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**Submission date:** 08-Jan-2021 03:11PM (UTC+0700)

**Submission ID:** 1484475650

**File name:** Morphology\_of\_Rencong\_Aceh\_in\_Aceh\_Museum\_IBDA\_terbaru.docx (180.67K)

**Word count:** 7142

**Character count:** 35282

# <sup>1</sup> THE MORPHOLOGY OF RENCONG ACEH IN THE MUSEUM OF ACEH

## <sup>1</sup> Abstract

As a fascinating weapon, Rencong Aceh cannot be separated from the life of Acehnese people. In order to describe the morphology of which, a qualitative method was implemented to collect the data through observation, interview and document analysis. The collected data were analyzed with descriptive analysis. The four types of Rencong Aceh – *rencong meucugek*, *rencong meukuree*, and *rencong podoi* or *puntong* – have the structure of *Bismillahirrahmanirrahim* entirely. Those also possess the letter of *Ba*. Every morphology form of Rencong Aceh is constant, either in the form of *Bismillāh*, *Bismillāhirrahmanirrahim*, or *Ba*. Philosophically, the compilation of morphology upon the weapons cannot be disconnected from the Islamic context developed within the social and culture understanding and its practice of the Acehnese people. Every beginning of an action should be initiated with the words of *Bismillāhirrahmanirrahim*. The expression is done to get the mercy and blessing of God, particularly when the enemies attack.

**Keywords:** *morphology, rencong, Museum of Aceh, weapon*

### A. Introduction

Aceh is a region having rich in cultures, customs, traditions, habits, and traditional knowledge. Aceh also developed weapon, jewelry, and ceremony tool made of iron, silver, gold, and brass.<sup>1</sup> The weapon was one of living equipment systems and means of raw material processing. Historically, Aceh has a completeness of the diverse weaponry. Swords or knives were not solely as the weaponry or war, but also as a completeness in particular great ceremonies. However, among the weaponry existed, rencong is the only one recognized as a symbol representing Aceh. There is a possibility that similar weapon have been existed long before the influence of Islam came to Aceh.<sup>2</sup>

With its short form, rencong, which was originally derived from knife, used in a variety of things. It was rough shape in the beginning; later on, it gradually became smooth. A *pandee beusoe* (blacksmith) was demanded to be able to create stabbing weapon with a beautiful form, which could put an enemy in a dangerous situation.

Rencong was known within the people of Aceh in the reign of the Kingdom of Pasai in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, specifically when the Kingdom had developed into a great empire. For the sake

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<sup>1</sup> Laila Abdul Jalil, "Teknologi Logam Masyarakat Aceh", *Arabesk*, No. 1. Vol. XIII, (Banda Aceh: Balai Pelestarian Cagar Budaya Banda Aceh Wilayah Kerja Provinsi Aceh dan Sumatera Utara, 2013), p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Leigh Barbara, *Hands of Time: The Crafts of Aceh*, (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1989), p. 45.

of having a strong defense strategy, the Kingdom equipped its troops with adequate weapons of war, including the use of rencong. Sultan Ali Mughayat Syah who ruled the Sultanate of Aceh from 1514-1528 CE used rencong for the first time in the war against the Portuguese.<sup>3</sup> Later, it was still used as a means of armament by the people Aceh in the fight against the colonial Dutch and Japanese. Nowadays, rencong is no longer used as a tool of weaponry. It is widely used as one of equipment in the official regional ceremony and marriage ritual for *lintoe* (the bridegroom). In addition, rencong also becomes as a special souvenir of Aceh.

Rencong Aceh has a variety of forms that are known to the community, such as *rencong meupucok*, *rencong meucugek*, *rencong meukuree*, and *rencong pudoi or puntong*. Rencong, which becomes as a symbol of Aceh culture, is inseparable from Islamic teachings and the philosophy of the live of Acehnese people. Each form of rencong has its own meaning. The engraving on the surface of its handle also has various forms such as leaves, chains, roses, and Arabic scripts.<sup>4</sup> The form of rencong reflects the sentence *Bismillāh*, the first sentence used in starting an activity within the Muslims, especially the people of Aceh.

The studies of Rencong Aceh have already written by the cultural observers and other researchers. However, most of those studies are discussing common aspect of rencong with the diverse perspectives in its analyses. A book by T. Syamsuddin and M. Nur Abbas, entitled *Reuncong*, describes that the Kingdom of Pasai required military forces to defend themselves by the use of rencong. Briefly, the book also alludes about the form of Rencong Aceh resembling the sentence *Bismillāh*. Furthermore, a book by Leig Barbara, *Hands of Time: The Crafts of Aceh* discusses the Aceh art crafts, rencong, and other similar stabbing weapons such as *siwah* and sword. The form of Rencong Aceh having the sentence *Bismillāh* is also mentioned in the book. Moreover, Rudi Sufi and his friends expose the use of weapons within the community of Aceh in their book, *Sejarah Kebudayaan Aceh*. In addition, published in The Atjeh Post, the article by Ilhan Nurdin, *Romantisme Kampung Rencong*, also describes the tradition of a community in Gampong Baet Lampuoet, Great Aceh, in making Rencong Aceh. The tradition is in hereditary inheritance that has been done since hundreds of years ago. The local community informed that rencong had already switched its functions related to its use. Besides, Sudirman, who wrote *Sejarah Teknolohi Pembuatan Rencong* in Buletin Haba of the XIII edition and published by *Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya Banda Aceh*, illustrates a brief history of Rencong Aceh and its techniques of manufacture. In short, those studies above only

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<sup>3</sup> Rusdi Sufi, et. al., *Sejarah Kebudayaan Aceh*, (Banda Aceh: Pusat Dokumentasi dan Informasi, 2003), p. 132.

