

8 Cultural Resistance to Shariatism in Aceh

Reza Idria

1 Introduction

In this contribution I will analyse some forms of cultural resistance to Sharia in Acehnese society, but it is impossible to talk about the roots of the implementation of Sharia¹ in contemporary Aceh, a province situated in the western part of the Indonesian archipelago, without referring to the political situation in Indonesia after the fall of General Suharto. Political turbulence brought to an end the New Order government – the longest ruling regime in the modern history of Southeast Asia – on 21 May 1998. The dramatic resignation of Suharto, followed by the independence of Timor Leste, caused a serious challenge to the unity of the Republic. Some provinces also demanded referenda (on either remaining in the Republic or becoming fully independent), and these included Aceh, Papua, Banten, Maluku and Riau.

In Aceh, soon after the collapse of the Suharto regime, a series of demonstrations took place demanding a referendum to further their desire for secession from the Republic.² A separatist group, the Free

- 1 Sharia is an Arabic term, literally meaning 'path to water' and in the religious sense (Islam) means 'duty to God'. Cf. M.B. Hooker, *Indonesian Syariah: Defining a National School of Islamic Law* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2008), ix. Sharia normally refers to legal practices or living law as a sort of Islamic way of life on the basis of two main sources in Islam, the Qur'an and the Hadith. However, the formulation of Sharia differs from one Muslim country to another. In the context of Aceh, Sharia can be an ambiguous term, pertaining to (1) Sharia in the normal sense, i.e. Islamic law; and (2) Sharia in the sense of the government's policy and regulations in relation to religious matters. The Sharia resistance that is the focus of this chapter mainly contests the second term. In short, the resistance to Sharia discussed here is not resistance to Islam and Sharia as such, but rather resistance to the authority's interpretation and tasks in formulating regional regulations, which they label as Sharia and in accordance with Islamic teachings.
- 2 It was on 8 November 1992 that two million Acehnese gathered in front of Masjid Raya Baiturrahman, Banda Aceh, to demand a referendum for Aceh. Led by several associations of Acehnese student activists and SIRA (Centre of Information

Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM), gained popularity.³ Since the arrival of the *Reformasi* era throughout Indonesia in 1998, GAM had been increasing its rebellious activities in many parts of Aceh. Needless to say, the GAM soldiers had much to benefit from in the unstable political situation at the national level. A series of guerilla attacks on the Indonesian army, as well as massive propaganda about the coming era of independence in Aceh, promoted its cause. The loss of Timor Leste after the referendum forced the government of Indonesia to find another 'soft' solution. The central government thus avoided the options of either accepting the Acehnese demand for the referendum or again using military oppression to tackle the Aceh case.⁴ Neither option would provide benefits to the central government at that time. In particular, the first option could trigger similar demands from other regions. Jakarta might also consider that nearly every Acehnese was strongly against the government and supported GAM at that moment. Therefore, religious identity, which is historically and culturally central to the Acehnese, became a valuable asset to be exploited by the Indonesian government, just as the first Indonesian president, Sukarno, used it to suppress the Acehnese rebellion in 1960s.⁵ Understanding the political situation, both

for the Aceh Referendum), this provocative action forced the central government in Jakarta to take advanced steps to reduce potential chaos.

- 3 The Free Aceh Movement (GAM), also known as the Aceh Sumatera National Liberation Front (ASNLF), was declared by Hasan Muhammad di Tiro in 1976. About the early formation of this rebellious movement see Hasan Muhammad di Tiro, *The Unfinished Diary of Tgk. Hasan Tiro*, (ASNLF, 1981); see also Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion 1989–1992* (Ithaca: Cornell Indonesian Modern Project, 1995). For a comprehensive study about the conflict and the roots of the peace process in Aceh after the tsunami of 2004 see Anthony Reid, *Verandah of Violence, the Background to the Aceh Problem* (NUS Publishing & Seattle: Singapore University Press & University of Washington Press, 2006).
- 4 In order to quash the GAM rebellion, Suharto declared Aceh to be a Military Operation Zone (DOM). During this period (1989–1998), some regions of Aceh such as Pidie, Aceh Utara (North Aceh) and Aceh Timur (East Aceh) became mass killing fields. Thousands of people were killed, raped and tortured. See Al-Chaidar, *Aceh Bersimbah Darah: Mengungkap Penerapan Status Daerah Operasi Militer (DOM) di Aceh 1989–1998* (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 1998). Later on, President Megawati was responsible for human rights violations in the region after she declared martial law in the province of Aceh in 2003.
- 5 As in 1953, Aceh started to confront the Indonesian government. Teungku Daud Beureueh led the struggle and declared Aceh to be part of the Darul Islam or Negara Islam Indonesia (the Indonesian Islamic State) under the Imam SM Kartosoewiryo. The conflict ended after Sukarno offered Aceh special status, including local government rights to implement Islamic law. See Nazaruddin

in the past and the present, will lead us to understand why some Acehnese Muslims are now fighting against 'Islamic law'.

To understand why the Sharia proposal became an integral part of the response to the political situation in Aceh, particularly after the fall of Suharto, one must look closely at the activities of the Free Aceh Movement during the war. Although many researchers argue that GAM had already been transformed into a non-religious movement,⁶ it was clear at the time of conflict that many local GAM combatants tried to convince the people of Aceh that their struggle was a struggle along the path of God (*jihad fi sabilillah*), one that sought to bring a victory for Islam in Aceh.⁷ It was important for GAM to reject being labelled as an Islamic separatist group if they wanted to gain international support; however, at the local level they needed Islam to gain adherents. It is evident that the contradiction and ambiguity of GAM propaganda were taken into consideration by the central government when formulating a counter-strategy to delegitimise the rebellion.

Thus, the central government proposed a special approach to the province of Aceh. The government first issued Law (UU) No. 44/1999 on the special status of the province of Aceh, concerning religion, *adat* (custom) and education. This was followed two years later by the issue of Law UU No. 18/2001. The latter granted special autonomy to Aceh and allowed Sharia to be implemented.⁸ These new regulations granted

Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: a Study of the Acehnese Rebellion* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985). See also C. van Dijk, *Rebellion under the Banner of Islam: the Darul Islam in Indonesia* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1981).

