



# The Impact of the Past Conflict "Cumbok Tragedy" on Development Planning in Aceh

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**Abstract:** The phenomenon of violence in the formation of nation-states in the 19th and 20th centuries, especially during the era of nationalism, had significant impacts on many countries, including Indonesia. This violence is linked to an official, exclusive, and elitist nationalism narrative, as seen in Aceh. The history of the "Cumbok Tragedy" in Aceh illustrates how nationalism can lead to violence. The impacts of conflict, such as in the Cumbok Tragedy, include infrastructure damage, security uncertainty, psychological effects, and social disruption. Development planning in East Aceh must consider rehabilitation, reintegration, and peace efforts to achieve effective and sustainable development. In the context of the Cumbok tragedy, the historical narrative that is written and often understood by the public originates from power and colonial control. Therefore, there is a need for a political movement to offer a new, more democratic, postcolonial meaning, bridging the sociocultural reconciliation movement. This research will be conducted in Aceh Regency, which is the epicenter of the conflict and the most distorted area in the history of the Cumbok Tragedy. A qualitative social approach with a case study method will be used to explore the real-life situation of the case. The research results on the Cumbok Tragedy in East Aceh reveal the complexity of history through in-depth narratives from the families of the victims, such as Teuku Saiful Anwar and Cut Anzar Hanum, who highlight the direct impacts and differing perspectives compared to the official historical version. The inaccuracies in the current historical writing have caused tensions, underscoring the importance of historical reconciliation. Experts, including Prof. Ismail Fahmi Arrauf Nasution, emphasize that honest and balanced disclosure, along with university involvement, is a crucial step to improving historical understanding and building sustainable peace in Aceh. Awareness of various perspectives and a commitment to reconciliation are key to healing past wounds and creating a more harmonious future.

**Keywords:** Impact of the Conflict 1; Cumbok Tragedy 2; Development Planning 3; Aceh 4;

## 1. Introduction

The phenomenon of violence in the formation of a nation-state is considered a "historical inevitability". Violence can occur widely and repeatedly in the history of nationalism, especially in the 19th century and its peak in the 20th century [1]. This narrative of violence is not unique to Indonesia, but it is also found in many other nation-states. The importance of violent narratives in nation-state formation has had a significant impact on wounded areas and individuals who feel suffering as a result of the implementation of "official nationalism". This model of



nationalism, according to Partha Chatterjee, can be exclusive, elitist, dynastic, and distortive. An example can be seen in Aceh, where the elite claims to be republicans [2][3][4].

This narrative of violence can be understood in the context of the "scripturalism" of Ernest Renan, the French historian, who considered the nation as a spiritual principle formed through the concept of memory of the past. Renan considers each individual to be the heir to the memory of the past, and the preservation of this memory becomes a solid foundation for a common life in a nation. However, Renan's views were tested by the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida (1993) [5], who called him the "destiny of violence". Derrida argues that every nation-state tends to be born and fall into a cycle of violence. Examples from different parts of the world, including the Uighurs in China, the Rohingya in Myanmar, and Aceh in Indonesia, show how violence is practiced in the name of nationalism.

Then, the narrative of Indonesian history began since the Youth Congress in 1928, but the background of independence also kept scars with the emergence of the "Cumbok Tragedy" in Aceh in 1945-1946 [6][2][7]. This conflict, which involved the Uleebalang group and ulama, left a mark that is still felt in social development and regional development in Aceh. Michel Foucault's view of the "discourse fault" is used to understand the way the Acehnese people see the tragedy. There are two models: total history, which sees history as the principle of homogeneous civilization, and general history, which sees history as the search for various series. This understanding opens up an opportunity to re-read the history of the Cumbok tragedy and relate it to the context of development in Aceh after the 2005 Helsinki MoU [8].

The reality of the Cumbok tragedy in the East Aceh region in the past has left a significant impact, especially in the context of development planning in the region. Past conflicts, such as the Cumbok Tragedy, can present serious challenges in designing sustainable and inclusive development strategies [9][10][11]. Infrastructure Damage from past conflicts often causes major damage to infrastructure in the region concerned. The Cumbok tragedy in East Aceh is likely to leave a trail in the form of physical damage to roads, bridges, schools, and other public facilities. This impact can be an obstacle to effective development planning [12].