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Tammat, et. al., *Seni Rupa Aceh*, (Banda Aceh: Taman Budaya Provinsi Daerah Istimewa Aceh, 1996), p. 365.

describe in brief Rencong Aceh that has the form of *Bismillāh*. Additionally, the studies have minimal information about the morphology of Rencong Aceh in a more detail. Therefore, the researcher needs to conduct a deeper research upon the morphology of Rencong Aceh.

## **B. Discussion**

### **1. The History of Rencong Aceh and its Influence within the Acehnese People**

Aceh is located on the line of international trade. Although Aceh already gave many residents before the Common Era, its culture cannot be traced any further. At the beginning of the century, the people of Aceh had developed as the other tribes in Indonesia.<sup>5</sup> The development kept going along with the sea transport. The advance made Islam broadcasters coming to the land, of whom most of them were merchants.

There is no clear elucidation upon the history of the invention of rencong. At first, a wide range of tools was based on its shape, usability, and easiness of human life, particularly in the hunting. This assumption is based on the findings such as a harsh hand-held axe on the Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic), a slippery axe in transitional age (Mesolithic), a functional and aesthetic axe on the Young Stone Age (Neolithic).<sup>6</sup>

The human needs are rely heavily on the nature and their environment. Before the Islamic era, the people of Aceh already used a variety of equipment in their socio-cultural life. Axes, knives, spears, and other sharp tools, were the example of the equipment. Originally, rencong was a knife, which had evolved its aesthetic.<sup>7</sup> It achieved its perfection since the coming of Islam to Indonesia and the advance of Kingdom of Pasai in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup>

Considering their location on the line of the international sea trade, the Kingdom of Pasai needed the military forces having strong defense strategy and an adequate war equipment to be able to defend themselves from the threat of any enemies or to face the war. In addition to the use of cannon and sword, the people of Aceh also used another traditional weapon like rencong, in fighting the colonialism.<sup>9</sup>

In the history of Aceh, the broadness of war weapons was varied. The armaments of war were not only swords or stabbing weapons. The use of rencong as a weapon to fight the enemies

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<sup>5</sup> Dahlia Umar, "Islam Multikulturalisme di Aceh", *Arabesk*, No. 2. Vol. X, (Banda Aceh: Balai Pelestarian Cagar Budaya Banda Aceh Wilayah Kerja Provinsi Aceh dan Sumatera Utara, 2010), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ketut Wiradnyana, *Prasejarah Sumatera Bagian Utara: Kontribusinya Pada Kebudayaan Kini*, 1st Edition, (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2011), p. 7-8.

<sup>7</sup> Sudirman, "Sejarah Teknologi Pembuatan Rencong", *Buletin Haba*, No. 67, Year of XIII, (Banda Aceh: Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya Banda Aceh, 2013), p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> T. Syamsuddin and M. Nur Abbas, *Reuncong*, (Banda Aceh: Museum Negeri Aceh, 1981), p. 1.

began to be used for the first time when Aceh was having war against Portuguese. It was occurred when Sultan Ali Muqhayat Syah ruled the Kingdom of Aceh in 1514-1528 CE.<sup>10</sup> Beside to fighting the enemies, rencong was also being a part of particular great ceremonies.

The need to expand the broadness of war weapons became very vital considering the rising of Aceh military power in the region occupying by Malay people. Aceh established the relationship with west and east countries. One of the countries was Turkey. When Sultan Ali Riayat Syah AL-Qahhar (928-946 Islamic Calendar/1537-1568 CE) ruled the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam, he made a relationship with the Sultan of Turkey, Sultan Salim Chan. The Sultan sent 40 cannon-specialist soldiers and horses to Aceh.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Sultan Mansur Syah (985-993 Islamic Calendar/1577-1588 BE) continued the relationship with the Sultan of Turkey, Sultan Abdul Hamid Chan. The relationship was marked by the parcel sending. Turkey claimed that they gave help to the Kingdom of Aceh.<sup>12</sup> The relationship between the Kingdom of Aceh and Turkey gave good influence, particularly for the military field. The form of rencong was likely influenced by the countries like Turkey and India. The blade form of rencong is similar the swords of Turkey called *kilij*. The dagger belonging to Sultan Mahmud I made from emerald has a curved shape. It is similar to rencong.<sup>13</sup> However, the size of *kilij* is bigger than the size of Rencong Aceh.

The people of Moghul also have *scimitar*, a shorter stabbing weapon comparing to rencong. In Madras, there is a wall painting aged 1610 to 1620 BE. On the painting, there are graceful men with sword and dagger hung at their waist. Either through trading or through sharing the same faith, the relationship between the Kingdom of Aceh and the Kingdom of Moghul might influence the form of rencong.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, the development of the form of the rencong began to find its perfect form. It can be seen from its form that oriented to the Islamic belief as a religion. The belief is very influential in the socio-cultural life of the people of Aceh. Generally, the study of rencong focuses on its manufacturing process. There is no chronological record or information related to the development of Rencong Aceh. However, the stories collected from the Acehnese people of the rencong can be used to supplement the facts obtained through written sources telling the history of Rencong Aceh.

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<sup>10</sup> Rusdi Sufi, et. al., *Sejarah Kebudayaan Aceh*, (Banda Aceh: Pusat Dokumentasi dan Informasi, 2003), p. 132.

<sup>11</sup> Zainuddin, *Tarich Atjeh dan Nusantara*, (Medan: Pustaka Iskandar Muda, 1961), p. 272-279.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272-273.