- 6 About the notion of transformation of the rebellious movement see for example Edward Aspinall, *Islam and Nation: Separatist Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia* (California: Stanford University Press, 2009); see also Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM), Anatomy of a Separatist Organization* (Washington DC: East-West Center, 2004). The European-based GAM leaders, mainly in Sweden and Norway, objected to the use of the terms Islam and jihad and showed hesitance about applying Sharia law in Aceh. Most of them used terms such as 'historical consciousness' (*kesadaran sejarah*) or 'historical duty' (*tugas sejarah*), if asked about the spirit behind the struggle for independence. However, according to some interviews I conducted prior to the Helsinki Peace Agreement, many local combatants stressed in public their convictions about jihad and a victory for Islam as goals of independence.
- 7 However, one could also argue that the form of jihad as understood by GAM differs from the Acehnese jihad that was waged against the Dutch during the colonial era. About this notion see for example James T. Siegel, 'The Curse of the Photograph: Atjeh 1901', *Indonesia*, no. 80 (October, 2005), 21–38.
- 8 See Taufik Adnan Amal and Samsu Rizal Panggabean, *Politik Syariat Islam dari*

broader powers to the provincial government to implement the so-called 'comprehensive Islamic Law' or Sharia (*Syari'at Islam*) and the special right to establish a Sharia court (*Mahkamah Syari'ah*) and the Official Department of Sharia (*Dinas Syari'at Islam*). It also changed the name of the province from Aceh to Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam. According to some local elites, the new name sounds more Islamic, peaceful and independent. Unfortunately, these new regulations and status contributed nothing to stopping the conflict.

2 Sharia for a Decade: A View from Within

Since 2001, Sharia and the indefatigable conflict between Aceh and Jakarta have been intertwined. However, according to many Acehnese, God eventually sent his hand to stop the war.⁹ The earthquakes and tsunami on 26 December 2004 changed the political situation in the region. On 15 August 2005, in Helsinki, Finland, the Free Aceh Movement and the Indonesian government signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU), ending one of the bloodiest conflicts in Southeast Asia. Damien Kingsbury wrote a chronological story of the peace process in Helsinki, describing the negotiations round by round. It shows clearly that there was no talk about Sharia.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the implementation of Sharia, although it did not significantly contribute to ending the conflict, had already been promulgated in the Undang-undang Pemerintahan Aceh/UUPA (the Law on Aceh Governance) after the Helsinki proposal. The central government legalised the UUPA on the basis of Law UU No. 11/2006. Broadly speaking, after the Helsinki MoU and the enforcement of the Law on Aceh Governance (UUPA), Sharia was handed over to the Acehnese provincial government. The central government transferred a 'tool' to the local authorities.

Meanwhile, the tsunami recovery process and the peace in Aceh attracted an international presence to the region. Interestingly, the first

Indonesia sampai Nigeria, (Jakarta: Pustaka Alvabet, 2004), 26–29. According to Law No. 18/2001, special autonomy for Aceh includes redistribution of revenues, reformation of the government structures and Islamic law.

9 See my work 'Muslim Theological Perspectives on Natural Disasters: The Case of Indonesian Earthquakes and Tsunami of 2004', MA Thesis submitted to Leiden University, 2010.

10 Damien Kingsbury was GAM's political adviser during the peace talks in Helsinki, Finland. See Damien Kingsbury, 'The Aceh Peace Process', in Arndt Graf et al., *Aceh: History, Politics and Culture* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2010), 135–156.

public caning took place in 2006, but it did not draw international attention to the consequences of the implementation of Sharia. Conflict resolution and disaster management preoccupied the minds of people as reconstruction and rehabilitation were underway. Reports about Aceh in local and international media were dominated by news concerning peace-keeping, reconstruction progress and aid transparency. Arguably, Sharia was not an interesting issue for the mass media at that time.¹¹ Moreover, Irwandi Yusuf and Muhammad Nazar had been elected to become the new governor and vice-governor of Aceh. Both are known for their 'secular' background, especially Irwandi Yusuf who was a former GAM spokesman. Both men are very much in line with international GAM leaders and their political views, which meant that neither had a particular interest in promulgating Sharia.¹² Following the peace agreement, the Free Aceh Movement was transformed into a local party, Partai Aceh (PA, The Aceh Party). However, the situation changed soon after many international NGOs left Aceh. The Sharia police, popularly known as WH (*Wilayatul Hisbah*), announced their presence with wholesale arrests of those violating Sharia regulations (*qanun*).¹³ They carried out intensive raids on the so-called 'suspect locales', secluded places such as beaches, cafés and hotels. This was followed by the issue of various prohibitions of public conduct that, according to the authorities, are incompatible with Sharia, such as celebrating New Year's Eve, public entertainment, and more. Acehnese women are obliged to wear the *jilbab* (headscarf) and are prohibited from wearing tight dresses.

The abuse of Sharia and its relation to the politics of Jakarta can also be traced back to when the Aceh Party won the general election in 2009. Shortly before leaving the parliament building, the members of the outgoing Aceh representative council (DPRD Aceh) – members of national political parties such as Golkar, PDI-P, PKS and PPP (as opposed to local parties including PA) – passed a draft of the *Qanun Jinayah* or the Islamic Penal Law. This law includes stoning to death for those

11 I have made initial studies of the archives of *Serambi Indonesia*, a daily Acehnese newspaper from 2005 to 2007. It is difficult to find news concerning Sharia affairs during the time of the disaster. News about the disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction dominated.

12 Moch Nur Ichwan, 'Official Ulama and Politics of Re-Islamisation: The Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama, Shari'atisation and Contested Religious Authority in Post-New Order's Aceh', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 22:2 (2011), 204.

13 According to the Aceh Sharia qanun, public caning is the punishment for those who commit the following acts: *khalwat* (sexual retreat), *maisir* (gambling), *khamar* (alcohol consumption). After the issue of UU No. 11/2011, all the Acehnese government's regulations are considered qanun.

who commit adultery and 100 lashes for homosexuality. However, this regulation has been postponed because the governor, Irwandi Yusuf, has refused to sign the *qanun*. However, according to the autonomy regulations, at the provincial level Irwandi Yusuf has no right to intervene in Sharia policy as it is applied by regents.

