

# The *Sarakopat* Government System and the Relevance in the Implementation of Regional Autonomy in Central Aceh Indonesia

Syukri, Muhammad Aswin, Arifinsyah  
 State Islamic University of North Sumatra  
 North Sumatra, Indonesia  
 drarifinsya63@yahoo.com

**Abstract**—The *Sarakopat* Government System is four pillars in a government that consists of *Reje* (king), *Imem* (priest), *petue* (custom leader), and *Rayat* (people) constituting a republican government formed by patriarchal society from generation to generation should be applied in Regional Autonomy. But in reality, this government system is increasingly blurred, lack of democratic values and spirit of deliberation, so that it is almost destroyed by modernization. Whereas Regional Autonomy is able to arrange the political interests of the people in Tanah Gayo Aceh. Therefore, how is the role of Regional Autonomy in re-exploring the *Sarakopat* government system to be beneficial for the survival of the nation and state. The aim of this study showed the system governance must be preserved. This study has not been studied specifically and comprehensively before. This research used qualitative research through observation and in-depth interviews. The results of this study were: 1. The *Sarakopat* Government System is based on customary law and Islamic law which functions as a control tool in the fields of security, peace, harmony and public order. 2. *Sarakopat* was able to realize democracy based on local wisdom. 3. *Sarakopat* built cooperation in diversity to preserve peace in the framework of the Republic of Indonesia. Therefore, in the implementation of Regional Autonomy of *Sarakopat* Government was expected positive contribute to political stability conducive in Aceh particularly, and Indonesia in general.

**Keywords**—*Sarakopat*; *Sarakopat* government system; regional autonomy

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Gayo community is an integral part of the Indonesian. Generally, they have specific character and culture as the people of Aceh. They make the culture and custom of Gayo as a law in everyday life. According C. Snouck Hurgronje in his book "Het Gajoland en Zijne Bewoners," said that the traditions of the Gayo people were expressed in various proverbs and their customary expressions, if viewed at a glance sometimes they contained similar riddles. However, the customary words are the law's handle. (C. Snouck Hurgronje in Hatta Hasan, 1996: 70-71). Furthermore, the cultural system basically contains knowledge, beliefs, religious values, norms, rules, laws that become a reference for behavior in the life of a society (M. J. Melala Toa, 1997: 202).

The *Sarakopat* government system should function as a rope of trust in forming a collective life based on local wisdom, but the reality in the implementation of Regional Autonomy of government system receive less attention from the Regional Government, whereas through autonomy, the Regional Government has greater opportunities to encourage and motivate build a conducive area, so that the emergence of community creation and innovation can compete with other regions (Widjaja, 2002: 77).

In addition, the *Sarakopat* Government is a republican formed by patriarchal society for generations; it should be implemented in the implementation of Regional Autonomy. However, the *Sarakopat* Government system increasingly lacked the spirit of deliberation, which almost drowned in time. Whereas, Regional Autonomy opens wider opportunities to regulate the political interests of the people in Gayo.

*Sarakopat* as a forum for democracy and deliberation in solving problems and conflicts if they occur in the community in Tanah Gayo Aceh, so that *Sarakopat* should be able to function professionally and proportionally to build cooperation in plurality and in preserve peace within the framework of NKRI, but this function is increasingly underutilized and socialized to the public. Whereas, through autonomy, the region is more familiar with the community and its environment, so that the area is required to develop and improve human resources, management institutions, personal quality (bureaucracy), organizational feasibility and administrative sophistication (Widjaja, 2002: 77).

Actually, this paper seeks to explore as much as possible about the *Sarakopat* political system, then related to the implementation of Regional Autonomy in Gayo, Central Aceh. The *Sarakopat* political system, if it did not follow the flow of contemporary thinking, then the Gayo culture and the *Sarakopat* political system will disappear in the lives of society, it is in

line with A.R. Hakim Aman Pinan said that until this day we still know that the position of custom is necessary, custom is important, but in reality the custom does not play a good role around us, it is not wrong to say it is more classified as mere ceremonial (A. R. Hakim Aman Pinan, 1996: 12). In fact, the custom used has gone too far from the actual rules, so the color is no longer original, its development fades continuously, as if the custom, especially the *Sarakopat* Government as the main pillar in regulating the Aceh Gayo community lacks spirituality again in various aspects of life and community life (A.R Hakim Aman Pinan, 1996: 12).