<sup>13</sup> Sudirman, *Sejarah Teknologi...*, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

At the time of the reign of Sultan Ali Mughayat Syah and his successor, rencong had been used as a weapon of war. In that moment, the forging places of rencong were located in every region in Aceh, particularly in Great Aceh (Kampung Pande, Lam Blang, Sibreh, Ulee Kareng, Lampakuk), Pidie (Peukan Pidie, Kampung Aree, Uno), North Aceh (Matang Geulumpang Dua, Gedong, Lhok Sukon, Panton Labu), East Aceh (Peureulak, Idi, Simpang Ulim, Banyak Payet), Blang Pidie, Meulaboh, and Calang.<sup>15</sup>

*Pandee-pandee beusoe* (the blacksmiths) also spread almost all over Aceh. In addition to making machetes, hoes, spears, and anklets for beef or buffalo, the blacksmiths also made rencong in their forging place. It shows that rencong plays a great role in socio-cultural life of the Acehnese people, specifically as the weapon to defend themselves. Although *siwah* and sword had ever played an important role in the history of Aceh, the Acehnese people still gloried rencong as the traditional weapon of Aceh. It is considered to its use and unique shape. Beside to having Islamic elements, rencong is also associated with the efforts of Jihad, especially when Acehnese people fought the Dutch. Using rencong in a war was considered as conducting a holy war.<sup>16</sup> It also becomes a symbol of valor and loyal comrades, which truly accompanies the wielder when facing the enemies.

## 2. The Types of Rencong Aceh

In general, the term of rencong or rincong has been covering all forms of rencong existing within the people of Aceh. However, to discover the types of rencong, we should note the form of its handle. From its common name, then, we can determine the actual name of rencong. That is, names given to rencong are generally derived from its handle form. The outsiders only know that there is one sharp weapon called rencong or, in other words, Rencong Aceh.<sup>17</sup> There were certain names that appeared among the Acehnese people. Thus, we can distinguish the different types of Rencong Aceh existing within the Acehnese people or being stored in the museum. The followings are the types of rencong.<sup>18</sup>

### 2.1 Rencong Meupucok

<sup>15</sup> T. Syamsuddin dan M. Nur Abbas, *Reuncong...*, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Leig Barbara, *Hands of Time : The Crafts of Aceh*, (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1989), p. 50.

<sup>17</sup> Syamsuddin dan M. Nur Abbas, *Reuncong...*, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Sudirman, *Sejarah Teknologi...*, p. 8.

*Rencong meupucok* has the golden carving on the top of its handle. The size of its handle is small on the bottom and large on the upper part. The golden carving is engraved on the top. It is known as *pucok* (top).

The carving form on the surface of its handle is various forms such as leaves, chains, roses, and Arabic scripts. Besides, there is similar type of this *rencong*, *rencong klat*; a *rencong* that its bottom part of the handle wrapped with gold or mixed gold.<sup>19</sup> There is a small bundle on the surface of the handle of *rencong meupucok*. This type of *rencong* can be identified from the bundle.

### 2.2 *Rencong Meucugek*

*Rencong meucugek* used *cugek* (bended handle) having 90° of its bend. It is bended to the back of the blade about eight to ten centimeters, so the handle has right angle. On its axis, *cugek* is made to simplify its use. This model is more widely used in the battlefields, especially in a fight one versus one.<sup>20</sup>

*Rencong meucugek* already used as a stabbing tool since the colonial period occurred. *Cugek* has a function to facilitate its wielder to attack and stab someone insistently. The wielder can take it back even though the axis is covered with blood. *Cugek* plays a part as a means of anchoring the back of the wrist.

If a *rencong* does not have *cugek*, it can be easily detached from the hand due to the axis covered by the blood of the enemy. Hence, *rencong meucugek* is a *rencong* having bended axis. Additionally, it is the most potent and very popular stabbing weapon among the people of Aceh.

### 2.3 *Rencong Pudoi or Puntong*

*Rencong pudoi* or *puntong* is a type of *rencong* having a half form. It is called *pudoi* since its handle has a straight, short, and half form.<sup>21</sup> Generally, it is used as a jewelry and a weapon. The structure of its simple handle has no warranties that can be took it back once the axis of the *rencong* stabs the enemy.<sup>22</sup> In accordance with its simple form, this *rencong* is limited in its use. *Rencong pudoi* cannot be seen clearly if it is inserted in the waist and covered by shirt, sarong, or long pants.

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<sup>19</sup> Muhammad Tammat, dkk., *Seni Rupa Aceh*, (Banda Aceh: Taman Budaya Provinsi Daerah Istimewa Aceh, 1996), p. 365.

<sup>20</sup> T. Syamsuddin and M. Nur Abbas, *Reuncong*..., p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> T. Syamsuddin and M. Nur Abbas, *Reuncong*..., p. 12-13.

<sup>22</sup> Rusdi Sufi, et. al., *Aceh Tanah*..., p. 77.