There have been human rights abuses by Sharia officers and regional government officers within Aceh province. For example, two members of the Sharia police raped and tortured a 20-year-old female student they had in custody on 15 July 2010. Furthermore, there are regents who have started to apply controversial regulations in their own regions. As an example, Ramli ms, the regent of West Aceh, issued a *qanun* forbidding women to wear jeans and 'tight' clothing.¹⁴ Thus, Muslim women in West Aceh have been required to wear full-body clothing which does not reveal their figures and only shows their face and palms. Another 'strange' regulation was issued by the regent of South Aceh, Husein Yusuf. Oddly, he has prohibited male civil servants from having beards.¹⁵ Since then, local and international media and human rights-based NGOs have started to report abuses in relation to the administration of Sharia in Aceh.¹⁶

Sharia has now been implemented for a decade. Its dynamic appears in the ongoing process of the regulations, some of which we have just mentioned. I should thank many researchers who have already provided critical studies concerning the background of the imposition of Sharia in contemporary Aceh; works such as those by Amal and Panggabean (2003);¹⁷ Kingsbury (2007);¹⁸ Feener and Cammack (2007);¹⁹ Salim

14 The regulation was issued on 27 May 2010 and applied in West Aceh only. At the provincial level, the *qanun* about Muslim dress was issued in 2002 where Article No. 13 only stated that every Muslim should wear Islamic dress. The explanation of Article No. 13 further states that Islamic dress should cover the *aurat*, not be transparent and not be sensual. There is no subsection that jeans and trousers are forbidden.

15 *Serambi Indonesia*, 12 May 2010. Husin Yusuf never explained why he said so. He only told the media that 'we are not living in Iran, we are Indonesian Muslims'.

16 See for example Human Rights Watch, 'Policing Morality: Abuses in the Application of Sharia in Aceh, Indonesia', HRW report 2010, 4 December 2010.

17 Taufik Adnan Amal and Samsu Rizal Panggabean, *Politik Syariat Islam dari Indonesia sampai Nigeria* (Jakarta: Pustaka Alvabet), 2004.

18 Damien Kingsbury, 'The Free Aceh Movement: Islam and Democratization', *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 37:2 (2007), 166–189.

19 R. Michael Feener and Mark E. Cammack (eds.), *Islamic Law in Contemporary Indonesia: Ideas and Institutions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Islamic Legal Studies Program, Harvard Law School & Harvard University Press, 2007).

(2008);²⁰ Aspinall (2009);²¹ Ramli (2010);²² Basri (2011);²³ and Ichwan (2011).²⁴ Most of the aforementioned studies have, more or less, indicated how Sharia became a 'means' of quelling separatist sentiment.

However, in spite of the works of these scholars there are still many stories left, many accounts to be analysed and many findings to be discussed concerning the ongoing processes of Sharia in Aceh. The introductions of many of the aforementioned studies have focused on the legal issue of Sharia in Aceh. Only a few examine how ordinary Acehnese perceive Sharia, as Moch Nur Ichwan notes:

Despite growing Shari'atization processes, however, some developments indicate otherwise. There have been also growing resistances from "progressive circles" such as some Muslim politicians (especially, but not exclusively, ex-GAM), public intellectuals, academics (especially, but not exclusively, of the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) Ar-Raniry), feminists, queer activists, Shi'ite intellectuals, literary writers, and human rights activists.²⁵

According to Ichwan, this reality has so far been neglected by many researchers. In his own study, Ichwan tries to conceptualise types of Sharia resistance as an 'alternative voice to shariatization' in Aceh. Modes of Acehnese resistance to Sharia may vary by education, political views, region, gender and personal disposition.

Ichwan pays attention to intellectual and religious-based group activities when challenging Sharia, which leaves some aspects still unexplored. Here I attempt to provide a more in-depth account of how individuals of less powerful, vulnerable and cultural groups in Aceh respond to the ongoing processes of Sharia, mainly in their daily and

20 Arskal Salim, *Challenging the Secular State: The Islamization of Law in Modern Indonesia* (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 2008).

21 Edward Aspinall, *Islam and Nation: Separatist Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia* (California: Stanford University Press, 2009).

22 Affan Ramli, *Merajam Dalil Syariat* (Banda Aceh: Bandar Publishing, 2010).

23 Hasan Basri, 'Applying Islamic Law (Syari'at) in Aceh: A Perspective from Within', in Arndt Graf et al., *Aceh: History, Politics and Culture* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2010), 265–286.

24 Ichwan, 'Official Ulama and Politics of Re-Islamisation', 183–214.

25 Moch Nur Ichwan, 'Alternative Voices to Officialized and Totalized Shariatism in Aceh', a research in progress report (2010) presented at the IRP meeting, the Netherlands Embassy, Jakarta, 30 May 2011. I offer my sincere and special thanks to Dr Nur Ichwan for fruitful discussions before exploring the topic of this research.

cultural activities. By closely examining the Acehese people's activities, I will analyse some forms of cultural resistance to Sharia in Acehese society, particularly in Banda Aceh. For example, I believe that the Sharia authority, the Aceh ulama council, and the local government of Aceh often prohibit things that, according to them, are incompatible with Acehese culture and Islamic culture ('*tidak sesuai dengan kebudayaan Aceh dan kebudayaan Islam*'). Within the confines of this study, I would like to examine how some Acehese people respond to and challenge such prohibitions.

According to social theorists, cultural resistance is the practice of using meanings and symbols to combat a dominant power. The term resistance covers a wide variety of forms of collective actions and may take a defensive form, such as concealment and including the ambiguous form of mimicry, which from above may be read as a mistake, but viewed from below looks more like mockery. In this case, the strategy adopted is 'defensive', 'subversion rather than confrontation'.²⁶ Moreover, F. Bailey coined modes of resistance such as 'pilfering, feigned ignorance, sabotage, arson, wangling, fiddling, and dodging'.²⁷ Although I will pay no attention to groups of peasants or workers in Aceh in this paper, James C. Scott's concept of 'weapons of the weak' is helpful in understanding how daily resistance has been expressed by less powerful people.²⁸ All these concepts are fundamental for this study.

