

Integration of traditional maritime governance systems in combating drugtrafficking: A case study of the institution of *panglima laot* in Aceh, Indonesia

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Abstract

The article explores the potential of leveraging indigenous maritime wisdom to combat drug smuggling via sea routes in Aceh, Indonesia. This region has recently experienced significant challenges related to narcotics trafficking, as evidenced by several major seizures in 2022 and 2023. The study specifically explores the integration of traditional maritime institutions, with a focus on the *panglima laot* system, into contemporary maritime security frameworks. Using a qualitative methodology, the research employed participatory observation and in-depth interviews with 11 key informants, including traditional leaders, fishermen, and government officials. The findings indicate that customary maritime practices, such as *khanduri laot* (sea rituals), *hukom adat laot* (customary sea law), and *meupayang law* (fishing regulations), can be effectively adapted to enhance anti-narcotics efforts. This study proposes an innovative model for maritime security by synergizing these indigenous elements with formal security agencies through joint regulatory mechanisms and coordinated surveillance systems. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on harnessing local knowledge systems to address contemporary security challenges at sea and offers valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners operating in coastal regions facing similar threats.

Keywords: maritime security, local wisdom, drug trafficking, traditional institutions, coastal communities

Introduction

Aceh Province possesses significant marine natural resources, as shown by its extensive maritime territory (Rizqi et al., 2017). Its coastline stretches about 1,660 kilometers. The marine area totals 295,370 km², including a territorial sea of 56,563 km² (covering territorial and archipelagic waters) and an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 238,807 km². Aceh's maritime domain is a strategic asset for regional development (Andriani et al., 2018). Despite this vast potential, challenges persist in ensuring adequate maritime security oversight. Insufficient oversight has created vulnerabilities that criminal actors exploit, notably enabling large-scale drug smuggling operations via sea routes. The eastern coast of Aceh has been identified as particularly susceptible to such illicit activities; East Aceh district ranks among the areas with the highest incidence of drug trafficking cases (Hartanto et al., 2021).

Drug trafficking remains a critical concern for Indonesia and the global community, given its widespread impact on other forms of crime. Former Indonesian President Joko Widodo highlighted: "Marine threats faced by Indonesia extend beyond illegal fishing to

include environmental degradation, drug smuggling, human trafficking, illegal immigration flows, and resource conflicts” (Hakiki & Utomo, 2019). This statement underscores the role of Indonesia’s seas as key entry points for narcotics into the country.

Recent enforcement actions highlight the severity of this problem in Aceh’s waters. On April 7th, 2022, the National Narcotics Agency (*Badan Narkotika Nasional – BNN*) apprehended five individuals and seized approximately 256 kilograms of methamphetamine off East Aceh and Bireuen regencies’ coasts (Dirgantara, 2022). Subsequently, on January 11th, 2023, police arrested ten suspects involved in a Malaysia–Indonesia drug network responsible for smuggling fifty kilograms of methamphetamine into Acehnese waters (Ramadhan, 2023).

Additional seizures include two hundred kilograms confiscated from fishermen in North Aceh on February 28th (Saifullah, 2023), forty-two kilograms intercepted at Matang Rayeuk Beach in Peudawa District on January 26th, and fifty-seven kilograms seized near Lamreh Coast between July 4th and 5th, highlighting persistent maritime trafficking (IMIC (Indonesia Maritime Information Centre), 2023; Zulkarnaini, 2023). These cases show efforts to make Aceh a point of entry for international drug trafficking (Putra et al., 2018). The data demonstrate that drug smuggling via sea routes has escalated to a crisis needing comprehensive countermeasures. Prevention strategies should involve multisectoral collaboration with formal security agencies and customary institutions rooted in local cultural frameworks, leveraging indigenous social capital to mitigate illicit maritime activities.

In Aceh’s coastal communities, local wisdom is grounded in marine life. It consists of wise ideas and good values shared by community members (Munazir et al., 2017). The maritime world in Aceh recognizes *panglima laot* as customary leaders within the Acehnese fishing community. The existence of *panglima laot* is a form of local wisdom that has long been practiced in Aceh since it was a kingdom (Mujiburrahman et al., 2021). The *panglima laot* is the customary leader of the fishermen’s community alliance who oversees the sea customs, *hukom adat laot*, and *hukom meupayang* (Munazir et al., 2017). The *panglima laot* has a customary jurisdiction that extends along the shore, from the landward direction, starting from the last point where the sea waves break or where the *tapak guda* plant grows (a type of creeper whose leaves resemble the footprints of a horse) to the open sea within reach of the local customary community (Syarif, 2003). *Panglima laot* is a symbol for upholding the customary law of the sea, so the position of *panglima laot* is responsible for everything that happens at sea and everything related to

marine relations among fishermen's alliance members (Munazir & Mujiburrahman, 2018).

Indigenous maritime wisdom is a valuable resource for enhancing marine security systems, particularly when integrated with state-led security frameworks aimed at curbing drug smuggling via sea routes. Mujiburrahman et al. (2021) identify four pivotal roles of the *panglima laot* within fishing communities: (1) enforcing traditional maritime customs (*laot* customs); (2) upholding customary maritime law (*laot* customary law); (3) administering the *meupayang* system, a profit-sharing mechanism; and (4) mediating customary disputes. This study aims to analyze how the rationalization of local maritime values in Aceh has been used as a security measure to prevent drug smuggling via sea routes.