#### 2.4 Rencong Meukuree

In contrast to the previous *rencong*, this type can be determined from its particular pattern such as flower, snake, *limpan*, root, and leaf.<sup>23</sup> The patterns contained on *rencong meukuree* are not deliberately created by *pandee busoe*, but it appears from the nature of the iron itself. The sign of *kuree* displaying on the blade of *rencong* can only be understood by the blacksmith.<sup>24</sup> Presumably, the patterns have its advantages or privileges. The longer *rencong meukuree* is stored, the more patterns and magic the weapon has. The name granting upon *kuree* can only be done or discerned by experts in the knowledge of iron (iron specialists such as *pande beusoe* and shaman).<sup>25</sup>

### 3. Parts of Rencong Aceh

Rencong Aceh consists of five particular parts making its entirety and combination of parts or structure of a *rencong*. The first one is the handle of *rencong*. It is called *geu*. The wielder can hold this handle to use *rencong*. The holder is seriously noticed by the wielder, predominantly in terms of its aesthetic and strength. Therefore, the handle is made from strong materials, especially the buffalo horn, elephant ivory, or selected wood.<sup>26</sup> The handle made from the buffalo horn can be smoothed until it is shiny, so it is not much difference with the handle of *rencong* made from elephant ivory. However, the ivory does not require selection since it is already good material.<sup>27</sup> The buffalo horn made as the handle of *rencong* is derived from the horn of old buffalo.

The second part is the body of *rencong*. It is a part of *rencong* found in the central part of the blade. It is wider comparing to the base and the pointy bottom of the *rencong*. The bended body of *rencong* gives a certain limit as the controller or suppressor handle<sup>28</sup>. Thus, in its use, the body of *rencong* is a cleaver tool, which can determine upon the wound experienced by the enemy.

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<sup>23</sup> T. Syamsuddin and M. Nur Abbas, *Reuncong...*, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> Rusdi Sufi, et. al., *Aceh Tanah Rencong*, Banda Aceh: Pemerintah Provinsi Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam, 2008, p. 77.

<sup>25</sup> Muhammad Tammat, dkk., *Seni...*, p. 366.

<sup>26</sup> Sudirman, *Sejarah Teknologi...*, p. 10.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> T. Syamsuddin and M. Nur Abbas, *Reuncong...*, p. 17



Next, the blade is the third part of Rencong Aceh. This last part of the weapon is very sharp. This part determines the success of attack, whether it penetrates exactly the enemy's body or not<sup>29</sup>. This sharp blade is followed by other parts of a rencong.

Furthermore, the fourth part is the rod of Rencong Aceh (*bak reuncong*). It is the first blade of rencong next to its handle. The rod is serrated, particularly on the inside and lower side of *rencong*. The serrated rod has a sharp and extended curve.<sup>30</sup> Essentially, the rod of rencong becomes as a grip determining its power. The rod gets thicker and sturdier metal-handiwork rather than the body and the blade of rencong. It is understandable since the main function of rencong is to stab not to cut. That is why the rod must be made thicker and sturdier.

Last part, the sheath of Rencong Aceh is an object wrapping a rencong. It has a form following to the blade and size of a rencong. To make its form aesthetic, the edge sheath of rencong is serrated to the top like the claw of tiger or cat.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, there is the specific form curved on the bottom of the sheath. The bottom form, which is mounted to a belt, can be felt like *cungkeh* or *mecendot*. The form can steadily hold rencong.

#### 4. The Tradition of Rencong Aceh Utilization

Various ethnics settling and stopping by in Aceh carried the characteristics and cultures of their countries, including the miscellaneous pattern and clothing style. Those were used in either doing daily activities or attending a ceremony. The existence of Acehnese traditional jewelries or weapons attracted the attention of strangers.<sup>32</sup> The way of dressing of the Acehnese people was based on comfortableness, manner in covering the forbidden body parts, and aesthetics. Generally, the types of clothing for the Acehnese people are divided into three groups, namely festal garments, custom clothing, and usual outfit. In addition to wearing a shirt and trousers for the custom clothing, the Acehnese men also use loincloth, rencong, rimless cap, and shoes.<sup>33</sup>

The use of rencong within the people of Aceh has evolved from the past to the present. It can be seen from the regulation issued by the Government of the Netherland of East Indies in 1904 CE. The regulation forbade the Acehnese people using or carrying rencong in their daily lives.<sup>34</sup> The rencong, presumably, might harm the Dutch. The regulation hurt the

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18

<sup>30</sup> Sudirman, *Sejarah Teknologi...*, p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> T. Syamsuddin and M. Nur Abbas, *Reuncong...*, p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> Harun Keuchik Leumiek, *Perhiasan Tradisional Aceh*, (Banda Aceh: Toko Mas Dan Souvenir)

<sup>33</sup> T. Alamsyah, et. al., *Pedoman Umum Adat Aceh*, Propinsi Daerah Istimewa Aceh, 1st Edition, (Banda Aceh: Lembaga Adat dan Kebudayaan Aceh, LAKA, 1990), p. 31.

<sup>34</sup> Sudirman, *Sejarah Teknologi...*, p. 9.

Acehnese people's feeling upon rencong. For them, it is not merely for war, but also as a habit to use it everywhere by slipping it next to waist. There is a term known by Acehnese people that rencong is a true friend. It faithfully accompanies its wielder when facing the enemy. Besides, it also triggers its wielder's spirit when travelling in the middle of the night.

Due to the regulation issued by the Netherlands of East Indies, the Acehnese people sought other alternatives towards the form of rencong by modifying its handle, either in short or half type (*rencong pudoi*). It was meant to compensate the safety of the Acehnese people so they did not violate the regulation. On the other hand, they could still wear rencong.<sup>35</sup> *Rencong pudoi* slipped to the waist will be invisible if it is covered by sarong or pants. It remains safe next to the waist since it has straight and flat form<sup>36</sup>. It will not be seen if the people see it in a glance. The Dutch only knew the main function of rencong, which is as the mere weapons used in a war. In fact, the Acehnese people used another type of rencong, *rencong meucugek* or *meupucok*, to cover its real function.