3 Resistance to Sharia: An Overview

It is important to note that nearly all Acehese are afraid of being labelled as 'anti-Sharia'.²⁹ However, from the very beginning, some elements of Acehese society have shown their disapproval of the central government proposal to apply Islamic law in Aceh. Prior to the tsunami of 2004, opponents of Sharia could be categorised into two main groups, each with different purposes. The first is a group that was dominated by the traditional Dayah (Islamic Boarding Schools)-based Ulama, including Waled Nu, one of the influential Acehese Muslim scholars who called the proposal on Sharia '*cari 'ab*' (an Acehese word literally meaning

26 Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory: Second Edition* (Cambridge-Malden: Polity Press, 2007), 91–92.

27 F.G. Bailey, *The Kingdom of Individuals* (New York-Ithaca, 1993), 17.

28 James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

29 Ichwan, 'Alternative Voices to Officialized and Totalized Shariatism in Aceh', 5.

'looking for a meal') or '*tipu Jakarta*', a deception by Jakarta, and only intended to ignore the Acehnese.³⁰ In a seminar I attended, Waled Nu or Tgk. Nuruzzahri, a leading figure of the Himpunan Ulama Dayah Aceh/HUDA (Association of Acehnese Dayah Ulama) criticised Jakarta's policy in his speech in front of the Aceh civil society networks at the Sultan Hotel, Banda Aceh, 17 June 2007. He spoke of 'cari'ab' and refused to use the word 'Sharia' to denote the formalisation of Islamic law in Aceh. Furthermore, the HUDA also criticised the government's version of Sharia for being only a partial understanding of Islamic law. In short, if Jakarta had any interest in showing goodwill, it would allow for a comprehensive Islamic law, one which is total and not partial, called *Syariat Islam Kaffah*. However, according to the HUDA, the government did the opposite and therefore it rejected the government's version of Sharia.³¹

The second group comprised various elements but shared the same view regarding the government's proposal. They were politicians (mainly GAM leaders), human rights activists and university intellectuals who saw the implementation of Sharia as a political tool of the government to create conflict among the Acehnese. For example, according to Nur Djuli, a senior leader of GAM, Aceh had become a centre of Islamic teaching throughout Indonesia. It is ironic then that the Indonesian government was now trying to 're-Islamise' Aceh. Djuli argued that this special status was only a government tactic to win the hearts of the Acehnese. Moreover, Djuli said that GAM made no attempt to establish an Islamic state. Ideologically, GAM was motivated by historical consciousness and GAM's struggle is based on the idea of independence, not religious issues.³²

For some Acehnese human rights activists, Sharia is a government policy used to conceal the human rights violations of the past.³³ While it is said that professors at IAIN Ar-Raniry and the University of Syiah Kuala were involved in designing the Sharia regulations, others, including intellectuals at a number of other Aceh universities, have shown their opposition to the imposition of Sharia.³⁴ In 2003, IAIN

30 See Rusjdi Ali Muhammad, *Revitalisasi Syariat Islam di Aceh: Problem, Solusi dan Implementasi* (Banda Aceh: Ar-Raniry Press, 2003).

31 See H. Anwar Fuadi A. Salam, *Dapatkah Syariah Islam diberlakukan di Aceh?* (Banda Aceh: Gua Hira, 2001). However, recently many Dayah-based ulama have changed their opinion, and many of them now have become Sharia supporters.

32 See Kingsbury, 'The Free Aceh Movement', 166–189.

33 Interview with Wiratmadinata (International Centre for Transitional Justice-Aceh Programme) and Hendra Fadli (Kontras Aceh), 23 March 2011.

34 See Otto Syamsuddin Ishak, *Dari Maaf ke Panik Aceh: Sebuah Sketsa Sosiologi-Politik*, (Jakarta: Tifa Press, 2008), 358.

Ar-Raniry organised a public seminar concerning the issue. Many participants, mainly lecturers, reportedly criticised the Indonesian government's decision to end the war by giving Islamic status to Aceh province. One even said that the introduction of Sharia is a 'harassment policy'.³⁵

Recently, the Sharia authorities have been concentrating their efforts on the issue of women's dress, organising public canings, forbidding public entertainment, as well as issuing many prohibitions concerning private matters. This has provoked counter-discourses from those who believe that these regulations do not touch the substance of Islam and Sharia itself. In fact, many books and media articles have been written by contemporary Acehnese intellectuals such as Fuad Mardhatillah,³⁶ Affan Ramli,³⁷ Husni Mubarak A. Latief,³⁸ Teuku Harits Muzanni,³⁹ Asrizal Luthfi⁴⁰ and Teuku Muhammad Jafar Sulaiman.⁴¹ They have criticised this version of Sharia as a 'top-down policy' formulated without popular consent.

Furthermore, Irwandi Yusuf's objection to signing the *Qanun Jinayah* is also inseparable from the reaction of Acehnese civil society organisations that demonstrated their resistance to Sharia. After the draft of the *Qanun Jinayah* was published in the newspapers, 100 activists from the Jaringan Masyarakat Sipil Peduli Syariat/JMSPS (the Civil Society's Network of People Concerned about Sharia) went to the Aceh Parliament and asked its members and the governor of Aceh to stop proposing

35 See Lily Zakiah Munir, 'Simbolisasi, Politisasi dan Kontrol terhadap Perempuan di Aceh', in Burhanuddin (ed.), *Syariat Islam: Pandangan Muslim Liberal* (Jakarta: Jaringan Islam Liberal-the Asia Foundation, 2003), 131.

36 Fuad Mardhatillah, 'Islam Protestan', *Journal Gelombang Baru*, vol. 4 (2009), 63–102.

37 Affan Ramli, *Merajam Dalil Syariat* (Banda Aceh: Bandar Publishing, 2010).

38 Husni Mubarak A. Latief, Sengkarut Syariat Atas Bawah, *Journal Gelombang Baru*, vol. 4 (2009), 111–122.

39 Teuku Harits Muzanni, 'Syariat Tanpa Simbol', www.acehinstitute.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=385:syariat-tanpa-simbol&catid=74:paradigma-islam (accessed 2 March 2011).

40 Asrizal Luthfi, 'Pribumisasi Syariat', www.acehinstitute.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=445:pribumisasi-syariat&catid=74:paradigma-islam (accessed on 2 March 2011).

