

Historical Heritage as a Media for Reconciliation of Social Conflicts:

The Aceh Tsunami Museum as a Media for Conflict Reconciliation

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Abstract

The Aceh Tsunami Museum not only serves as a place to commemorate the 2004 tsunami tragedy, but also has a strategic role in the process of conflict reconciliation in Aceh. This research aims to analyze how this museum can be a medium of reconciliation for people who have experienced prolonged conflicts between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government. This research confirms that the Aceh tsunami museum has great potential in building sustainable peace. Therefore, the optimization of the role of museums in supporting reconciliation and historical education needs to be continuously developed so that the message of peace can be conveyed to future generations

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INTRODUCTION

Eko Supriyono (2024:4-5) explained in his writing that conflict is an unpleasant condition that occurs and is often encountered in daily life. Conflict is a situation that is often interpreted negatively and avoided by a person. Most individuals perceive conflict only from their physical form, such as someone who fights. Conflict is a relationship between two or more parties who have, or who feel they have, goals that are not in line.

Conflict resolution cannot be separated from reconciliation, because reconciliation is one of the stages of conflict resolution, namely *the Peace Building*

process. Reconciliation is a scientific terminology that emphasizes the need to see peace as an open process and divide the conflict resolution process into several stages according to the dynamics of the conflict cycle. A social conflict should be seen as a phenomenon that occurs due to the multi-layered interaction of sharing factors. Conflict resolution can only be applied optimally if combined with various other relevant conflict resolution mechanisms (Hendry Bakri, 2015).

Aceh as we know has experienced a major event that changed its social and political dynamics, namely the prolonged conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government and the tsunami disaster in 2004. The tsunami that hit Aceh on December 26, 2004 was a turning point for social and political change in the region. This tragedy claimed more than 200,000 lives and devastated the coastal cities of Aceh. In the midst of tremendous destruction, this disaster also opens up opportunities for the reconciliation process between GAM and the Indonesian government. The international aid that came in large quantities, as well as the need for stability for post-tsunami recovery, prompted both sides to reach a peace agreement. The Helsinki Agreement signed in August 2005 ended a decades-long conflict and became a new milestone in social reconstruction in Aceh.

In this context, the Aceh tsunami museum was established as a memorial to the humanitarian tragedy that occurred due to the tsunami. However, more than just a place to commemorate disasters, this museum also acts as a medium for conflict reconciliation. This museum is an educational space that conveys a message about the importance of unity, by understanding the role of the Aceh Tsunami Museum in the process of reconciliation, this research aims to analyze how this museum can be a medium of reconciliation for people who have experienced prolonged conflicts between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government.

METHOD

This writing uses a historical research method that involves four main steps, namely heuristic, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography.

DISCUSSION

Before the tsunami hit on December 26, 2004, Aceh was in a very complex situation due to the prolonged conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government. The conflict, which has been going on since 1976, is rooted in dissatisfaction with the central government's policies, which are considered to exploit Aceh's natural resources without providing adequate welfare for its people. For more than three decades, this conflict developed into an armed conflict that caused thousands of casualties, massive displacement, and social and economic instability (Dilla Janu Istanti et al., 2021).

In that condition, the people of Aceh were divided into several groups with different experiences and perspectives. Some support GAM's struggle for independence, some remain loyal to the Indonesian government, and some just want to live in peace without getting involved in conflict. However, the situation on the ground does not allow them to remain neutral, as violence often occurs in villages, involving security forces and GAM members. Living in fear and uncertainty became part of the daily life of the Acehnese people at that time.

However, when the tsunami hit Aceh with waves of more than 30 meters high, all these differences seemed to disappear in an instant (Dina Gunarsih et al, 2023). Tsunami did not choose victims based on ideology or political affiliation of everyone, whether GAM members, security forces, or civilians, experienced the same suffering. Thousands of people have lost their families, homes, and livelihoods. Towns and villages were destroyed, leaving almost unimaginable destruction. In a situation like this, the most important thing is no longer who is fighting for what, but how everyone can survive and find a way to bounce back.

After a disaster, solidarity begins to grow on its own. GAM and the Indonesian government, which were previously at war with each other, for the first time found themselves in a situation where they had to work together to rescue the surviving victims and ensure the smooth distribution of aid. Aid came from all over the world, including from the Indonesian government, international humanitarian agencies, and even former enemies on the battlefield. The process of rehabilitation and reconstruction of Aceh involves various elements of society, including former GAM combatants and government officials, who are slowly beginning to realize that cooperation is the only way out of this crisis.

It is in this context that the Helsinki Agreement was born in 2005 (Riski Grenanda, 2021). This peace deal was largely driven by the realization that prolonged conflict would only exacerbate the suffering of the Acehese people. The tsunami is a factor that accelerates the peace process because this disaster clearly shows that Aceh cannot rise if it is still trapped in conflict. The decades-long war is finally over, and for the first time in Aceh's modern history, people are beginning to rebuild their lives in peaceful conditions.

The Aceh Tsunami Museum was then built not only as a reminder of the tragedy of the disaster, but also as a symbol of a turning point in Aceh's history. This museum depicts how the tsunami, despite bringing tremendous destruction, also created an opportunity for the people of Aceh to reunite (Ejodia Kakunsi, 2023). The exhibits inside the museum not only showcase the impact of the disaster, but also how international solidarity and cooperation between various parties in Aceh played a role in the recovery. This is proof that in the midst of suffering, there is still hope and possibility to rise together.

In addition to being a place of reflection for the people who experienced the event firsthand, this museum also has an important role in educating the young generation of Aceh. By looking at the documentation in the museum, the new generation can understand how conflicts and disasters both bring suffering to the people of Aceh. They are invited to understand that armed conflict does not bring prosperity, but rather worsens the situation. This museum is a reminder that peace is not just a political agreement, but also a foundation that must be maintained so that Aceh can continue to develop.

In addition to historical and educational aspects, this museum also contributes to Aceh's economic growth. As one of the main tourist destinations in Banda Aceh, this museum attracts many domestic and international tourists. The existence of this museum helps build a tourism-based economic ecosystem, which ultimately creates jobs and improves people's welfare. With the increase in people's living standards, factors that can trigger conflict, such as poverty and social injustice, can be suppressed.

Thus, the Aceh Tsunami Museum is not only a place to commemorate the tragedy, but also a real symbol of reconciliation. The museum reminds us that Aceh has gone through difficult times, both due to conflict and disaster, and that peace and unity are the key to building a better future. In the long run, this museum serves as a tool to maintain

peace, avoid the return of conflicts, and instill awareness that only with social stability and cooperation, Aceh can move forward.

CONCLUSION

The Aceh tsunami museum has a broader role than just a place to commemorate the 2004 tragedy. In addition to being a space for reflection for people who experienced the event firsthand, this museum also plays a role in educating the younger generation about the importance of peace. Through the historical documentation displayed, this museum makes the new generation aware that conflicts and disasters only bring suffering, so that peace must continue to be maintained as a foundation for the progress of Aceh itself.

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