The Acehnese people successfully tricked the Dutch with *rencong pudoi*. It proves that they always found a resolution, obeyed, and kept their spirit even though there was a regulation that illegalized the use of rencong.<sup>37</sup> It becomes as a proof that rencong is something that cannot be separated from the lives of Acehnese people. However, in the war and peace conditions, rencong was a tool used by particular groups within the community of Aceh to undertake a threat and to beat or kill other people who were considered as an enemy. Generally, it was done by various means, mainly by stabbing, either from the front or back of the enemy.

Everything, which is originated from the human culture, will be dynamic since its form will change in times. In other words, the longer time or the longer distance of a human cultural outcome, the greater its differences will be.<sup>38</sup> The changes present a new development against every work of humans, including the way of defending themselves. The official use of rencong is still often used in the custom activities, for instance, in the ritual of marriage. In the event, it becomes as a part of accessories slipping to the waist of *lintoe* (groom). Additionally, rencong also becomes as a symbol of greatness for the special souvenir of Aceh, which is concerned as the travelers' craving.<sup>39</sup> Rencong is a traditional weapon that turns into a symbol of greatness

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<sup>35</sup> Rusdi Sufi, et. al., *Sejarah Tradisional Provinsi Daerah Istimewa Aceh*, (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Kebudayaan Daerah, 1988/1989), p. 27.

<sup>36</sup> Sudirman, *Sejarah Teknologi...*, p. 9-10.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> Sidi Ghazalba, *Pengantar Kebudayaan Sebagai Ilmu*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Antara, 1968), p. 109.

<sup>39</sup> Ihan Nurdin, "Romantisme Kampung Rencong", *The Atjeh Post*, Tahun I, Edition of IX, (Banda Aceh: PT. Media Sarakata, 2014), p. 70.

for the nobility. Similarly, over the development of culture and social life system, rencong is also getting its development and function transformation.

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## 5. The Structure of Rencong Aceh in the Museum of Aceh

Museum of Aceh is a place to storage and exhibits the historical items. Rencong, which is known as a collector item, is also secured in the museum and has three types, namely, *rencong meupucok*, *rencong meucugek*, and *rencong pudo*i. *Rencong meukuree*, however, is only available in the form of photographs.<sup>40</sup> Only two modifications of every type of rencong in the Museum of Aceh were found.

*Rencong meupucok* in the Museum of Aceh has two modifications with different materials. First type, it has 42 centimeters in length. It is made of horn overlaid with gold, wood, silver chain, and black iron. Its handle is made of *lungkei* (horn) coated with gold having the pattern of plants. Meanwhile, the sheath is made of wood. Its base part is carved with the ornate of plants. In addition, its chain is made of silver while its blade is made of black iron. Furthermore, the second type has a length of 42 centimeters and made of horn coated with gold, wood, mix gold, and black iron. Its handle is made of gold-wrapped horns with carved motive of plants. Its wood sheath also has a decoration of plants. Besides, it has mixture gold chain and black iron blade.

*Rencong meucugek* in the Museum of Aceh consists of two modifications with different materials. First modification has a length of 38 centimeters. It is made from *lungkei* and black or brown iron. Its handle is also made of *lungkei* with the motive of *pucok reuboeng* (bamboo shoots) over its base part. Its sheath is made of *lungkei* with the decoration of plants along with its blade made of black or brown iron. Meanwhile, the second modification has 40 centimeters in length. It is made from *gadeng* (ivory), silver, and black iron. The handle has no modification, however, its *cugek* on the top and bottom part is coated with silver. The sheath is made of wood with the decoration of *bungoeng* flower). Additionally, the blade is made of black iron.

*Rencong pudo*i or *puntong* in the Museum of Aceh also has two modifications with different materials. The first modification has a length of 38 centimeters. Horn, iron chain, and black iron are the materials for this type of rencong. Its handle is made of *lungkei* having no decoration. Its handle is also made of *lungkei* tied with brass. There are iron chain and black iron over the handle. Furthermore, the second modification, which is made from black iron, has 42 centimeters in length. Its handle is made from black iron as well as its blade. Besides, the

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<sup>40</sup> The interview with Edeh Warningsih, the Head of Collection and Education at the Museum of Aceh, Lam Dingin, Banda Aceh, 22 December 2018.

handle is decorated with *bungoeng delima* (flowers of pomegranate) at the edge of the handle. Its sheath is made from *lungkei* tied with silver while its blade is made of black iron.

*Rencong meupucok*, *rencong meucugek*, and *rencong pudoï* or *puntong* in the Museum of Aceh is made in Great Aceh. Those rencong are obtained by providing a redress from the public so the items are stored in the warehouse of the Museum of Aceh.

*Rencong meukuree* in the Museum of Aceh is only in the form of photo documents. This is due to rarity of this rencong. If the people of Aceh own it as a private collection, they mind to give it to the museum, although the compensation is given to them.<sup>41</sup> This type of rencong can be recognized from its blade. If *kuree* (particular pattern) is embedded on a rencong, on either *rencong meupucok*, *rencong meucugek*, or *rencong pudoï* or *puntong*, it is categorized into *rencong meukuree*. From the private collection of the people settling in Great Aceh, the writer found *rencong pudoï* or *puntong* embedded with *kuree*. However, such classification is done since *rencong meukuree* does not have a special form. *Kuree* can converge on all types of Rencong Aceh. In addition, *kuree* found in the blade of rencong may change its type, of which can be identified from its handle.

From a personal collection of a local Acehnese, this type has a length of 40 centimeters. It is made of *lungkei* and black or brown iron. Its handle is made from horn, which is partially wrapped with black iron. Besides, its sheath, which is also made from horn, has no decoration or motif with its black or brown-ironed blade.