41 Teuku Muhammad Jafar Sulaiman, 'Syariat Islam tidak Perlu Dibela' (Negosiasi Pluralisme Sebagai Islam Masa Depan Aceh), www.acehinstitute.org/id/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=810:syariat-islam-tidak-perlu-dibela-negosiasi-pluralisme-sebagai-islam-masa-depan-aceh&catid=133:paradigma&Itemid=280 (accessed 2 March 2011).

Sharia qanuns containing human rights violations.⁴² JMSPS comprises several local NGOs, such as the Human Rights NGO Coalition, Aceh Legal Aid Foundation (LBH), women volunteers on humanitarian issues (RPUK), Flower Aceh, KKTGA, Komunitas Tikar Pandan, Aceh Judicial and Monitoring Institute, Violet Grey, Women's Voice Radio, Gender Working Group, SEIA, Fatayat NU, Sekolah Menulis Dokarim, Kontras Aceh, Centre for Human Rights Studies-Unsyiah, Sri Ratu Safiatuddin Foundation and others. The group successfully convinced Irwandi to postpone the implementation of the Qanun Jinayah.

The decision by politicians, intellectuals and humanitarian activists to protest and Irwandi Yusuf's decision to postpone the implementation of the Islamic penal law show that forms of resistance to Sharia are various and exist. But how do ordinary Acehnese, without the backing of any political party, intellectual academy, material and the power of money, resist Sharia?

4 Sharia and Cultural Resistance: Voices from Below

On 31 December 2011, the Aceh ulama council and the mayor of Banda Aceh put an advertisement in the *Serambi Indonesia* newspaper. The authorities prohibited the Acehnese people from celebrating New Year's Eve. They did the same in 2009 and 2010. The threat was that fireworks and trumpets would be seized by the Sharia police. The beach near Banda Aceh would be closed to the public during the night. But, by midnight, thousands of people were driving cars and motorcycles, blowing trumpets and illuminating the sky of Banda Aceh with their fireworks. No one knows exactly where people bought the trumpets and fireworks and where they hid them before midnight. Everyone knew, however, that the Sharia police could do nothing about the crowds that night.

This is not the first time that 'feigned ignorance, sabotage, arson, fiddling, and dodging' were used against the Sharia authority. For instance, there have been beauty contests held in Banda Aceh, such as Miss Aceh Fair, Miss Coffee, *Ratu Waria Aceh* (Queer Queen of Aceh) and *Duta Wisata Aceh* (Aceh Tourism Ambassador) without approval from the Sharia office.

Some Islamic student groups and ulama condemned the contests and asked the government not to give permission to those wanting to organise these events. The group called Violet Grey⁴³ found its own way

42 *Serambi Indonesia*, 22 November 2009.

43 Violet Grey is an organisation that claims to strive for the rights of lesbian,

to combat the rule. In 2009, Violet Grey hosted a controversial activity, *Pemilihan Ratu Waria*, a queer festival. Violet Grey had hidden its true agenda and asked for approval from the Aceh Ulama Council and the Sharia police to organise a music concert and a seminar for charity. After the event, Violet Grey announced to the public who had won the festival. Ulama and some hardline Islamist groups and Muslim student organisations such as Hizbut Tahrir, FPI, LDK and KAMMI demanded the dissolution of Violet Grey.⁴⁴

The two accounts below provide a more in-depth story and analysis in terms of how specific groups of Acehnese express their opposition to the administration of Sharia.

5 Challenging Arabisation through Arab Films

One of the unusual phenomena in Banda Aceh is that there is no public cinema at all in the city. This is different from the capital cities of other Indonesian provinces where watching films at cinemas is a regular feature of urban lifestyles. For example, neighbouring cities such as Medan and Padang have at least three cinemas each, generally in plazas and malls. Banda Aceh, despite the development of various business projects after the tsunami, has no cinema.

In the 1980s and 1990s, however, there were four popular cinemas in Banda Aceh. The oldest one was the Garuda Theatre located close to the Blang Padang public playground. In fact, the Garuda Theatre was a building for art performances and was one of the colonial legacies of Banda Aceh. After independence, it became the first commercial public cinema in town. In 2004, the building was hit by the tsunami. Now, it has been rebuilt for other purposes, mainly for weddings, and there is no regular schedule either for art performances or films. Further, there were cinemas dedicated to the memory of the people of Banda Aceh,

gay, bisexual and transgender people (LGBT) in Aceh. Initially, this group was introduced to the public in 2007 as an organisation focused on anti-HIV/AIDS campaigns as well as disseminating information related to sexual and reproductive health issues. It was supported by some international NGOs such as Hivos, World Vision and the National Commission on HIV-AIDS. Violet Grey has now shifted its focus to human rights issues, especially advocating the rights of lesbians, gays and transgenders in Aceh who face discrimination and intimidation from both society and the authorities.

44 See www.antaranews.com/berita/1266144439/ulama-kecam-kontes-waria-aceh (accessed 2 March 2011).

including the Gajah Theatre, Jelita Theatre and PAS 21. PAS 21 was burnt down during the conflict of 2001 and the Jelita theatre was closed in the late 1990s after the political situation worsened. It has now become a supermarket and has been renamed Hermes Mall.

The Gajah Theatre was the last remaining cinema in Aceh, even surviving the conflict. However, it was closed to the public following the disaster of 2004 and is now used as a military warehouse. Thus, there are currently no cinemas in Banda Aceh. It is said that the Sharia authorities regard the presence of a cinema in Aceh as incompatible with the implementation of Sharia. Indeed, the authority considers cinemas to be potential places for Sharia violations. In his article, *Bioskop di Banda Aceh: Sejarah Esek-Esek* ('Cinema in Banda Aceh: A History of Improper Sexuality') Sehat Ihsan Sadiqin wrote, 'it is commonly thought that people in Banda Aceh went to the cinema not only to watch films but also to *khalwat*.'⁴⁵ According to Sadiqin, this is one of the reasons why the local government then asked the owner of the cinema to separate men and women in the building. He acknowledges the possibility of the cinema becoming a place where Sharia violations could take place. However, it is not clear whether Sadiqin agrees with the local government policy on cinema, because he also wrote that entertainment, including films, is a necessity and not in contradiction with Islam.⁴⁶

In fact, until now there has been no regulation that prohibits people from opening or going to the cinema in the Sharia qanuns. But prior to the tsunami, the Sharia police regularly came to raid those accused of committing *khalwat* while watching films at the cinema. Consequently, people stayed away from the cinemas and in the end they were forced to close. Needless to say, people in Aceh are now watching films on television or VCD players.