Moreover, the *panglima laot's* cultural values constitute critical social capital for coastal communities by restricting opportunities for illicit activities such as drug smuggling. This indigenous value system complements formal maritime security institutions, fostering synergy and accelerating the development of a comprehensive marine security architecture. Recognizing cultural capital as a strategic asset underscores its potential to advance national development objectives. Ultimately, this research offers novel insights into designing integrated marine security models tailored to regions vulnerable to narcotics trafficking, thereby safeguarding national sovereignty and future generations from these pervasive threats.

In the context of Acehnese coastal local wisdom, the *panglima laot* is not merely an enforcer of customary rules, but an agent who actively interprets, negotiates, and even modifies them in light of context and practical interests. Owing to his accumulated social capital, the *panglima laot's* position commands considerable respect within coastal societies. According to Ronald Burt, social capital is conceptualized as the product of actors who generate benefits (Häuberer, 2011). Furthermore, social capital is also constructed through trust and the value derived from reciprocal relationships (Darmenova et al., 2021).

Study methods

This research was conducted in East Aceh, Indonesia, a strategically selected coastal area frequently affected by drug smuggling. This region upholds strong coastal local wisdom traditions within its communities, notably embodied by the *panglima laot* customary institution. Preliminary information indicated that efforts to address drug trafficking via

maritime routes in this area actively involve these customary institutions within local settlements. Consequently, this research posits that an integrative approach that combines formal legal frameworks and customary law can effectively prevent drug trafficking.

Employing a qualitative research design with descriptive–interpretative techniques, data were collected through in-depth interviews with eleven informants representing diverse backgrounds. They were identified as knowing the maritime customary system or having involvement in traditional sea management, involvement in drug prevention efforts through sea routes, knowledge of the structure and operational mechanisms of the *panglima laot* institution, and a willingness to provide information openly and honestly. Meanwhile, fishermen participants were required to be actively engaged in the study area’s fishing activities and to have experience with, or awareness of, drug-smuggling prevention efforts.

They were interviewed to gather information on community knowledge, values, perspectives, ideas, and lived experiences regarding Aceh’s customary maritime law aimed at preventing drug smuggling. The informants were identified by snowball sampling throughout the research process; they were perceived as knowledgeable individuals during preliminary observations (Lucas, 2014). In particular, the informants were interviewed to explore information related to: 1) customs that are lived and practiced in coastal communities, 2) opportunities from customary practices that can be utilized and integrated to prevent drug smuggling, 3) actors involved in drug smuggling, and 4) how drug cases are arrested in coastal areas. The researcher used a recording device to conduct interviews. Interviews were conducted using structured and semi-structured interview systems (Spradley, 2016).

The eleven informants interviewed included four *panglima laot* leaders in East Aceh District. These leaders were crucial informants because of their central role in maritime customary governance structures; their responsibilities include creating and enforcing customary marine laws, mediating disputes among fishermen, crew members, and vessel owners, and adjudicating violations of customary marine laws. Additionally, *panglima laot* leaders oversee fishing protocols and procedures and manage ritual practices and traditional ceremonies related to maritime life.

Beyond *panglima laot*, two traditional coastal community leaders participated as key informants due to their advisory roles on maritime matters. The sample also included two fishermen actively engaged in local fishing activities, three government officials, two representatives from the East Aceh Marine and Fisheries Agency, and one official

from the National Narcotics Agency operating within East Aceh's jurisdiction. Marine Affairs and Fisheries officials exercise their mandate over governmental functions related to marine resource management, including policy coordination, permit issuance, regulation of spatial utilization, and community empowerment initiatives targeting coastal populations and small island communities. Meanwhile, the National Narcotics Agency serves as an Indonesian non-ministerial government body tasked with prevention efforts against narcotics abuse alongside enforcement actions targeting illicit trafficking of narcotic substances.

In conducting the interviews, the initial step was to meet each informant individually to explain the purpose of the research visit. This process was accompanied by the presentation of an official assignment letter issued by the Research and Community Service Institute of Malikussaleh University to establish legitimacy. Only after obtaining informed consent from each informant did the interview proceed, ensuring adherence to established research ethics. Informants were also explicitly informed that data collected during these interviews would be utilized for publication in a scholarly journal.

The interviews were scheduled at different times to allow concurrent observations at key cultural sites within local coastal communities, including fishing settlements and fish auction markets. During these observations, researchers documented socio-cultural phenomena pertinent to coastal livelihoods through informal conversations with community members. Additionally, these field visits provided opportunities for identifying influential community actors who could serve as key informants for subsequent interviews. In addition to interviews, researchers also conducted document studies to enrich the data. Relevant documents served as primary and secondary data sources encompassing mass media outlets.