## **6. The Structure of *Bismillāh* within Rencong Aceh**

The aforementioned function of rencong proves that the weapon becomes the object having a sacred and high value within the people of Aceh. Meanwhile, the form of rencong is very closely related to the Arabic letters contained in the sentence of *Bismillāh*. Starting from its handle to its edge of the blade has its own meaning. It is interconnected and inseparable in every initiation or action in the Muslims' point of view. Rencong Aceh is a manifestation of the abovementioned sentence, which means "By the name of Allah".

Each part of a rencong depicts the consonants of Arabic, namely *Ba*, *Sin*, *Mim*, *Lam*, and *Ha*. If those letters are combined, it turns into a sentence of *Bismillāh*. The combination can be sorted in the form of rencong interpretation as follows:

### *6.1 Ba*

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<sup>41</sup> The interview with Edeh Warningsih, the Head of Collection and Education at the Museum of Aceh, Lam Dingin, Banda Aceh, 22 December 2018.

The bended bottom part thickening on the curve of the rencong handle is a form of an Arabic consonant, *Ba*.

(ب)

#### 6.2 *Sin*

The shape located over the bottom part of rencong handle is a form of an Arabic consonant, *Sin*.

(س)

#### 6.3 *Mim*

The pointed blade of rencong sharpening down to the jagged and ironed base next to a rencong handle is a form of an Arabic consonant, *Mim*.

(م)

#### 6.4 *Lam*

The iron cover, which is over the base of handle to the blade edge of a *rencong*, is a form of an Arabic consonant, *Lam*.

(ل)

#### 6.5 *Ha*

The rencong edge narrowing plainly on the top and slightly upward on the bottom is a form of an Arabic consonant, *Ha*.

(هـ)

The combination of those characters becomes the embodiment of the sentence of *Bismillāh*.<sup>42</sup> Thus, rencong should not be used for vile things, which are banned in Islam. The rencong structure having a shape of *Bismillāh* does not include the shape of its sheath. The blacksmiths of rencong, in the past, in addition to having the knowledge in iron, they also possess well comprehension of calligraphy to create calligraphic carvings over the blade of

<sup>42</sup> T. Syamsuddin and M. Nur Abbas, *Reuncong*, (Banda Aceh: Museum Negeri Aceh, 1981), p. 5.

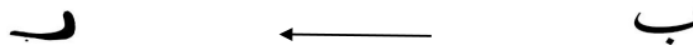
rencong. The Arabic calligraphy craved over the most of rencong proofs such assumption. Besides, the calligraphy is clearly to be read or to be understood like the sentence of *Syahadah* (declaration made by Muslims to convert their faith to Islam), *Allā Ilāha Illallāh Asyhadu, Wa Asyhadu Anna Muhammadar Rasulullāh*, meaning: “I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah”.<sup>43</sup> The people of Aceh believe that rencong is the manifestation of *Bismillāh* in the form of sharp weapon functioning as a tool for war. It also has a function to defend themselves, to protect their property, and to secure their religion from the enemies of Islam or the anti-Islam parties.

## 7. The Structure of *Bismillāhirrahmānirrahīm* within the Rencong Aceh

Based on its manifestation, the artwork can be classified into a pure artwork and an applied artwork. However, based on its form, artwork can be categorized into the geometric and non-geometric forms.<sup>44</sup> Rencong is started to find its real manifestation as we recognize it nowadays. Its form has a tendency to the Islamic belief occurring within the socio-cultural life of the Acehnese people. It consists of shapes or parts. The parts form the up the entirety of a rencong. In addition, those also have the meaning composed from the set of such craft. Therefore, the set forms the sentence of *Bismillāhirrahmanirrahim* having a meaning, “In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, and the Most Merciful”.<sup>45</sup> The manifestation of the sentence is explained comprehensively below.

### 7.1 *Ba*

The bended part of the rencong structure is being thick on the curve of the rencong stick having the form of an Arabic consonant, *Ba*.



### 7.2 *Sin*

The bended and widened structure over the stick where a wielder holds it has a form of an Arabic consonant, *Sin*.

<sup>43</sup> The interview with Hafnidar, the Head of Collection and Education at the Museum of Aceh, Gampong Mulia, Banda Aceh, 6 January 2019.

<sup>44</sup> RM. Vonna Darsa, “Kerajinan Rencong di Desa Meunasah Blang Kecamatan Tanah Pasir Kabupaten Aceh Utara”, *Undergraduate Thesis*, (Undergraduate Program of Education of *Sendratasik*, the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, University of Syiah Kuala Darussalam, Banda Aceh, 2014), p. 37.

<sup>45</sup> The interview with Tarmizi, a specialist of Arabic calligraphy (*Khattat*) of Aceh province, *Gampong Cot Gue*, Darul Imarah, Great Aceh, 8 December 2018.



### 7.3 Mim

The pointed and jagged structure dipping down to the ironed base next to the rencong handle forms an Arabic consonant, *Mim*.



### 7.4 Lam

The pointed structure tapering down over the bottom iron part next to the rencong handle is a form of an Arabic consonant, *Lam*, which is meant to illustrate the Arabic word of *Jalalah Allāh*.



### 7.5 Ra

The pointed and jagged body of a rencong directing down to the edge of the rencong shapes an Arabic consonant, *Ra*, which is meant to illustrate the Arabic word of *Ar*.



### 7.6 Ha

The edge structure of a rencong shaping from its top plain parts to its bottom being thin and bend upward is a form of an Arabic consonant, *Ha*. It is meant to depict the Arabic word of *Rahmān*.