This conflict has created security uncertainty in the region. This can hinder investment and economic growth, as stakeholders continue to pass it on to posterity. Therefore, development planning needs to consider strategies to overcome this uncertainty. People directly affected by conflict often experience psychological trauma and social disruption. This can affect community participation in the development process and make it difficult to implement projects that involve active participation from local communities.

After the conflict, the region needs to undergo a process of rehabilitation and reconstruction. Organized and sustainable development must consider the urgent need to restore conflict-affected areas, both physically and socially. The impact of conflict can affect relationships between communities and between individuals. Therefore, development planning should include strategies to promote social reintegration and create a climate of peace that supports sustainable growth and development.

By understanding the impact of past conflicts, this case study in East Aceh can provide valuable insights for effective and sustainable development planning in areas experiencing similar conflicts.

## 2. Research Methods

The research location will be conducted in East Aceh Regency, Aceh Province. The reason for choosing the location in this district is because this area is the starting point of bloodshed for the tragedy of persecution and massacre of the Ulee Balang and their descendants, before the tragedy spread to other districts such as Pidie Regency, Pidie Jaya Regency, Bireuen Regency, Lhokseumawe City, North Aceh Regency, Langsa City, and Aceh Tamiang Regency. Therefore, the location of this research became the center of the beginning of the case that became the

polemic of the civil war that occurred in Aceh. Thus, this location becomes an object that can provide an interpretation of the perspective of Aceh regional development planning through the reconciliation of past tragedies.

The use of the case study approach in this study is an effort to see how the Cumbok tragedy is the starting point of bloodshed in East Aceh Regency. As is known, the Cumbok tragedy has left deep memories for the victims, especially the Ulee Balang who had a social influence in the Acehese community in the past and to this day the generation is quite well known by the people of Aceh through the noble glasses brought by that generation.

The Cumbok tragedy and development planning here are cases that will be studied. Through a case study method with a qualitative approach, the researcher will delve into the tragedy by looking at the circulation of development planning through Aceh reconciliation to obtain a perspective on sustainable development planning in the Aceh region [13]. Observation to observe aspects related to the Cumbok tragedy and development planning in East Aceh. In-depth interviews to explore information about the informant's experience related to the incident. Finally, Literature Studies which explores books, articles, and journals as the basis for research. A document that contains a record of past events as secondary data [14][15].

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### **Family Profile of Cumbok Victims in East Aceh**

The observations we made in East Aceh Regency have shown the glory of the uleebalang state in Idi. With the help of Teuku Saiful Anwar, a descendant of Uleebalang Idi, we were invited to visit the Uleebalang Cemetery of Idi Rayeuk located in Keude Blang, Idi Rayeuk. The tomb visited was the tomb of the founder of the state uleebalang Idi Rayeuk, namely Teuku Chiek Benguci Bin Teuku Chiek Panglima Prang Nyak Syin. According to Teuku Saiful, the establishment of this state occurred in 1861-1862, during the reign of the Sultan of Aceh, Ibrahim Masyursyah.

The tomb of Teuku Chiek Benguci is the largest in the complex. Next to him is the grave of his son, Teuku Chik Hasan Ibrahim, and next to him is the grave of his younger brother, Teuku Chik Hanafiah. The son of Teuku Chik Hanafiyah, Teuku Muhammad Daudsyah, became the Resident of Aceh replacing Teuku Nyak Arif. In this tomb there are also Idi figures who became leaders in the era of the Republic of Indonesia, including the son of Teuku Chik Hanafiyah, who was the younger brother of Teuku Muhammad Daudsyah and became the third regent of East Aceh in the 1950s.

#### **Narrative of the victim's family history in East Aceh**

The visit in East Aceh has brought together several families who can provide a historical narrative of the early condition of the Cumbok tragedy. Researchers have visited parents who still have knowledge related to past stories that can provide explanations of the historical narrative that occurred. The following researchers convey several families who are able to explain these conditions.