## II. METHOD

This research used qualitative research which is closely related to the unique nature of social reality and human behavior itself. (Sanafiah Faisal, 1990: 2). The aim of this research is to get a profound picture of the *Sarakopat* government system and its relevance in the implementation of Regional Autonomy in Central Aceh Indonesia. The process of collecting data through observation and in-depth interviews focused on understanding the project under study by using "field research" and "frame of reference." The source of this research data consists of primary and secondary sources. The primary source came from the informant's answers by conducting in-depth interviews, namely informants or resource persons. The secondary sources of this research were information and data obtained from the offices of the Regional Government and the Traditional Gayo Aceh Institute, Indonesia.

In addition, the technique of data collection used in this study was library research data collection by collecting and examining documents that provided information needed by the researcher (M. Syamsuddin, 2007: 99). The data contained in the literature was collected and processed by editing, coding, tabulating, organizing, and research findings, so that the data and assessment are directed to find the position, strength of meaning, and the relationship between documents. (Asep Saepul Hamdi and E. Bahruddin, 2014: 12-13).

Throughout the researcher's sciences, the study of the *Sarakopat* Government system and the relevance in the implementation of Regional Autonomy in Central Aceh have not been studied much by experts. Actually, it included writings and books about this study have not been widely written and circulated in the community. Therefore, this research is considered important, new and actual. It called important because it can be used as a scientific reference. It called new because it was first done and has never been written and researched by experts, and it called actual because the problem of the political and government systems remains warmly discussed and dialogue in various scientific forums and forums.

## III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### A. *Meaning of Sarakopat in Gayo Society*

Etymologically, the meaning of *Sarakopat* is a term taken from the words of the Gayo language, which consists of two syllables: "Sarak" and "Opat." Sarak means body, and Opat means four powers. So *Sarakopat* is a body that has four power, consists of a king, elder, priest, and people. Whereas according to the terminology the notion of *Sarakopat* is the four pillars that are solid from the Gayo community's administration based on customary law that is in harmony with Islamic law.

In the Qanun Association of Central Aceh Regency, the understanding of *Sarakopat* is an institution of deliberation according to Gayo custom which consists of *Reje* (king) *Imem* (priest), *petue* (leader), and *Rayat* (people) (Association of Qanun, 2002: 142).

Thus, *Sarakopat* is a forum for government apparatuses that regulate and take care of the interests of the community based on customary law in line with Islamic law. The empowerment of customary law in Central Aceh was projected to increase the role of traditional values in supporting the implementation of Regional Government for the continuity of development, and to contribute to promoting order, public security, and creating harmonious and democratic relations.

The aim of the *Sarakopat* government in the Gayo community is in addition to maintaining and keeping the dignity and dignity of the region, village, and community, as well as maintaining the existence of Gayo customs and culture in harmony with Islamic teachings. Whereas the *Sarakopat* is functioned as to regulate and take care of all the interests of society and government, both in Sinte Murip (obligation to live) such as wedding ceremonies, religious ceremonies, social, circumcisions, bathing, etc, as well as in terms of Sinte Mate (obligation for death) such as, calamity, misfortune or death.

In the Aceh Tengah Qanun Association Number 09 of 2002 Article 8, told that *Sarakopat* as an institution of custom that :

- 1) *Sarakopat* was an active role in preventing charity.
- 2) *Sarakopat* was to take action against charity
- 3) *Sarakopat* carried out customary law and customary witnesses.
- 4) *Sarakopat*; completing four cases of kemalun, honey opat.
- 5) *Sarakopat* resolved which violated the custom of the four deeds.