### 7.7 Ra

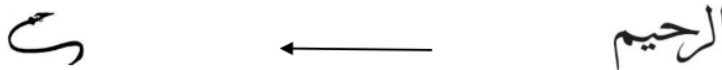
The sheath structure of a rencong forms an Arabic consonant, *Ra*, which is meant to represent the wood of *Ar*. It can be recognised from the spot where the blade of the rencong is plugged to the edge of the sheath.





### 7.8 Ha

The edge structure of a rencong sheath pointing from its top plain part to its bottom part bending and thickening upward forms an Arabic consonant, *Ha*, which is aimed to show the Arabic word of *Rahīm*.



The overall structure of a Rencong Aceh integrated from its base, stick, body, edge, and sheath, has a solid meaning, *Bismillāhirrahmānirrahīm* (In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful).

**Figure 1**



Figure 1: Rencong Aceh forming a sentence of *Bismillāhirrahmānirrahīm* (A private collection of Ustadz Tarmizi)

**Figure 2**



Figure 2: The private collection of Rencong Aceh belonging to Ustadz Tarmizi

In this case, each part integrating starting from the handle, the blade, and the sheath of a rencong is inseparable, even more, logically, when it is slipped to the waist. Meanwhile, the pattern over the handle of a Rencong Aceh along with its sheath does not influence on the form of the sentence of *Bismillāhirrahmānirrahīm*. According to Ustadz Tarmidzi, Rencong Aceh is a manifestation of the aforementioned sentence marked by its contemporary type of Islamic calligraphy having the creation of Arabic letters and sentences craved by its blacksmith. The

creation, thus, is suitable with the shape of the rencong. Therefore, the contemporary type of calligraphy has individualist in its nature so it needs more observations to analyses.

The observation related to the sentence of *Bismillāhirrahmānirrahīm* upon the private collection of Ustadz Tarmizi is continuously associated with the previous studies. Hence, it can be understood that the shape of a Rencong Aceh forming the sentence of *Bismillāhirrahmānirrahīm* is the initial speech of the Acehnese people in every deed or activity, particularly in the social cultural events upholding the values of Islam.

## 8. The Morphology Analysis upon Rencong Aceh

### 8.1 Rencong Aceh in the Form of Ba

The previous studies focus only on the form of Rencong Aceh having a manifestation of the words of *bismillāh*. In this study, the writer discovers more in depth towards the form of Rencong Aceh. From its whole form, *Bismillāhirrahmānirrahīm*, the Rencong Aceh also includes the Arabic letter *Ba*. It can be seen from its calligraphy type or Islam *khat*. It can be seen clearly if type of the letter *Ba* is *khat thuluth* and *khat kufi*. In addition, it can also be recognized through touching over the form, especially for those who have lack of vision.

The letterform of *khat thuluth* (one third) is italic and stretch as the pen used for *khat thuluth* 'adi and jali'.<sup>46</sup> This *khat* is also decorated with a specified ornament taken from the verses of Qur'an. The decoration is not separated from the method of *khat thuluth*, which has been determined, except the single letter using. *Ba* in *khat thuluth* has two kinds. First, it is similar with *ba khat naskhi*. However, the size of *ba khat naskhi* is longer and has italic style if it is compared to *ba khat thuluth* (one third). Second type has long and straight *ba*. This kind, which is called as *thuluth tawqi'*, resembles the extant form of the Rencong Aceh.

Meanwhile, *khat kufi* is the oldest Arabic calligraphy and becomes as the source of all Arabic calligraphies. It is called *kufi* since it is originated in the city of Kufa (Iraq), of which spread to all Arabian Peninsula.<sup>47</sup> Its square and thick shape becomes as the characteristic of the *khat kufi* letters. The letters can be adjusted to any preferable forms composed into sentences. In addition, the form of *khat kufi* is allowed to be decorated with flower ornaments within the sentences, excluding the single letter.

<sup>46</sup>D. Sirojuddin Ar, *Koleksi Karya Master Kaligrafi Islam*, 1st Edition, (Jakarta: Darul Ulum Press, 2007), p. 64.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 409.

The type of *ba* in *khat kufi* remains square and thick shape having various forms.<sup>48</sup> Every *khat* artist can adjust the space or size needed to the various forms of *ba kufi*. Of such forms, one of them is in the form of Rencong Aceh since this *khat* can be accustomed to the desired shape.

### 8.2 The Philosophy of the Shape of Ba within Rencong Aceh

The letter *ba* may form and occur within all types of Rencong Aceh. One of the types, rencong *pudoi* or *puntong*, also has clear form of *ba* although it has no *cugek* and *pucok*. Philosophically, a rencong is deserved to be shaped like the letter *ba*. It is done to maintain the sanctity of *bismillāh* against the unwanted things, which will be faced by the rencong wielder. Meanwhile, based on the view of monotheism, the beginning of *bismillāh* goes back to *ba*. Thus, *bismillāh* contains a vast meaning. Even some people cannot understand the meaning contained in it.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, it is understandable that a rencong is manifested from an Arabic letter since it has no *lahiriyah* meaning. *Ba* is a letter of *jar* having *ta'aluq* (dependence) in the previous sentence. Although it is utilitarian or impersonal, *ta'aluq* of *ba* has specific usefulness. For instance, "I am holding a rencong in the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful", of which the words of "I am holding a rencong" becomes as *ta'aluq*.<sup>50</sup>

In this discussion, *Bismillāhirrahmānirrahīm* actually has a longer meaning if the letter of *ba* or *bi* pronounced *Abtadi-U* (I begin) is not discarded or unwritten, so the meaning will be "I begin with the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful."<sup>51</sup> Thus, the sentence becomes as a kind of praying or a statement conveyed by the utterer. Besides, it can also be interpreted as a command form Allah, even though the sentence is not in the form of a command (Begin with the name of Allah).