Fozan Santa, an Acehnese-born filmmaker, has a different opinion concerning Sharia policy on cinema. Along with some of his colleagues he runs a local organisation called Sekolah Menulis Dokarim (Dokarim Writing School).⁴⁷ This organisation was founded in 2003 by some Acehnese writers, and is known as an alternative literary school for Acehnese students interested in literature. Initially, the programme

45 Sehat Ihsan Sadiqin, 'Bioskop di Banda Aceh: Sejarah Esek-Esek', <http://hiburan.kompasiana.com/film/2010/05/21/bioskop-di-banda-aceh-sejarah-esek-esek/>.

46 Ibid.

47 Dokarim was the nickname of the late 19th century bard poet Abdul Karim, the author of the *Tale of the Dutch War*. What little we know about him comes from Snouck Hurgronje's *De Atjehers* (Batavia and Leiden: Landsdrukkerij and Brill, 1893–1894).

was primarily about creative writing and publishing.⁴⁸ Fozan joined the organisation in February 2005, shortly after the tsunami. He was very critical of Acehese government policy and, according to him, the intensity of the implementation of Sharia has destroyed one of the important things in life – the right to entertainment.

Fozan argued that film is a strongly effective medium for learning and that the cinema is an important public sphere where people share information and culture. His background as a film director as well as a screenplay writer resulted in the Dokarim programme changing from being solely training for writers to also including an annual Banda Aceh film festival.

The festival is unlike any other film festival. Since Banda Aceh has no cinema, Fozan and his friends installed screens and VCD players at the university campus, cafés and villages for the festival. Interestingly, all the films shown during the festival are concerned with the situation in the Middle East and North Africa. Indeed, Fozan and the Dokarim school members call the festival the 'Festival Film Arab' or the Arab Film Festival. But why an Arab film festival?

Fozan, who graduated from IAIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, argues that Sharia has led to the imposition of Arab culture in Aceh. As an educated Muslim, he imagined that Islam and Sharia (in their fundamental definition) would contribute positively to building back a better Aceh after the bloody conflict and tsunami, but he argues that the authorities have politicised Islam and Sharia to gain power. According to him, few contemporary Acehese distinguish between Islam and Arab culture. Through his knowledge of Islam and Muslim cultures he wants to illustrate that what is happening in Aceh is a process of Arabisation rather than Islamisation. The slogan of the festival is '*Sinoe Aceh Sideh Arab, Sinoe Sideh Hana Rab*', which literally means 'Here is Aceh, there is the Arab World; Here (Aceh) and There (Arabia) are not close (and not so alike)'. It highlights that there are many differences between the two cultures and that one cannot simply replace the other.

Below are some of the titles of films that have been shown at the festival:

In 2009:

1. *Condemnations*, Walid Mattar, Tunisia, 2009, 15 min
2. *The Unknown Lady*, Fajr Yacoub, Syria-Palestine, 2010, 22 min
3. *La Trappola*, Lemnaouer Ahmine, Algeria, 2010, 62 min

48 Sekolah Menulis Dokarim is a member of the Cultural League Komunitas Tikar Pandan: see www.tikarpandan.org (accessed 5 August 2011).

4. *I am George*, Mohsen Abdelghan, Egypt, 2010, 10 min
5. *Saba Flous*, Anis Lassoude, Tunisia, 2010, 15 min
6. *Jasmin Bird*, Sulafa Hijazi, Syria, 2009, 90 min⁴⁹

In 2010:

1. *Caramel*, Nadine Labaki, Lebanon, 2007, 90 min
2. *The Stoning of Soraya M*, Cyrus Nowraste, Iran, 2009, 110 min
3. *Baran*, Majid Majidi, Iran, 2003, 98 min
4. *Le Grand Voyage*, Ismael Ferroukhi, Morocco-France, 2007, 108 min
5. *Shouf Shouf Habibi*, Albert Ter Heerdt, Morocco-the Netherlands, 2008, 85 min
6. *Turtle Can Fly*, Bahman Gohbadi, Iraq, 2007, 95 min⁵⁰

The Arab Film Festival, organised by the Dokarim School, is an interesting phenomenon within the ongoing process of Sharia implementation. On the one hand, it seems that this programme supports the notion of Sharia in Aceh. Many people attend the festival and participate in a series of discussions after the screenings. Fozan realises that most ordinary Acehnese regard 'Arab' and 'Islam' as being synonymous. Everything that comes from the Arab world is considered Islamic and treated as holy. Dokarim Arab Film Festival wants to show the contrary through films. He believes that films may influence people in a peaceful way to be aware of the distortion of the real meaning of Sharia. This is the way to support 'Sharia' by resisting Sharia, as he concluded.

6 Punk: Resistance to Sharia from the Street

A piece of writing appeared on the social network website, Facebook, entitled '*Aku Azhari, Aku Seorang Punker: Apa Ada Masalah Besar?*' ('I am Azhari and I am punker: Is there a big problem with that?'). It was posted by Azhari Aiyub on 13 February 2011.⁵¹ Within a matter of hours, some 70 comments were posted in response. The article talks

49 The Dokarim report, 2009.

50 The Dokarim report, 2010.

51 www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=10150142263646015 (accessed 15 July 2011). This article has also been published by *Distraction Zine*, vol. 4, June 2011. Internet access can easily be found in many places including coffee shops in Banda Aceh and is one of the valuable contributions made by the international development presence involved in rebuilding Aceh after the disaster. Most Acehnese now have a Facebook account.

about a punker who was angry because his dignity as a human being was being violated. The entry also talks about the chronological history of the punk community. Azhari further discusses punk ideology and nihilist philosophy, punk anarchical ideas and statements about how such a marginalised group survives in Aceh at a time of growing hypocrisy. In fact, Azhari is Acehnese-born and a well-known figure within modern Indonesian literature. He does not wear punk clothes nor lives on the streets like many other punkers. His writing nonetheless showcases his sympathy with punk communities against the background of many Sharia police-backed arrests of members of the punk community in Banda Aceh.