*Sarakopat* as a Government Institution is affirmed in the Qanun of Central Aceh District Number 09 of 2002 Article 9 functioned as:

- 1) *Sarakopat* is located as a place for the Gelong Reje government apparatus, Subdistrict, the Village Government as a forum for deliberation / consensus which consists of Reje (king), Imem (priest), petue (leader), and Rayat (people) even consensual.
- 2) *Sarakopat* has a duty:
  - a) Appreciate the aspirations of the people in the administration of government, implementation of development and community development.
  - b) Resolve disputes based on customary law, customs and habits within a maximum period of 3 months.
  - c) Creating harmonious and democratic relationships and objective in problem-solving.
  - d) To carry out the task *Sarakopat* conducted investigative activities, data collection, making minutes of events.

This *Sarakopat* political system arose against two factors, namely internal and external factors. Internal factors in addition to maintaining and keeping dignity and honor "Sarak" (region, village), also maintained the upholding of customary law and Gayo culture in the life of the Gayo community which is in line with Islamic law. While external factors were in addition to developing "Sarak," custom and Gayo culture, also established in relationships with the outside world, both through friendly relations, marriage, trade and communication and politics.

During the Pre-Islamic period, the Gayo people at that time were still animistic, and the name of this ethnic group was Gayo, so it did not arise after the Batak 27 came to Takengon which was later Islamized. According to the version of the kings of Pasai it was stated that Gayo was an Oceanic who did not want to convert to Islam, then fled to the upper river of Peusangan, because it was called "Kaiyo" which means "Fear." Actually, the Gayo people were not afraid and ran away, but they moved to find out a more decent and broad livelihood to Samudera Pasai.

The *Sarakopat* political system when the Pre-Islamic era was still unknown because the political system at that time was "Sarak Tulu" (three Sarak in an integrated unit, namely *Reje* (king), *petue* (leader), and *Rayat* (people)).then, Islam came to the Land of Gayo around 173 H / 800 M, so the "*Sarakopat* political system" was formed because it was added by "*Imem*" (priest) as the implementer of Islamic Shari'a. In the era of Islamic, *Sarakopat* government being developed and richer because *Sarakopat* as the one and only being government term, there is no other government, especially during the Linge Kingdom (+ 181 H / 808 M), Hill Kingdom (+1580 M, or XV century), Kingdom of Cik Bebesen (+ 1607 M or XVI century), and Kingdom of Syiah Utama (+ 1580 M or XV century). In the Kingdom era, Gayo customary law and Gayo culture were well developed, very original and noble.

When Dutch colonialism came to Tanah Gayo in 1901-1942 and followed the Japanese occupation in 1942-1945, the *Sarakopat* government system began to decline, even less functioning, because the government structure was more controlled by the colonial government. Custom/ Gayo culture and the *Sarakopat* political system which was contrary to the Dutch and Japanese colonial interests were eliminated, while the Gayo Culture and the *Sarakopat* government system which supported the Dutch and Japanese colonial occupation were maintained and preserved.

In the Independence of Republic of Indonesia era in 1945, the *Sarakopat* administration was not functioning until the end of 1969. Therefore, in addition to the colonial factors, the economic factors were still weak, coupled with the country's unfavorable educational and political factors. At the time of independence, the *Sarakopat* political system could be said to be "reluctant to die not wanting," meaning that it was said to be alive but not functioning, and said to be dead, but it sounded that *Sarakopat* still existed. It was only in the Orde Baru era, the *Sarakopat* government reappeared, namely from April 1, 1969, the Gayo customs / culture began to be explored and developed, and the *Sarakopat* political system began to be implemented, through the sub-sector program in religious and socio-cultural development.

In the Reformation era (1998 to present) which demanded improvement in all fields, one of the most important was the birth of greater autonomy rights for the people of Indonesia, especially Central Aceh District. With broader autonomy, the Gayo people are more flexible in carrying out the customs / culture, religion, education and the *Sarakopat* government system in the Gayo Land. It is expected that with the birth of the Regional Autonomy law, the *Sarakopat* political system will play a more active role.