The divine books such as the Torah revealed to Prophet Moses, the Psalms to Prophet David, and the Gospel to the Prophet Jesus, assembles within the Qur'an revealed to Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet.<sup>52</sup> The Qur'an consists of 114 surah and contains 30 *juz* (section) called *mushaf*. The meaning of those sections, then, assembles the surah of Al-fatiha. The surah

<sup>48</sup> Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (Jakarta: PT. Gramedia, 2008), p. 1544.

<sup>49</sup> The interview with Tgk. Muhammad Nasir, a teacher in Pesantren Babul Makfirah, Gampong Lamsabang, Kuta Baro, Great Aceh, 1 January 2019.

<sup>50</sup> The interview with Tgk. Muhajir Budiman, a teacher in Dayah Darul 'Atiq, Gampong Cot Cut, Kuta Baro, Great Aceh, 9 January 2019.

<sup>51</sup> Imam Muhammad Bin Ahmad Bin Abdul Bari Al-Ahdali, *Kawakib Ad-Durriyah*, (Maktabah Darul Ihya, t.t), p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Hasan Basri M. Nur and Ahmad Zaki Husaini, *Geografi Islam: Dari Geografer Muslim Klasik, Kiprah Penjelajah hingga Kantong-kantong Islam di Negara Non-Muslim*, (Banda Aceh: Yayasan Al-Mukarramah, 2015), p. 52-53.

consists of six verses, of which is added with the sentence of *Bismillāhirrahmānirrahīm*. Thus, the perfection of Alfatiha becomes seven verses.<sup>53</sup>

All contents and meanings of Al-fatiha are piled up into the sentence of *Bismillāhirrahmānirrahīm*. The sentence is piled up into the words of *bismillāh*, which in the end, the words goes back to *ba* located at the beginning of the word, *bismi*. It has meaning *Bi Kana Mā Kana Wabi Yakunu Mā*, which means, “I am going on what has been happened and I face anything that would be happened”. There are some Islamic scholars stated that the meaning of a dot in *ba* found within the sentence of *Bismillāhirrahmānirrahīm* signs *Asma Allah*. It indicates that He is God Almighty, the only God who is unmatched to anything.<sup>54</sup> Each of everything blended in with *ba* is inseparable, including the dot found under the letter. Meanwhile, Rencong Aceh also has the serration at the bottom next to the rencong handle. It serves to divine the enemy when it has been punctured to the target desired by the rencong wielder. Thus, each of which uniting with Rencong Aceh cannot be separated. Besides, it always blends in everything.

The form of Rencong Aceh has a deep and wide meaning as Islam becomes as the foundation for the people of Aceh. In their perspectives, any beginning or initiation of activities should begin with *Bismillāhirrahmānirrahīm*. It is done to gain the mercy and blessing of Allah. As the above explanation concerning the form of *Rencong Aceh*, which is very closely with Islam, so the term arose within the Acehnese people, “Whoever steps over a rencong, one will commit a sin.” This shows a very special position of *Rencong Aceh* for Acehnese people. Apart from the meaning contained, Rencong Aceh is one of the weapons, which has ever hold an important role for Acehnese people. For of whom, the weapon can defend themselves, religion, property, and the country of the enemies’ perturbation.

### C. Conclusion

*Rencong Aceh* stored in the Museum of Aceh is an iron rencong having approximately 38-42 centimeters in length. Its whole length is ranging from its handle to its edge. The perfection of a rencong can be seen if it is merged with its handle and covered with its sheath. The handle along with its sheath are made from gold, ivory, silver, and wood. Those are inseparable and becomes as a traditional weapon representing the Acehnese people. Rencong Aceh has a variety of types and shapes. It consists of four types, namely *rencong meupucok*,

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<sup>53</sup> The interview with Tgk. Muhammad Daini, a teacher in *Dayah Darul ‘Atiq, Gampong Cot Cut*, Kuta Baro, Great Aceh, 9 January 2019.

<sup>54</sup> Syaikh Ahmad bin Syaikh Hijaz, *Al-Majalis As-Saniah*, (Haramain, t.t), p. 3.

*rencong meucugek, rencong meukuree, and rencong pudoi or puntong*. Those types can be recognized from the shape of its handle, except *rencong meukuree*. The mentioned *rencong* has particular pattern over its blade.

There are two views related to the *kuree* decorated over a *rencong*. First, the *kuree* is deliberately made by its blacksmith having the purpose to provide the difference of his work with others'. Meanwhile, the second view believes that the *kuree* is originated from the characteristic of its iron used. However, not all *rencong* do have *kuree*. In addition, the meaning of *kuree* can only be understood by those experts who understand the matter of iron. Furthermore, there is one said that the shape of *Rencong Aceh* forms the words of *bismillāh*. Its structure can assemble the sentence of *Bismillāhirrahmānirrahīm* if it is seen in a whole set. On the regard of *Rencong Aceh*, the sentence, then, can be manifested to the shape of an Arabic consonant, *ba*.

The differences found upon each type of the morphology of *Rencong Aceh* depend from the way of examining and analyzing the manifestation and shape of the weapon. It has the manifestation of the Arabic consonant, *ba*. In addition, the letter can be seen through two types of calligraphy or Islam *khat*, namely *khat kufi* and *khat thuluth*. The first type, *ba kufi*, can be formed within four types of *Rencong Aceh* while the second type, *khat tsulud tawqi*, is only represented in *rencong pudoi or puntong*.

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