Following data collection, empirical findings pertinent to the research objectives were systematically filtered and analyzed using descriptive analytical techniques. The analytical process employed an interactive model articulated by Miles and Huberman (B. Miles et al., 2014), comprising three sequential stages: First, data reduction involved distilling raw empirical observations into manageable datasets while organizing them into coherent patterns or thematic categories. Second, data display involved presenting these organized data in a narrative form to enable more precise interpretation. Third, the conclusion focused on validating emergent insights by elucidating significant relational patterns among core variables within the study framework. We were fully aware that

researching sensitive social issues such as this was prone to bias that must be addressed.¹

Local values of Aceh maritime society

According to Van Vollen Hoven, Aceh has many traditional institutions of authority. In the harbor, the center of relations between civilizations, there was the *Syahbandar* (the collector of entry and exit fees); in *kuala*, there was the *Kepala Krueng* (head of the river) to protect the waters, and the *pawang krueng* to maintain the service of the ships; in the markets around the east coast, there was also the *haria* in charge of collecting taxes; and there was also the *panglima laot* for the management of marine-related issues (Bustamam-Ahmad, 2010).

Panglima laot has existed since the royal period, as noted by Hoven, but its functions and position have shifted across eras. Referring to the Regional Regulation of Aceh Special Region Province, No. 7/2000, on the implementation of customary life, a *panglima laot* is a person who leads the customs that apply in the field of fishing at sea, including regulating fishing places and resolving disputes related to the sea (Mujiburrahman et al., 2021). The *panglima laot* is given the power to act and make decisions. These powers include *laot custom*, *laot customary law*, and *meupayang law*. According to Maksoem, there are several central powers of the *panglima laot*, which are as follows: 1) issuing sea customary law regulations that will be applied to fishing communities; 2) regulating the relationship among fishermen; 3) regulating the law to fishing communities that violate the provisions of sea customary law; and 4) holding deliberations with fishermen to solve conflicts and regulate ceremonies known as sea customs, such as *khanduri laot* (Maksoem, 1994).

Referring to the authority vested in the *panglima laot*, it is evident that this figure serves as the customary leader of the fishing community. Consequently, the *panglima laot* holds a structured and significant role, which directly manifests his authority and power in ensuring the orderly conduct of fishing community activities. From a sociological perspective, a role is understood as the dynamic aspect of a social position; thus, an individual who fulfills the rights and obligations associated with the position is said to

¹ For instance, informants or community members participating as research subjects may withhold sensitive information related to customary practices or their collaboration with authorities to protect their image or security. The researcher strategically selected representative informants from traditional leadership and formal security institutions to mitigate this risk and ensure proportional and balanced data representation. Furthermore, a triangulation strategy was employed by using multiple data sources to enrich the dataset and facilitate cross-verification of information. Member checking (participatory validation) was also conducted by reconfirming preliminary findings with key informants, ensuring that interpretations accurately reflected the informants' intended meanings.

perform a role (Soekanto, 2017). In this regard, the *panglima laot* occupies a strategic function within the fishing community, exercising leadership grounded in his position and authority.

An Indigenous community is an autonomous social unit that independently organizes its systems of law, politics, and other communal affairs. Such communities are born, grow, and sustain collectively (Warassih & Sulaiman, 2017). A fundamental element within indigenous communities is the existence of customary law, which governs harmonious social relations. Customary law serves to restrain greed and regulate the sustainable utilization of natural resources to meet economic needs (Riggs et al., 2016). For Indigenous peoples, particularly fishermen, customary law is crucial in fostering commitments to environmental stewardship and legal sustainability (Warassih & Sulaiman, 2017). Thus, customary law represents the normative framework that the community desires and adheres to. From another perspective, customary law comprises behavioral rules enforced by sanctions, meaning violations trigger specific coercive measures to ensure compliance. Importantly, customary law is typically unwritten and not codified into formal legal codes (Syahbandir, 2010).

In addition to the *panglima laot*, *adat laot* is also part of the local values of maritime communities in Aceh. *Adat laot* is a series of traditions and agreements by fishing communities related to the cultural space of fishermen's lives. One of the functions of the *panglima laot* is to regulate and ensure the implementation of *adat laot*. There are four elements of *laot* customs carried out by *panglima laot*: *khanduri laot* customs, social customs, environmental maintenance customs, and drifting goods customs (Munazir et al., 2017). *Khanduri laot* is a ceremonial event conducted by the fishing community either before the east season or after the west season's conclusion (Wibowo et al., 2000). This ceremony is held annually or adjusted according to the fishermen's economic conditions and other contextual factors. *Khanduri Laot* serves as an expression of gratitude to God for the abundance of sustenance. Moreover, this customary event serves as a platform for socializing *Laot customary law*, *Laot* traditions, and *meupayang law* (Munazir et al., 2017). For the Acehnese fishing community, *khanduri laot* symbolizes the interconnected relationship between humans, their creator, and the surrounding environment, reflecting a holistic approach to engaging with the local ecosystem (Suryo, 2008).

The implementation of the *khanduri laot* is led directly by the *panglima laot*, who raises funds from each fisherman. *Panglima laot* is instrumental in carrying out *laot* customs related to *khanduri laot*. All processes are directly driven by the *panglima laot*, assisted by his apparatus (Mujiburrahman et al., 2021).