##### **a. Teuku Seiful Anwar bin Tuku Hanafiyya**

Teuku Saiful Anwar bin Teuku Hanafiyah (a security guard at PLN) bin Teuku Usman Basyah is a descendant of the wareh uleebalang of the Idi state, or the fifth descendant of Teuku Benguci, the founder of the uleebalang Idi state. According to his explanation, no family members were victims or slaughtered in the Cumbok tragedy. This is because their ancestors managed to survive and flee outside the region, such as Penang, Medan, or Java. They had left Idi before the Cumbok War broke out.

According to Teuku Saiful Anwar, no Uleebalang was killed in Idi when the TPR troops attacked. However, Hussein Al-Mujahid's forces managed to force the Uleebalang in Idi to sign a letter of surrender of land ownership to the "revolutionaries" and asked them to leave the Idi territory. The tomb complex is an old building that has now been fenced, but there is no good maintenance or narrative about this historical site on site. Even the road to the location has not been paved so access to the location is not so smooth.

In the historical context of the origin of the Cumbok war, the Idi region was the first round of the movement of the uleebalang exterminating troops, namely from the TPR troops led by Husein Al Mujahid. In this understanding, Teuku Saiful Anwar explained that the forces of Husein Al-Mujahid were supported by PUSA to exterminate the uleebalang. Initially, the masses were brought in under the pretext of fighting the Dutch who had rampantly controlled the Idi area, but what happened on the ground was the uleebalang massacre, which led to a coup d'état against Teuku Nyak Arif. Teuku Saiful Anwar explained as follows:

"Before arriving in Kutaraja, Husein Al-Mujahid's troops stopped in the Seulawah area, where they already had accomplices, including Prof. Ali Hasymi. Finally, Teuku Nyak Arif's rank was taken, and he was then isolated" (Interview on July 31, 2024).

Socio-culturally, although Teuku Saiful Anwar's family is not a victim, in their daily lives they often get ridicule from the community because they come from the uleebalang family. He explained as follows:

"We were ridiculed for saying that we were Dutch cu'aks (spies), etc. But of course the people are affected because they don't know. And this is included in Snouck Hurgronje's theoretical model which then created a conflict among scholars and uleebalang. Because if we look at history, the group that still wants Aceh to stand alone is among the uleebalang, when other groups have accepted the idea of a proclamation. In fact, in 1942, Teungku Hasan Krueng Kalee had gathered scholars and stated that we can stand alone as a kingdom. But at that time Daud Beureueh did not want to. This is clear, because his group wants to become the ruler in Aceh by joining the Indonesian government. If they stand alone, they will not necessarily get power." (Interview on July 31, 2024).

According to him, during the Dutch colonial period, the uleebalang remained in Idi. Some of those who resisted were exiled to Penang, including Teuku Chik Hasan Ibrahim, the brother of Teuku Hanafiah who was the father of Teuku Muhammad Daudsyah, who later became a resident in place of Teuku Nyak Arif.

Based on the historical narrative that the uleebalang were killed because they carried the values of the Dutch Colonial compradors, but for Teuku Saiful Anwar it was not true. According to him, one of the propagandists is Soekarno. Soekarno established a relationship with Daud Beureueh and Husein Al Mujahid, they planned to finish off the uleebalang. In addition, these uleebalang people have a bond of descent with each other. For example, the Pasai – Peureuelak – Idi uleebalang network has a descendant bond with the 16th Sultan of Aceh, Malik Muzahir.

The tragedy case that has lasted for about 60-70 years in the view of Teuku Saiful Anwar really needs to be revealed to the wider community. However, according to him, if this tragedy is re-revealed, it will trigger revenge from the uleebalang family. He explained as follows:

"For me, this disclosure is important to know the true history, and also to restore the names of these ampons that have been tainted by incorrect historical writing" (Interview on July 31, 2024).

#### b. Teuku Razi

Teuku Razi is a descendant of Panglima Nyak Adam, currently he is active as an administrator of the Alam Sejahtera Mandiri cooperative in Idi Rayeuk. Based on information from Teuku Razi,

his family has never been involved in the Cumbok tragedy so he is unable to explain these dark stories. However, as a noble lineage, he was concerned about the past dimension that befell the people of Aceh, especially the uleebalang. He explained as follows:

"I feel disappointed with the past history, because PUSA at that time was used by the communists who aimed to seize office and power. At that time, young scholars who joined PUSA did not listen to the advice of senior scholars. For example, tarekat clerics such as Abuya Muda Wali opposed the movement led by Abu Beureueh and Husein Al Mujahid. If no clerics refuse, this tragedy could become even more bloody. In my opinion, this PUSA movement is a Wahhabi movement infiltrated by the communists" (interview on July 31, 2024).