#### *B. Sarakopat and Regional Autonomy*

The composition of the government of the Gayo community according to C. Snouck Hurgronje is based on the *patrilineal republic* or *patriarchal republic*. This is the meant in the Gayo custom as explained before "*Reje musuket sipet, putue mu sudik sasat, imem mu perlu sunet, rayat genap mupakat*" (Aman Pinan, 1997: 12). The king has the function to uphold and maintain justice in leading the people. *Petua* investigates and examines the state of the people; Imam implements the Syari'ah of Islam. People are obliged to hold deliberations and consensus).

The explanation above is an ideal description of the *Sarakopat* political system, and it has been realized in the past to the present. So, the system of government in the Gayo Land is very unique, because it is based on Islamic teachings, it also develops as a manifestation of creativity, taste, work, and excellence. It evidently this uniqueness has relevance to the implementation of Regional Autonomy in Central Aceh. Because, It is cannot be implemented if there are not supported by the *Sarakopat* political mechanism, only the *Sarakopat* leadership is responsible for the implementation of Regional Autonomy launched by the Central Government in Central Aceh, both in the Regional Autonomy Law Number 22 in 1999 about Regional Government, Law Number 25 in 1999 about Financial Balance between Central and Regional Governments, Law Number 28 in 1999 about State Administrators that are clean and free from Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism, (KKN) and decision of president RI about Law Republic of Indonesia Regulation Number 18 in 2001 about Autonomy for Aceh Province (Law of OTDA Number 18 in 2001: 3).

*Sarakopat's* relevance to the implementation of the OTDA in the Central Aceh region was caused by several factors, First, by giving Regional Autonomy to Central Aceh, so that it could free to have a strong legal basis to increase and accelerate prosperity and equity for the people. Secondly, by giving greater autonomy, the Gayo people can be more free in carrying out their customs / culture, religion and education, which in turn is the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh, especially in the Gayo Land. Thirdly, Regional Autonomy is very strong in reviving the cultural elements of the local wisdom of the Gayo community to be developed and preserved (Interview Yulia, Musaradi, and Raidani March 12, 2017).

In an effort to build a democratic society and government and the implementation of Regional Autonomy well, there must be a mindset that needs to be developed, especially by its *Sarakopat*, namely the cultural values, religious values, political values and others, which if the pattern is developed and implemented, it will be strong in culture, strong in religion, strong in the principle of deliberation, besides that it can filter the negative impacts caused by modernization. Thus, there will be a generation of religious Gayo people, creative and dynamic of the young generation, as well as a democratic government clean from corruption, collusion and nepotism; It will be able to implement Regional Autonomy in the Tanah Gayo area of Central Aceh. For more clearly it can be seen from the scheme below:

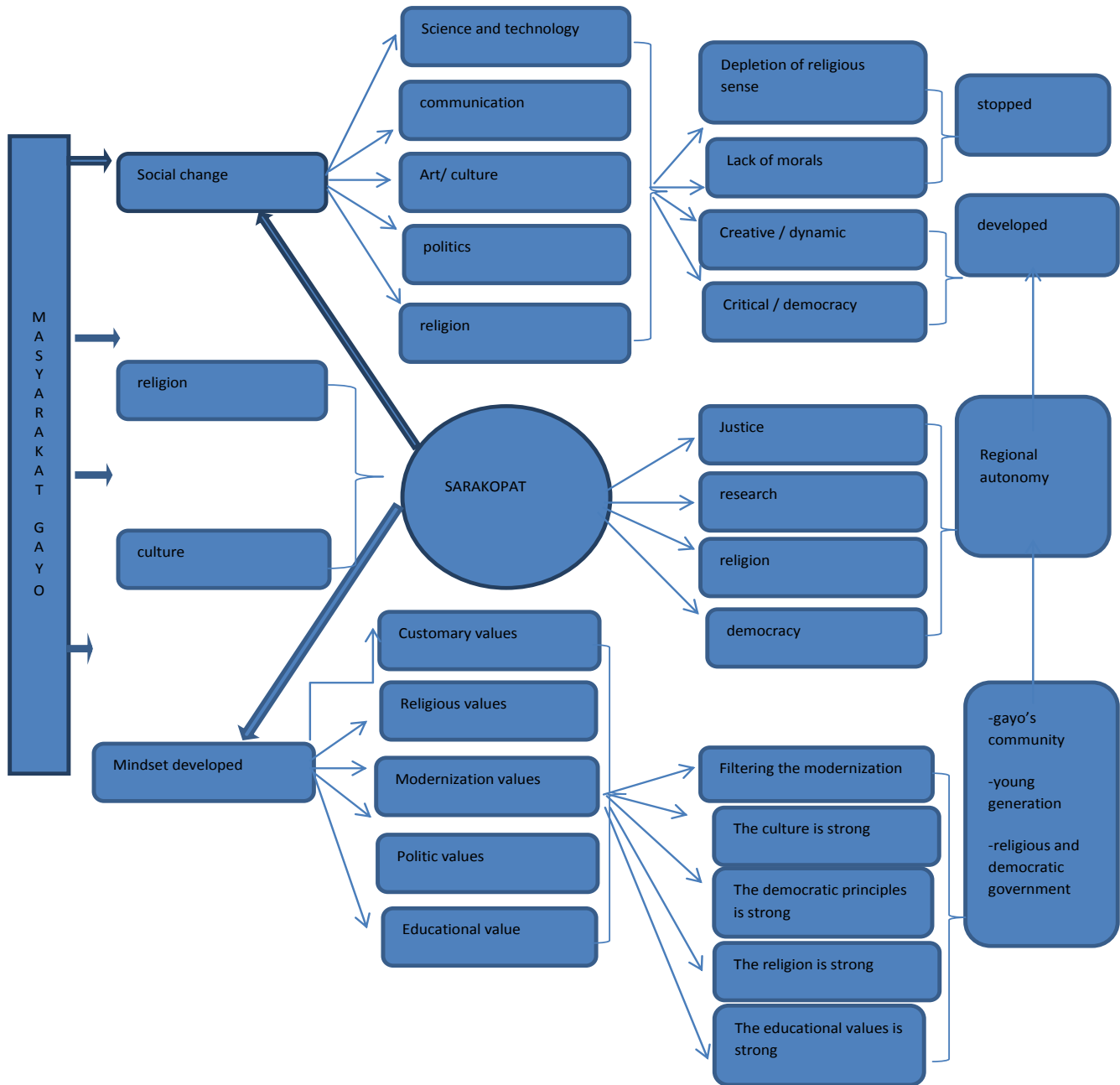


Figure 1. The Sarakopat

The political system of the *Sarakopat* government is a system based on customary law that is suitable with Islamic law, the position of *Reje* (king) in the Land of Gayo is as a "customary holder/*pemangku adat*." All power is in the hands of the king. King as head of government, as a prosecutor, as the judge, and as head of religion, a government based on the "*feudal system*." Which is carried out in "*monarchiheriditis*" (hereditary kingdoms), and the composition of government is based on patrilineal republics (through the straight lineage of the father) or patriarchal (from ancestors). Even so, *Reje* (king) must not act dictatorial or arbitrary, because he must obey customary law and the principle of "*keramat mufakat behu berdedele*" (consensus is a source of strength and democracy is a provision that applies in Gayo society).

Technically, the *Reje* (raja) helped by the *Sarakopat* government, it was also helped by the daily apparatus, namely "*Kejurun Belang*" (lead food crop farming), "*Penghulu Rerak*" (lead the source of water), "*Penghulu Uten*" (lead and supervise the forest), "*Penghulu Uwer*" (lead livestock), "*Penghulu Lut*" (lead fisheries business), "*Pawang Deret*" (lead and manage wildlife), beside that, *Reje* (raja) is helped by "*Biden*" (lead health matters), "*Hariye*" (public relations and information), and "*Banta*" (secretary or adjunct of *Reje*). If the *Reje* or king is unable to be temporarily replaced by "*Bedel*" (representative or



assistant of *Reje*), Same with *Reje*, *Imem* (imam), if he is unable to be temporarily replaced by "*Lebe*" (vice or assistant of *Imem*), and *petue* (*petua*) if he is unable to be replaced by "*Sekolat*".