Khanduri laot represents the relationship between man and The Creator (*hablumminallah*) and the manifestation of man's relationship with his neighbor (*hablumminannas*). *Kenduri laot*, for *panglima laot* throughout Aceh, is a place for friendship and visits (Suryo, 2008). *Khaduri laot* is also used as a basis for evaluating fishermen, the customary law of the sea, and fishing activities. *Panglima laot* uses this momentum to reaffirm the customary law of the sea or inform if additional laws have been updated (Munazir et al., 2017). It is also not uncommon for this momentum to become a platform for electing a new *panglima laot*. At the *khanduri laot* ritual, all parties related to the fishery will be invited, including *mugee* (people who buy fish from fishermen), to foster an atmosphere of intimacy among fellow fishermen and other participants.

For the East Aceh region, the *laot* custom is still strong. According to the East Aceh *panglima laot*, Birul Walidin:

Sea customs still exist and are still strong in East Aceh. However, certain changes occur when compared to the past. Like the implementation of *khanduri laot*, this is a sea custom we still carry out yearly.

The *panglima laot* of Idi Rayeuk, Sulaiman, also stated that the *khanduri laot* is still underway. As he said:

There are differences in the implementation. In the past, buffalo heads were washed into the sea because it was still steeped in Hindu teachings, but now it no longer does. *Khanduri laot* is a form of fishermen's gratitude, eating together, giving alms to orphans, and remembrance. Therefore, the current *khanduri* event is filled with *dhikr* and donations to orphans.

On that occasion, the *panglima laot* and other formal leaders spoke about strengthening sea customs for the fishing community. Therefore, on the day of the *khanduri laot*, all sea elements, from ship handlers to crew members, are prohibited from fishing, so that all can attend the *khanduri* activities.

Social customs relate to helping fellow fishermen carry out fishing activities. Fishermen's work is full of risks. The risks can include ships being damaged at sea, ships sinking, or other hazards arising in rough seas. When a disaster occurs, the *panglima laot*, as the customary leader of the fishing community, will play a role in organizing the fishermen to assist with a ship in distress. Sometimes, disasters require many ships to help. However, some only require one or two ships to help; for example, when a ship has a dead engine and is at a short distance, the *panglima laot* will order ships from *Kuala* to pull it ashore (Munazir et al., 2017).

Another *laot* custom is environmental preservation, though in recent decades it has received less attention. Pragmatic economic interests have reduced respect for nature and the environment. According to East Aceh's *panglima laot*:

Awareness of environmental customs has greatly diminished. Many trawlers are circulating in our customary waters. Small fishermen no longer have sustenance because of the use of these trawlers. According to customary law, trawling is prohibited, but it is done behind closed doors and involves business networks as well....

The environmental conservation efforts undertaken by the *panglima laot* through *laot* customary practices are intrinsically linked to the welfare of the fishing community. These environmental stewardship customs preserve both the marine ecosystem and the livelihoods of small-scale fishermen. The *panglima laot* enforces environmental protection by prohibiting destructive practices such as blast fishing, poisoning, drugging, electrocution, coral reef extraction, and the use of other harmful materials that threaten marine biodiversity. Additionally, cutting coastal trees, such as cypress and mangroves, that play a vital role in the stability of coastal ecosystems, is strictly forbidden. The customs also protect endangered marine species, including sea turtles and dolphins, by prohibiting their capture.

Furthermore, the management of drifting goods found at sea is regulated by customary law. All drifting items must be reported to the *panglima laot*, who will then announce that the items will be auctioned unless claimed within a specified timeframe. Proceeds from these auctions are allocated to the maritime customary institution, with a portion donated to local houses of worship. Commonly reported drifting goods include fishing equipment. Fishermen adhere to a belief that taking property that does not belong to them invites misfortune, a conviction that reinforces respectful treatment of drifting goods and supports communal harmony.

Within Aceh's maritime communities, customary laws govern fishing practices within the framework of *hukum adat laot* (Munazir & Mujiburrahman, 2018). These regulations include several mandated fishing abstentions: (1) a weekly cessation of fishing on Fridays, from sunset on Thursday to sunset on Friday; (2) a three-day fishing moratorium following the *khanduri laot* ceremony, from sunrise on the day of the ceremony until sunset on the third day; (3) a three-day fishing ban during Eid al-Fitr, from sunset before the festival until sunset on the second day; (4) similar three-day abstinence during Eid al-Adha; (5) a fishing prohibition on Indonesia's Independence Day, August 17th, from sunset on August 16th until sunset on August 17th. Since the devastating

earthquake and tsunami on December 26th, 2004, which caused significant loss of life, the *panglima laot* has also enforced a fishing ban every December 26th, from sunset on December 25th until sunset on December 26th.

These *pantang laot* (fishing abstentions) are not merely prohibitions on fishing activities but also carry profound cultural and ecological significance (Abdullah, 2014). The enforcement of these abstention days benefits fishermen by promoting sustainable marine resource management and ensuring the long-term health of coastal ecosystems. Moreover, these practices embody religious values; for example, the Friday fishing ban aligns with the Islamic obligation for men to attend Friday prayers at the mosque. The fishermen believe that violating these customary laws results in prolonged misfortune and scarcity of sustenance. Additionally, breaches of *laot* customary law may result in the *panglima laot* confiscating catches, reinforcing compliance and respect for traditional regulations.