Teuku Razi understood Pusa as an association of modern Ulama, while Husein Al Mujahid was part of the young scholars who were anti-tarekat and anti-dhikr, and considered it part of bid'ah. Then this group carried out the role of politicizing religion. According to him, the historical narrative that uleebalang deserves to be killed because they carry the values of Dutch competitors is not true. For him, the motive for the murder was purely due to the acquisition of power. Therefore, the disclosure of this history needs to be carried out again because the current generation of Acehnese must know the true history of Pusa. On the one hand, Pusa is not only referred to as an association of modern scholars, but Pusa is an upheaval that commits cruel acts against fellow Acehnese people.

#### c. Cut Anzar Hanum

On July 31, 2024, researchers and a team visited Cut Anzar Hanum's residence in Idi Rayeuk. Cut Anzar Hanum is the son of Teuku Ali, an uleebalang from Geudong, North Aceh, who has moved after marriage. Despite his advanced age, he is still fluent in recounting the tragedy that befell his family during the Cumbok upheaval. Based on his explanation, during the Cumbok tragedy, the younger brother of his mother's father, who is the grandfather of the mother's lineage, became a victim. His grandfather's name was Teuku Suncho, who was kidnapped in Meurah Mulia District, North Aceh (in the upper area of Samudera District, Geudong). Teuku Suncho was then taken to Idi by road and finally killed in Blang Segunci, Paya Bakong District, North Aceh. Cut Anzar Hanum explained that the grandfather of his father's descendants was not a victim, because he managed to escape to Malaysia. Here's Cut Anzar Hanum's explanation as the researcher listens to his story about a family who was a victim of kidnapping and murder.

"My paternal grandfather was not a victim, because he managed to escape to Penang. At the time she was not married, but fled to Penang to escape the mass movement. After somewhat subsided, she went home and married my grandmother" (Interview on July 31, 2024).

According to the story, in the past, everyone who had the uleebalang bloodline would be chased to be killed. Cut Anzar Hanum's paternal grandfather managed to escape to Penang, Malaysia. He sought refuge there because the perpetrators hunted the next generation to be eradicated. Luck was still on his side because after the conflict conditions were conducive, he returned to Aceh to marry his grandmother Cut Anzar Hanum from his father's side.

Cut Anzar Hanum in his explanation has never seen and known Abu Beureueh, a figure who is believed to be the driving force behind the Cumbok tragedy. He explained as follows:

"I don't know him. But there is a friend of mine who married Abu Beureueh's son, and the child then left for Java" (Interview on July 31, 2024).

Cut Anzar Hanum did not know Abu Beureueh directly, because in particular Cut Anzar Hanum never interacted directly. However, the information known by Cut Anzar Hanum that

his friend married Abu Beureueh's child and finally they migrated and settled on the island of Java.

Although Cut Anzar Hanum did not know Abu Beureueh, the figure of Husein Al-Mujahid who was also remembered by the uleebalang as the perpetrator of the kidnapping, is often depicted in his memory. He revealed that Husein Al-Mujahid had a relationship with him. He explained that Husein Al-Mujahid had visited his house on Veteran Street, Lhokseumawe City. At that time, he had time to sleep and sigh because he was sick. At that time, Cut Anzar Hanum's daughter-in-law also came to his house which made him feel uneasy because Cut Anzar Hanum's in-laws had a grudge against Husein Al-Mujahid. Regarding this, here is Cut Anzar Hanum's explanation.

"With Husein Al Mujahid there is a relationship. There is a story about it. When Husein Al Mujahid visited my house on Jalan Veteran Lhokseumawe, and had slept because he was sick. Then came my daughter-in-law, and asked who was sleeping inside. I said Hussein Al-Mujahid, and my in-laws didn't come in. I myself didn't really care about it at the time. But my in-laws have their own grudges, because they took (kidnapped and killed) my sister-in-law, Husein Al Mujahid. Why is he grieving? Because what sent him to school was his uncle (his mother's sister)" (Interview on July 31, 2024).