Azhari first reacted when he read the news coverage of the arrest of several punkers by the Sharia police in 2011.⁵² These punkers were taken to the State Police Academy in Saree, Aceh Besar, where they were shaved. A number of pictures showing this were published by several mass media. Azhari was furious and wrote the article in response. He told me that he had previously sent the article to several local media for publication but they all rejected his article, despite the fact that none of Azhari's writings had ever been rejected before. Azhari accused the local media of supporting the interests of politicians whose religious hedonistic and hypocritical lifestyles were being disrupted by the presence of the punkers 'who do not see what is considered important by several politicians and rich people in Aceh as important'.⁵³

How punkers came to be and how long they have been in Aceh is not exactly known. As a rebel movement, punk started out in London and spread throughout the world. In Indonesia, punk communities generally grow in big cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya and Yogyakarta. These communities are characterised by their clothes, hairstyles and gatherings. Leather jackets, nails, colourful Mohawk hairdos and special shoes have made them different from the majority of people. Punk has been identified as part of a counterculture, groups that resist surrounding social conventions.⁵⁴

It is said that punk communities existed in Aceh prior to 2000. They started by establishing a number of rock bands and conducted several music festivals as a way to resist the never-ending political disputes in Aceh. People in Banda Aceh were struck by the presence of unusually dressed youths. They look different from others since they usually play

52 *Serambi Indonesia*, 12 February 2011.

53 Interview with Azhari Aiyub, 16 March 2011.

54 See for example Roger Sabin (ed.), *Punk Rock, So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (Routledge: London & New York, 1999).

music and walk around on the streets of Banda Aceh. They call themselves 'Punkers'. A few people complained in the media about the presence of punk in Banda Aceh, because they look 'weird and un-Islamic' and, culturally, punk is not part of Acehnese culture. Some parents also said that they were afraid their children would join the group.⁵⁵ Since January 2011, members of the punk community in Banda Aceh have become the main target of regular sweepings by the Sharia police. They are usually arrested and imprisoned for several days before being returned to their parents.

Dedi Besi, who is considered senior within Aceh's punk community, said that he became a punker in 1998. Dedi learned about punk when he was studying in Yogyakarta. He believes that being a punker is in line with his job as an archaeologist. Then, he was called Dedi Besi (Iron Dedi) by his fellow punkers because he likes to look at and collect junk metal and iron, especially rusty nails he finds on the streets. Dedi used these rusted nails as accessories for his clothing. He looks polite and is far from looking like an urchin. He always carries a small guitar wherever he goes. He does not live on the streets, because his parents are relatively wealthy. I was even more amazed by the fact that Dedi is now teaching archaeology at the Faculty of Culture at the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) Ar-Raniry.

Dedi asserted that many Acehnese punkers know about things that are forbidden by Islam. They do not live freely, nor do they indulge in free sex even though they are accused of doing so; they do not rob people, and they do not provoke riots. They only gather, walk on the streets and play musical instruments. Perhaps, their appearance is unlike that of the rest of the community, but this does not mean that they are criminals. He does not deny that there are punkers who drink and fight, but this does not give the authorities the right to suppress and reject punkers' existence in Aceh by deploying the Sharia police as the guardians of Sharia law. He believes that the Sharia police should take a more humane approach to the punkers.⁵⁶

Dedi argues that many people who have a more conservative appearance commit violent acts, steal, are corrupt, drink, and adopt undesirable practices. Dedi Besi sees the tension between the punkers and the Sharia police as a result of the Sharia police's failure to understand what punk is. In fact, there are many kinds of punks and most are not involved in negative activities. Nonetheless, punkers have suffered blanket indictments.

55 Readers' forum of *Serambi Indonesia*, 3 January 2011.

56 Interview with Dedi Besi, 29 June 2011.

After the arrests, the Sharia police banned some of the punk communities, publishing a list in the mass media. These include:

1. *Rantai Hitam* (Black Chain)
2. Museum Street Punk
3. Rock in Love
4. *Damai Boleh Ribut Boleh* or *DaboRibo* (Peace Okay Chaos Okay)
5. *Netral* (Impartial)
6. *Anak Brutal* (Bad Boys)
7. *Ello*
8. *Tanggoel Rebel* (Rebel Dyke)
9. *Jusuid Guero*
10. Black Green
11. Brume + Horizontal
12. Lamb of Gun⁵⁷

Meanwhile, Syahril, a Sharia police officer, said that the arrests were lawful because punk is a Western subculture which is unfamiliar to Acehese people. Therefore, the punkers' existence is deemed to have disturbed order within the city of Banda Aceh. According to Syahril, punkers have been involved in activities that have worried local people. Syahril did not provide further details about such activities, but he did emphasise that punkers should not exist in Aceh. Punkers have to respect Aceh as a region that is implementing Sharia law. If the punkers do not want to respect the Sharia law, then they should leave Aceh.⁵⁸

Despite the punkers' explanation, a number of Islamic organisations support the Sharia police's extreme measures. These Islamic organisations issued a press release stating their support for the arrests. Teuku Zulkhairi, a member of Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah/DDI (Islamic Dakwa Council) and the President of IAIN postgraduate students, is one of the outspoken supporters of the Sharia police. He wrote an article entitled '*Menyorot Komunitas Punk Aceh*' ('Bringing to Light Aceh Punk Communities').⁵⁹ Zulkhairi further attacked those who defended punkers and called them 'a group whose way of thinking should be questioned' and a group that 'always hides behind human rights issues when defending things advocated by non-Muslims'. He further asked, 'How would a Muslim justify a punker's way of life?'

This is where the debate stands. Lowbat Boeloek, a leader of a punk community, stated that their activities have not violated Sharia law. The

57 *Serambi Indonesia*, 11 February 2011.