No.	Name of day	Number of days
1	Khanduri Laot	3
2	Every Friday. 1 day × 48 times in one year	48
3	Eid al-Fitr holiday	3
4	Eid al-Adha	3
5	Every August 17 th	1
6	Every December 26 th	1
	Total	59

Table 1. Number of days of abstinence during the year (Mujiburrahman et al., 2021)

Furthermore, the Acehnese maritime cultural system recognizes the *hukom meupayang*, a customary legal framework governing fishing practices. This law is a legal instrument designed to ensure justice and equitable protection for all parties involved in fishing activities, including fishermen, handlers, crew members, and boat operators. According to Mujiburrahman, *meupayang* law operates particularly in contexts where formal statutory law does not adequately regulate fishing procedures at sea (Mujiburrahman et al., 2021).

Disputes frequently arise among fishermen at sea during fishing operations. The *meupayang* law addresses these conflicts by regulating operational boundaries by vessel type and establishing a clear profit-sharing system. Given that fishing on the high seas

often involves multiple vessels, explicit rules governing the distribution of catches are essential to prevent conflicts among fishermen.

In addition to those related to the rules, there is also a trial institution called the *Lembaga Persidangan Hukum Adat Laot (LPHAL)*, or *the Customary Law of the Sea Council*. LPHAL is a set of hearing panels in dispute resolution. In this assembly, trials of various disputes occur, including those involving *laot customary* violations, *laot* customary law, and *meupayang* law. LPHAL is a judicial forum for fishermen to resolve disputes and customary violations. In general, LPHAL will be held when someone files a case, usually involving disputes between individuals or between ships. When a case report cannot be resolved through ordinary deliberation, a trial will be held and organized by LPHAL.

Integration and strengthening of marine elements: The opportunities to utilize maritime local values

Local wisdom plays a crucial role in development, extending beyond economic, social and cultural dimensions to encompass the realization of security and stability in coastal, rural, and mountainous regions. It offers valuable insights and solutions for sustainable development. Consequently, addressing various challenges requires incorporating local values to optimally harness indigenous potential.

The customary maritime values that the *panglima laot* institution upholds can be integrated into contemporary frameworks, serving as a traditional mechanism to mitigate drug smuggling activities. The current maritime security system, which predominantly relies on state-based enforcement, faces significant limitations. This underscores the importance of combining conventional maritime surveillance with local wisdom through the *panglima laot* institution. The vastness and openness of maritime territories present formidable challenges for drug control efforts. Constraints in human resources and surveillance technology limit the effectiveness of physical patrols by ships and aircraft. These geographical conditions enable smugglers to exploit alternative routes to evade detection. Moreover, traditional surveillance methods, often dependent on routine patrols and manual inspections, struggle to identify small or fast-moving vessels involved in narcotics trafficking.

Empirical data indicate that drug smuggling primarily occurs via smuggling routes that often elude detection by port authorities, police, and other law enforcement agencies. These smuggling routes are well-known to local fishermen and, by customary rights, fall within the territorial domain of fishermen and the *panglima laot*. Narcotics trafficking is recognized as a form of transnational organized crime involving international networks.

According to *panglima laot* Nasir, many coastal zones remain deserted, facilitating illicit activities. The expansive maritime area of East Aceh, coupled with numerous smuggling routes directly connecting to foreign countries such as Malaysia and Thailand, poses significant challenges in curbing the influx of drugs through these waters. Therefore, integrating local wisdom into drug interdiction efforts is logical and necessary. Customary elements should be coordinated and embedded within legal frameworks that govern all stakeholders and maritime communities.

The customary maritime value known as *khanduri laot* holds significant potential to be integrated into the customary system to curb drug infiltration. The *khanduri laot* ceremony is a unifying event that gathers all maritime stakeholders, making it an ideal platform to reinforce and evaluate customary laws. During this event, the *panglima laot* delivers the *khutbah laot* (ocean sermons), which focuses on strengthening customary law, maritime traditions, and the *meupayang* law. As a traditional leader, the *panglima laot* can address the issue of drug smuggling within the *khanduri laot*, highlighting the detrimental effects of drug abuse that threaten to undermine all facets of life, including the enduring customs and traditions of the sea. Drawing on Durkheim's perspective, these rituals restore social cohesion, reduce conflict among community members, and reinforce social bonds (Abdullah, 2014).

According to Panglima Birul, drug-related issues have traditionally fallen outside the scope of customary law, being primarily under the jurisdiction of formal legal authorities such as the police. However, the police can strategically position the *panglima laot* as a spokesperson for anti-drug campaigns targeting fishermen. The *khanduri laot* provides a timely forum to discuss contemporary issues outside customary regulation. Consequently, threats to customary life, such as drug smuggling, should be incorporated into the category of customary violations. This inclusion would reinforce the belief that breaching customs brings misfortune and disrupts other long-held traditions.

Beyond *khanduri laot*, the *hukom meupayang* extends *meupayang* law, which governs fishermen's practices concerning the division of fishing areas, fishing methods, and the allocation of catches. This customary law framework could be expanded to encompass drug prevention measures. Since smuggling occurs at sea, fishermen inevitably encounter these illicit activities. Most smugglers act as couriers from both domestic and international origins. Therefore, the legal framework could be broadened to include customary sanctions against fishermen proven to be complicit in smuggling. Such sanctions could involve formal legal penalties and customary punishments, such as permanent exclusion from the fishing community by customary decree.