He reiterated that the killers were Hussein Al Mujahid groups, as follows:

"I don't know exactly, what is clear is that the group that took it was the Husein Al-Mujahid group. Nevertheless, Husein Mujahid was not polluted in Idi, as he also protected the uleebalang in East Aceh from assassination. Although they were protected because they made a signature to hand over their property to Hussein Mujahid and then let them out of Idi, such as there was to Langsa, and so on. They were given property to Husein Mujahid, but from the further confirmation that the gift was not a tribute, but forced to sign a document on the transfer of property ownership. And it happened in several areas of Uleebalang such as in Alue Batee (Peudawa Rayeuk), Buket Pala (Rantau Peureulak), Tanoh Ano (Idi Rayeuk), and other areas" (Interview on July 31, 2024).

Based on the explanation conveyed by Cut Anzar Hanum above, that his family had experienced kidnapping and murder from the Pusa. This gives an idea that the memory of the uleebalang generation is still in their memory. Even though they were under 10 years old at the time, the reality of escape and moments of movement was often felt.

#### a. Cut Mariatum

On July 29, 2024, researchers visited the Cut Mariatum house in Langsa City. Cut Mariatum is the son of uleebalang Teuku Umar bin Teuku Imum Itam, who was a victim of the Pusa massacre during the Cumbok tragedy. During the visit, she was accompanied by her two children, namely Cut Ida Mariya (inspector in East Aceh Regency) and Cut Jurnalita (housewife). Researchers spent two hours talking with them to dig into the memories of Cut Mariatum and his children about the tragedy that befell their immediate family during the Cumbok persecution.

Cut Mariatum, now 84, is sick and bedridden, unable to move freely like his two children. He is married to Teuku M. Juned. Cut Mariatum was born in Trieng Gadeng in 1942 and spent his childhood in various places because he was raised by his stepfather, Keuchik Haji Yusuf.

Teuku Umar (Cut Mariatum's father), in Cut Mariatum's memory, is a figure who works with the Dutch and is fluent in Dutch. Teuku Umar married Pocut Indah, but according to Cut Mariatum's statement, he did not get any stories about his father so in particular Cut Mariatum did not have any knowledge about his biological father.

Cut Jurnalita explained that in the past, her grandmother (Pocut Indah) was married to Keuchik Haji Yusuf who was a police figure at that time. He explained as follows:

"Grandma is married to a police officer (Keuchiek H Yusuf), the Chief of the Pidie Police, and she is still friends with Daud Beureueh, but not a group that supports the kidnapping of uleebalang" (Interview on July 29, 2024).

Cut Mariatum added back about his mother's post-marriage, as follows:

"Because the new mamak's husband is a policeman, then he moved around. From Keuchiek Haji Yusuf he had another child. My stepfather then took care of me. I live in different areas and have never been in the conflict area of Aceh. I live in Nias, Sibolga, Kutacane, Takengon, and a few other areas" (Interview on July 29, 2024).

At the time of the Cumbok tragedy, Cut Mariatum was only 4 years old, so the memories of those dark days were not so clear to him. Their two children also did not get a complete story about the dark period, so they were unable to explain in detail about the tragedy. Cut Mariatum's biological father was kidnapped and killed by the Pusa group, and to date, he does not know where his father's grave is. Cut Mariatum explains as follows:

"I don't know where the grave is. So there are no graves. He said he was put into a well in Sigli in a state of being killed. I don't know who was put into the well" (Interview on July 29, 2024).

In that case, for Cut Mariatum still erodes his heart on the person who killed his father. Until now, he still harbors anger towards the perpetrator of his father's murder, but the venting of anger has been suppressed until now. As the chief driving force, Cut Mariatum was also very angry with Daud Beureueh, but the anger had to be suppressed because the stepfather who took care of him in childhood was a friend of Daud Beureueh. Here's an explanation of Cut Mariatum:

"Of course I am angry with Daud Beureueh, but my stepfather is in agreement with Daud Beureueh. My stepfather was one of those who tempered our anger because he was close to David Beureueh. And he is among those who disagree with the murder of uleebalang" (Interview on July 29, 2024).