58 Interview with Syahril, April 2011.

59 *Harian Aceh*, 24 January 2011.

punk community to which Lowbat belongs is called Tanggoel Rebel. They have often taken to the streets to announce that they have the right to live in Aceh and they have protested against the arrest of several of their members. Boeloek himself is an educated young man. He is finishing his studies at the Economics Faculty of Syiah Kuala University. Boeloek condemns the government of Banda Aceh which, through its Department of Sharia Law, has generalised and categorised the existence of the punkers' ways of life as '*penyakit masyarakat*' (social diseases).⁶⁰

Lowbat Boeloek claimed that they still carry out the five-times-a-day prayers and they have helped to clear Banda Aceh's streets of rubbish. It is not the business of the Sharia police to worry about their hair and clothing styles. Everything depends on personal tastes and aesthetic perspectives and these clearly differ between people. Punk communities can easily point out a number of cases of corruption implicating those who claim to be religious (and claim to be Muslims) who, on different occasions, would deliver sermons on morals and on how to maintain Sharia law. Meanwhile, their deeds are far removed from Islamic teachings. Punkers exist to fight against their hypocrisy, Lowbat continued.

The emergence of a Muslim punk community in Yogyakarta has been an interesting phenomenon and provides a useful comparison for the situation in Banda Aceh.⁶¹ Members of this group dress like punkers but they emphasise their roles as Muslims. Besides singing on the streets, these particular punkers also carry out regular religious study groups called PUNKAJIAN, a creative way of writing '*Pengkajian*', which means study. Dedi and Lowbat claimed that many of them also did what the Yogyakarta Muslim punkers did. Nonetheless, the government of Aceh and the Sharia police only look at the way these punkers dress and judge it to be different from the local standard of ethics and local religious understanding. Lowbat asserted that tastes will never be the same 'until Judgement Day'.

The fact that the punkers' existence is not welcomed is not a problem confined to Banda Aceh. Big cities in Indonesia such as Bandung, Jakarta, and Yogyakarta also have punk communities and they often have to deal with the police as well. I can accept the critical notion that it is still too early to identify punk as a form of cultural resistance to Sharia law in Aceh as it must be further problematised and debated. However, Banda Aceh differs from the larger cities in Indonesia both in terms of its size and for its introduction of Sharia-based regulations and in this context gives punkers a different role. Lowbat Boeloek further stated that

60 Interview with Lowbat Boeloek.

61 <http://punkmuslim.multiply.com/>.

Acehnese punkers existed prior to 2000 but that they had drowned in the tsunami or had been killed in the conflict. On 9 September 1999, some punkers gathered again and re-established their movement to form a countermovement against the hypocrisy of the Achenese elite. They felt that the traditional Acehnese attached too much value to clothes and religion, as opposed to the many 'real' problems in society.

It is the way punkers dress and the songs they sing that the authorities and the Sharia police dislike. Often, the police dispersed them as they were gathering at particular locations within Banda Aceh. Such dispersals have worsened the relationship between the punk communities and the Sharia police. Indeed, the situation became worse at the beginning of 2011, when the police and the punkers clashed and a Sharia police officer was stabbed. Since that incident, punkers have been targeted by the Sharia police. However, the punkers have fought back and have taken to the streets, shouting that they do not want to be eradicated by the Sharia police.

It is interesting to see how the democratic process runs in Aceh with regard to this case. After the tsunami, the international presence influenced the rapid adoption of human rights norms among Acehnese civil society organisations. The role of lawyers from Banda Aceh's Legal Aid Institution (LBH), an institution aiming to provide free legal aid to people, was clear when some young lawyers tried to release the arrested punkers. Nevertheless, the LBH was unable to start a legal case against the Sharia police because the punkers who had been tortured did not want to report the Sharia police to the national police. 'It doesn't make any sense, they are the same', Boeloek said.

The problem with the punkers is yet to be resolved even though a number of parties have tried to invite the Sharia police and representatives of the punk communities to participate in a comprehensive dialogue. Discussions and seminars have been held in order to respond to the violence experienced by this minority group. However, physical clashes between the Sharia police and punkers continue to occur. Two days prior to Ramadan, on 29 July 2011, Sharia police once again conducted raids against punkers in Banda Aceh.⁶² During the raid, one punker, named Rully or Oyie, was arrested and beaten by the authorities. This was done in front of the deputy mayor of Banda Aceh.⁶³

The government programme named 'Visit Banda Aceh Year 2011' should be taken into consideration when trying to find out why the Sharia

62 <http://harian-aceh.com/2011/07/28/satpol-pp-dan-wh-keroyok-anak-punk> (accessed 31 July 2011).

63 Interview with Junaidi Hanafiah, a journalist of *Harian Aceh*, 2 August 2011.

police and the government of Banda Aceh have been aggressive and hostile to punkers. It is likely that the authorities fear that the punkers – with their activities which are considered inappropriate or not part of Acehnese culture – may spoil the image and motto of Banda Aceh as the ‘*Bandar Wisata Islami*’ (‘Islamic Tourism City’ or ‘A Spiritual Gateway to Islamic Tourism’) and drive away tourism.

The year 2011 saw a further number of contradictions in the position of the Aceh government with regard to adherence to Sharia implementation. While the entertainment industry was minimised with Sharia law banning the gathering of men and women, the government did organise a number of festivals. The *Peunayong*⁶⁴ Festival, *Duta Wisata Aceh* (Aceh Tourism Ambassadors) and the River Festival, among others, are examples of public events held by Banda Aceh’s Ministry of Tourism to support the ‘Visit Banda Aceh Year 2011’ programmes. Here, the government failed to deploy enough Sharia police officers to oversee the separate attendance of men and women at these events, thereby failing strictly to adhere to the regulation that no mixing of men and women can take place at public events.

7 Concluding Remarks

Aceh experienced various challenges in the implementation of Sharia. A decade after its formalisation, there is still no consensus on which type of ‘appropriate’ Sharia should be adopted by this region. Some religious groups and Acehnese public figures have criticised the Sharia-based legislation, arguing that Sharia is now merely used by the government as a tool to strengthen its political position. However, many previous studies concerning the implementation of Sharia in Aceh have often overlooked ordinary people’s reaction to the law. To fill the gap, some cases and youth expressions summarised in this article show some examples of how the implementation of Sharia has drawn criticism from the ordinary Acehnese. Their criticism has been expressed in the form of resistance and disobedience. However, central to this work is that their actions are not meant to reject Islam and Sharia, but to combat the politicisation of Islamic law by the authorities.

64 Peunayong is a Chinatown situated in the centre of Banda Aceh.