The *panglima laot*, as the customary maritime leader, holds the traditional authority to regulate ship unloading activities, particularly for vessels originating outside the customary jurisdiction. In practice, all external vessels carrying fishery products must report to the local *panglima laot* as a sign of respect for marine governance rooted in local wisdom. This protocol mandates that any ship operating beyond the *laot* customary area must notify the local *panglima laot* before unloading its catch. Such a mechanism embodies deeply ingrained cultural values and represents a strategic form of social capital that can be leveraged for community-based maritime surveillance. This customary authority has the potential to effectively curb illegal activities, including the pervasive issue of drug smuggling in Aceh's territorial waters, by complementing formal state security systems with localized community oversight.

Moreover, the prevention of drug smuggling can be enhanced through integrating and strengthening maritime security components. As noted by Prasetyo et al. (2019), maritime security encompasses efforts to maintain safety and security at sea, which are critical to a nation's welfare and survival.

The necessity of maritime security is underscored by several key factors: (a) sovereignty, ensuring the protection and control of a country's maritime territory through surveillance and law enforcement against violations; (b) economic prosperity, the sea as a vital natural resource requires safeguarding to sustain economic activities by preventing theft and smuggling (Keliat, 2009); (c) shipping safety, maintaining safe navigation through traffic monitoring and disaster mitigation; and (d) international cooperation, collaborative efforts among maritime nations in law enforcement, surveillance, and disaster management to uphold maritime security.

In Acehnese society, several maritime security institutions play pivotal roles. First, the Marine Security Agency (*Badan Koordinasi Keamanan Laut—Bakamla*), established in 2014, is tasked with guarding, supervising, preventing, and prosecuting maritime law violations within Indonesian waters through security and safety patrols. Second, the Water and Air Police Unit of the Indonesian National Police is responsible for monitoring, preventing, and enforcing laws in Indonesian waters and airspace. Third, as a branch of the National Armed Forces, the Indonesian Navy operates strategically to ensure maritime security. Finally, the *Syahbandar*, an official responsible for regulating and supervising port activities, plays a critical role in maritime drug prevention by overseeing port operations to curb drug smuggling via sea routes.

Conversely, this situation may result in overlapping authorities and tensions between customary institutions and state agencies, potentially giving rise to new conflicts of

interest. For instance, the authority to dismantle vessels is closely linked to the withholding of catch taxes at the Fish Auction Center (*Tempat Pelelangan Ikan—TPI*). However, such conflicts can be mitigated by implementing several strategic measures. First, developing collaborative regulations, or co-management frameworks, is essential. These joint regulations should delineate the division of authority between state institutions and the traditional institution of *panglima laot*. These regulations must be formulated through open dialogue forums that engage all relevant stakeholders to foster mutual understanding.

Second, establishing a cross-agency coordination forum that convenes regularly to discuss the operation of the Fish Auction Center, including tax collection mechanisms and vessel monitoring, is crucial. This forum would also serve as a mediation platform to resolve disputes and prevent escalation preemptively. Third, a transparent tax-sharing mechanism should be instituted to ensure the equitable distribution of tax revenues based on each party's contribution. Transparency and public dissemination of this mechanism are vital to avoid suspicion and dissatisfaction. Fourth, formalizing cooperation through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between institutions responsible for vessel dismantling and tax collection will provide a legal foundation for sustained collaboration. Finally, strengthening the capacity of customary institutions through targeted training in financial management, tax administration, and legal frameworks will enable customary leaders to engage professionally in managing fish auction operations.

Comprehensive socialization efforts are necessary to inform the community about each party's roles, thereby fostering support for integration and minimizing conflict. Collectively, these measures can reduce overlapping authorities and promote harmonious synergy between the formal state security apparatus and the local wisdom embodied by *panglima laot* in safeguarding maritime areas from drug smuggling and other illicit activities.

Hierarchically, within the Aceh government system, *panglima laot* functions as a customary institution that facilitates community participation in maintaining security and order, and in resolving social issues through customary law. This role is formally recognized under Article 98 of Law No. 11/2006. Among the officially acknowledged *adat* institutions, *panglima laot* holds a status equivalent to that of other customary bodies, such as the Aceh Customary Council, *imeum mukim*, and *Keuchik*. This recognition affirms that *panglima laot's* authority is both cultural and juridical, legitimizing its integration within the local government framework. As a customary institution special-

izing in the marine sector, *panglima laot* collaborates closely with marine and fisheries agencies to effectively manage and conserve marine and fisheries resources.

The integration of customary values into supervisory mechanisms can be effectively employed by various stakeholders, including those involved in maritime security, to enhance oversight of smuggling activities, which remain prevalent in Aceh waters, particularly in East Aceh. According to an interview with Cut Ida Mariya, Head of the East Aceh Marine and Fisheries Service, East Aceh has established a community-based monitoring system known as the Community Supervisory Group (*Kelompok Pengawas Masyarakat-Pokmaswas*) within the marine and fisheries sector. This group was formally established under the Decree of the Head of the Aceh Marine and Fisheries Service No. 523/2590/5/2022. A primary objective of forming *pokmaswas* is to integrate the *panglima laot* institution into Aceh's marine and fisheries resource monitoring framework. Specifically, *pokmaswas* aims to enhance *panglima laot lhok's* participation as a community monitoring group that supports the Aceh government's efforts to oversee marine and fisheries resources.