Keuchiek Haji Yusuf's marriage with Pocut Indah was based on the protection of the uleebalang. Cut Jurnalita, the son of Cut Mariatum, explained the reason why his stepfather married his grandmother, as follows:

"Because Nyak Chiek was also chased by a group of assassins. So this marriage is also to protect Pocut Indah from other persecution. He is a policeman, so he has the ability to protect. Keuchiek Haji Yusuf was also friends with Teuku Umar. So that Nyak Chiek avoided the pursuit of the kidnappers, because they also robbed the uleebalang property. Because usually uleebalang widows are taken by a group of kidnappers to marry, and after that there is a reason to take uleebalang's property" (Interview on July 29, 2024).

To this day, Cut Jurnalita as a descendant of Cut Mariatum is actively included in the wareh uleebalang association. He explained that the wareh association is located on the island of Java, precisely in the Cibubur area. The activity they carry out is to build communication and stay in touch between wareh uleebalang.

### **Historical reconciliation**

The rediscovery of the history of the Cumbok war tragedy needs to be re-raised as an effort to reconcile history towards future regional development. Historical reconciliation in this context is an important point as a balanced information medium from the Pusa order and the uleebalang so that peace is actually formed with awareness.

According to Teuku Saiful Anwar, historical reconciliation needs to be done to continue history. He explained that this reconciliation is useful for the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Daud Beureueh and Husein Al Mujahid, because basically they are also victims of the bad impact of their grandfathers in the past. He explained as follows:

"In my opinion, it is okay to continue. Because for me, the grandson and great-grandson of Daud Beureueh and Husein Al Mujahid in a certain context is also a "victim", the bad story of his grandfather or grandfather. The goal should be to lead to peace and not add new problems. After all, we are also good friends with Husein Al Mujahid's grandson and can laugh freely, without carrying the burden of his grandfather's behavior" (Interview on July 31, 2024).

The same thing was also explained by Teuku Razi that historical reconciliation needs to be carried out again, but only to continue history, so as to provide peace for the people of Aceh in the future.

One of the strategies for reconciling the history of Cumbok that currently needs to be done to the younger generation is a balanced historical narrative system. This narrative needs to be socialized to higher education institutions as one of the territories of knowledge production. In this case, the researcher had the opportunity to interview Prof. Ismail Fahmi Arrauf Nasution, as the Rector of IAIN Langsa. In his view of the process of reconstructing the Pusa-uleebalang conflict, it is important to carry out because violent events, including human rights violations in the past, are not in accordance with the spirit of humanity. He affirmed the following:

"The campus must be at the forefront of uncovering the history of the past. Academic values should be used to uncover the problem of violence in the past. The disclosure of human rights cases in the past must be oriented to the interests of the victims" (interview on July 30, 2024).

He also explained that universities really need to be involved in re-disclosing the history of human rights. The following is the explanation of Prof. Ismail Fahmi Arrauf Nasution:

"As an effort to rediscover and provide education to the public so that they are not trapped in the romance of past conflicts, the presence of experts in the campus world is very important. They can formulate good academic concepts. With its intellectual capital, the campus can be a party that helps resolve conflicts, including psychological problems left behind by the dark history of the past" (interview on July 30, 2024).

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the observations and interviews conducted in East Aceh, this research reveals the complexity of the history of the Cumbok tragedy through various narratives from the victims' families. Families involved, such as Teuku Saiful Anwar and Cut Anzar Hanum, provide deep perspectives on the event, highlighting both the immediate impact and how this tragedy shaped their perceptions and experiences. Meanwhile, different historical narratives indicate tension between the official version and the views presented by the victims' families, with some mentioning inaccuracies in the existing historical account.

Historical reconciliation is an important step in addressing the profound impact of this history, as emphasized by experts and academics, including Prof. Ismail Fahmi Arrauf Nasution. An honest and balanced disclosure of the Cumbok tragedy, along with the involvement of universities in this process, can help improve historical understanding and build sustainable peace in Aceh. Awareness of various perspectives and a commitment to reconciliation are key to reconciling a conflict-filled past with a more harmonious future.

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