Pokmaswas functions as an ex-officio management body of *panglima laot lhok*, tasked with reporting suspected violations in the fisheries sector to fisheries supervisors or law enforcement authorities. In violations caught in *flagrante delicto*, *pokmaswas* is authorized to apprehend offenders. Additionally, *pokmaswas* actively participates in monitoring operations conducted by government agencies and institutions. Through these roles, *pokmaswas* play a critical function in the marine sector, including assisting in supervising resource utilization and management, supporting government outreach to communities and business actors to ensure regulatory compliance, facilitating coordination between stakeholders and government authorities regarding potential violations, and aiding in the enforcement of legal provisions.

The existence and operationalization of *pokmaswas* demonstrate the significant potential of local customary values in reducing maritime smuggling. This underscores the opportunity to expand the *panglima laot's* role to include supervision of smuggling activities. Relevant government departments and agencies could promulgate joint regulations to formalize this role, thereby establishing an ex-officio supervisory function for *panglima laot* as indigenous community representatives. Such regulatory frameworks represent a tangible step toward integrating indigenous elements into a comprehensive maritime security system.

Supporting this perspective, Maya, Head of the Prevention and Community Empowerment Sub-coordinator at the National Narcotics Agency (*Badan Narkotika Nasional*—

BNN) in Langsa City, emphasized the potential of integrating customary values into efforts to monitor and prevent drug smuggling at sea. She stated,

We have collaborated with local traditional authorities and recognize the value of the *laot* customs and the customary system upheld by *panglima laot*. There is significant potential for cooperation. All relevant departments and units can coordinate to embed customary values within a coordinated security framework. This collaboration with customary institutions is expected to enhance the effectiveness of drug smuggling prevention efforts.

Integrating local wisdom-based surveillance systems with formal state-led surveillance mechanisms offers a robust approach to preventing drug smuggling, particularly because the traditional institution of *panglima laot* has an intimate understanding of local conditions. Coastal communities possess extensive knowledge and experience of their geographical features, weather patterns, ocean currents, and maritime traffic. This indigenous expertise enables the early detection of suspicious activities that may elude conventional state apparatuses.

Moreover, such integration enhances the overall surveillance network by incorporating customary maritime institutions into formal monitoring frameworks. This inclusion broadens the scope and intensity of surveillance in coastal and small-water areas that are often inaccessible to official patrols. Local communities effectively serve as supplementary “eyes and ears” for security forces, facilitating rapid reporting of suspicious activities. Additionally, integrating local wisdom fosters trust between state authorities and local populations. Community support is vital for the success of surveillance operations, as individuals are more likely to cooperate when they perceive their contributions as valued.

Conventional surveillance systems frequently lack sensitivity to local cultural norms, which can provoke resistance or conflict. By embedding local wisdom, surveillance strategies can be culturally attuned, enhancing effectiveness without compromising social harmony. This cultural adaptation allows supervision methods to be tailored to the specific social context. Finally, integration improves resource efficiency; exclusive reliance on official patrols demands substantial resources, whereas community involvement through local wisdom enables more efficient use of resources and expands surveillance coverage.

Integrating local wisdom-based surveillance with formal state systems represents a strategic advancement in strengthening maritime drug smuggling prevention. This

hybrid approach leverages the strengths of traditional knowledge alongside the capabilities of formal institutions, thereby enhancing detection efficacy and fostering social synergies that underpin the sustainability of drug eradication efforts.

The *panglima laot* institution has strategic potential to combat drug trafficking through several key mechanisms. First, it fosters social structures and community trust. With its strong social authority among Aceh's fishing communities, *panglima laot* can leverage public trust to establish community-based information networks, conduct social surveillance for suspicious activities along the coast, and mobilize active community participation to prevent drug trafficking. Second, it facilitates social control mechanisms. As a customary institution, *panglima laot* operates an effective informal supervision system that monitors maritime traffic, reports suspicious activities to relevant authorities, and establishes security posts in vulnerable coastal zones. Third, it implements prevention strategies grounded in local wisdom. Such culturally informed approaches tend to be more effective than purely repressive measures. *panglima laot* can utilize customary sanction systems, organize culturally sensitive awareness campaigns on the dangers of drugs, and empower youth within the fishing community as agents of prevention. Fourth, it coordinates with formal law enforcement agencies. It is a strategic partner in marine intelligence, a source of community-based information, and a communication conduit between local populations and official authorities.

Integrating the *panglima laot* institution into the formal national defense system, alongside strengthening its institutional governance, represents a transformative step toward adaptive resilience. As a component of social capital infrastructure, *panglima laot*'s embedded social networks provide intrinsic mechanisms for information dissemination and social control through collective action. Its strategic potential in drug trafficking prevention is evident in the development of information networks grounded in existing community trust and in the establishment of community-based early warning systems. Furthermore, incorporating drug trafficking prevention into customary law frameworks by developing social sanctions within maritime communities and utilizing mechanisms such as the culture of shame and collective accountability enhances the institution's effectiveness.

Moreover, adaptive governance models offer opportunities to reframe traditional regulatory mechanisms to address emerging maritime security challenges. Collaborative governance frameworks can formalize coordination between *panglima laot* and official maritime security agencies, establishing integrated maritime surveillance protocols. Given its substantial social and cultural capital, *panglima laot* is well-positioned to

contribute meaningfully to the complex challenges of maritime security, particularly in combating drug trafficking. An integrative approach that respects and incorporates local wisdom will be critical to the success of this strategy. Consequently, *panglima laot* transcends its historical role as a customary maritime authority to become a strategic partner in addressing contemporary maritime security issues.

Local wisdom is a proactive response to mitigate the adverse effects of globalization. This perspective supports the notion that drug smuggling by sea in East Aceh can be effectively curtailed by strategically utilizing local values. Given that drug smuggling constitutes both a global phenomenon and a transnational crime, local wisdom must embody prudent principles and ethical values (Ilham et al., 2021). Consequently, such wisdom can serve as a normative framework to guide human behavior away from harmful actions. According to Mungmachon, as cited in Rahma, the defining characteristics of local wisdom include (1) the incorporation of virtuous knowledge that imparts ethical and moral teachings, (2) the promotion of respect and care for nature, discouraging its destruction, and (3) the transmission of wisdom from elder community members (Rahma, 2022; Zainal et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Drs. Gun Siswadi, M.Si, Head of the Deputy for Prevention at the National Narcotics Agency (BNN), highlights that cultural arts approaches offer an effective and engaging medium for disseminating information about drug-related issues to the public. Such enjoyable methods facilitate better public comprehension and retention (Humas BNN, 2012).

Conclusion

This study elucidates how maritime local wisdom, particularly the institution of *panglima laot* in East Aceh, Indonesia, can be strategically integrated into contemporary maritime security frameworks to combat drug smuggling. The research yields three principal findings. First, the traditional maritime governance system in East Aceh, centered on *panglima laot*, encompasses a comprehensive framework of customs (*adat laot*), customary laws (*hukom adat laot*), and institutional mechanisms (*lembaga persidangan hukom adat laot*) that have historically regulated maritime activities and maintained social order within coastal communities. This indigenous system constitutes a resilient form of social capital that has endured across generations. Second, there is substantial potential to leverage these traditional institutions and practices in modern maritime security initiatives. The study identifies specific avenues for integration, notably through *khanduri laot* (traditional maritime ceremonies) and by expanding *meupayang* law to include provi-

sions against drug smuggling. This finding contributes to broader theoretical discourses on the role of traditional institutions in addressing contemporary governance challenges. Third, the research demonstrates the feasibility of establishing an integrated maritime security framework that harmonizes state authority with traditional governance systems. The successful implementation of Community Supervisory Groups exemplifies a promising model for the formal integration of traditional authorities, such as *panglima laot*, into maritime security mechanisms.

These findings carry significant implications for maritime security governance policy and practice. They suggest that effective responses to transnational maritime crimes, such as drug smuggling, require the harmonization of formal state institutions with traditional local systems. This study contributes to the expanding literature on hybrid governance models in maritime security and provides practical insights applicable to other coastal regions confronting similar challenges. Future research should explore the mechanisms for effectively integrating traditional maritime institutions into formal security frameworks while preserving their cultural integrity and social legitimacy. Comparative analyses across diverse coastal contexts could further elucidate best practices for leveraging traditional maritime governance in addressing contemporary security issues.

In summary, this research highlights the enduring relevance of traditional maritime institutions and their potential contributions to modern security challenges. The pathway to effective maritime security governance lies in the thoughtful integration of traditional and contemporary systems.

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Povzetek

Članek raziskuje možnost uporabe staroselske morske védnosti za boj proti tihotapljenju drog po morskih poteh v Acehu v Indoneziji. Ta regija se zadnja leta sooča z resnimi težavami, ki so povezane s trgovino z drogo, na kar kažejo številni večji zasegi med leti 2022 in 2023. Raziskava se posebej osredotoča na vključevanje tradicionalnih pomorskih institucij, s poudarkom na sistemu panglima laot, v sodobne okvire pomorske varnosti. Uporablja kvalitativno metodologijo, kot so opazovanje z udeležbo in poglobljeni intervjuji z enajstimi ključnimi sogovorkami in sogovorci, vključno s tradicionalnimi voditelji, ribiči in vladnimi predstavniki. Izsledki kažejo, da je mogoče tradicionalne pomorske prakse, kot so khanduri laot (morski rituali), hukom adat laot (običajno morsko pravo) in meupayang law (ribiška pravila), prilagoditi za krepitev prizadevanj na področju boja proti trgovini z drogo. Članek predlaga inovativen model pomorske varnosti s sinergijo omenjenih avtohtonih elementov s formalnimi varnostnimi organi prek skupnih regulativnih mehanizmov in usklajenih nadzornih sistemov. Prav tako tudi prispeva k širši razpravi o lokalnih sistemih védenja in njihove uporabe za premoščanje sodobnih varnostnih izzivov na morju, ter nenazadnje ponuja dragocene vpoglede za oblikovalce politik, kot tudi tiste, ki delujejo v obalnih regijah in se soočajo s podobnimi problemi.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: pomorska varnost, lokalna védnost, trgovina z drogami, tradicionalne institucije, obalne skupnosti

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