The *Sarakopat* political system above is still relevant to the implementation of Regional Autonomy, because Regional Autonomy will not be able to run without the support of local wisdom, and without policies which based on traditional values / Gayo culture that are in line with Islamic law, and *Sarakopat* government political mechanisms. The Regional Autonomy Law No. 22 in 1999 is very relevant to the *Sarakopat* political system because the law has opened a new channel for the District and City Regions to take responsibility in public service to the community in managing their household themselves. The *Sarakopat* Institute as a forum for government is a vehicle to realize the implementation of the law so that *Sarakopat* can build cooperation in diversity and preserve peace in the framework of the Republic of Indonesia. So, both are complementary and cannot be separated in the implementation of Regional Autonomy.

The task of *Sarakopat* as a Gayo custom institution and government was not passive but active. The activity was determined by the extent to which the main tasks of the custom and government institutions were lived and carried out by the community, especially the officials of the traditional institutions and the *Sarakopat* Government. For this reason, it was necessary to explain the position and duties of *Sarakopat* as the body responsible for the implementation of customs and governance in the Land of Gayo.

#### 1) *The function of Reje (King)*

*Reje* (king) is a general leader who is chosen by the people democratically in a particular region, region or village. *Reje* have a responsibility to protect the people, care the people, and manage all the interests of the people and upholding the justice in leading the people. The *Reje* function is expressed in the "*Reje musuket sipet*" it's mean that *Reje* is obliged to weigh correctly and fairly (to judge or measure) every problem so that it can make fair and wise decisions. The characteristics of *Reje* are fair, loving, right and holy. In the custom, it is stated, "*Reje munyuket gere rancung, munimang gere angik*" (the king measures no more and no less, not weight fors one sided) (Association of Qanun, 2002: 146).

#### 2) *The function of Imem (Priest)*

*Imem* is chosen by the people to lead the implementation of Islamic law. The task of *Imem* is to investigate the people well whether the case is suitable with Islamic law or not. The results of the investigation were submitted to the king before the king made a decision. (Adurrahim Ali, 1996 : 27) in Gayo custom called "*Imem muperlu sunet*" (Imam educates and leads the people to carry out what is required by the Syariat), which includes Islamic law such as *wajib, sunnat, makruh, halal and haram*. *Imem* must be able to uphold *Amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar* and always remember Allah SWT (Syukri, 2017: 19).

#### 3) *The function of Petue (custom leader)*

*Petue* is a parent or the elder because of their intelligence and authority; they are selected by the people to research, plan, evaluate and find ways to solve problems the people, the results of the people's research are conveyed to *Reje*. (H. Mahmud Ibrahim, 1986: 129), or *Petue* have tasks to investigate by obtaining concrete evidence of something that happened to the people to be conveyed to the king before the king took a decision. *Petue* and *Imem* are the Judicial Board in the *Sarakopat* institution. *Petue*'s job was revealed by the customary word "*Petue mu sidik sasat*" (Parents investigate and examine the situation of the people. Then it is resolved, both by *Reje* and *Imem*).

#### 4) *The function of Rayat (people)*

*Rayat* (the people) are representatives chosen by the people to sit in parliamentary seats or the people's consideration council, such as DPRD known today. The people chosen consisted of community leaders, youth figures, both men and women. They have the potential to give people's aspirations. The task of the people in the Gayo custom is: "*Rayat Genap Mupakat*" (people's representatives deliberate to resolve the problems faced by the people and determine each program that includes all efforts for the interests and progress of the people). (H. Mahmud Ibrahim 1986, 130). Chronologically, the chart of the *Sarakopat* Government structure of the Gayo Aceh community follows:

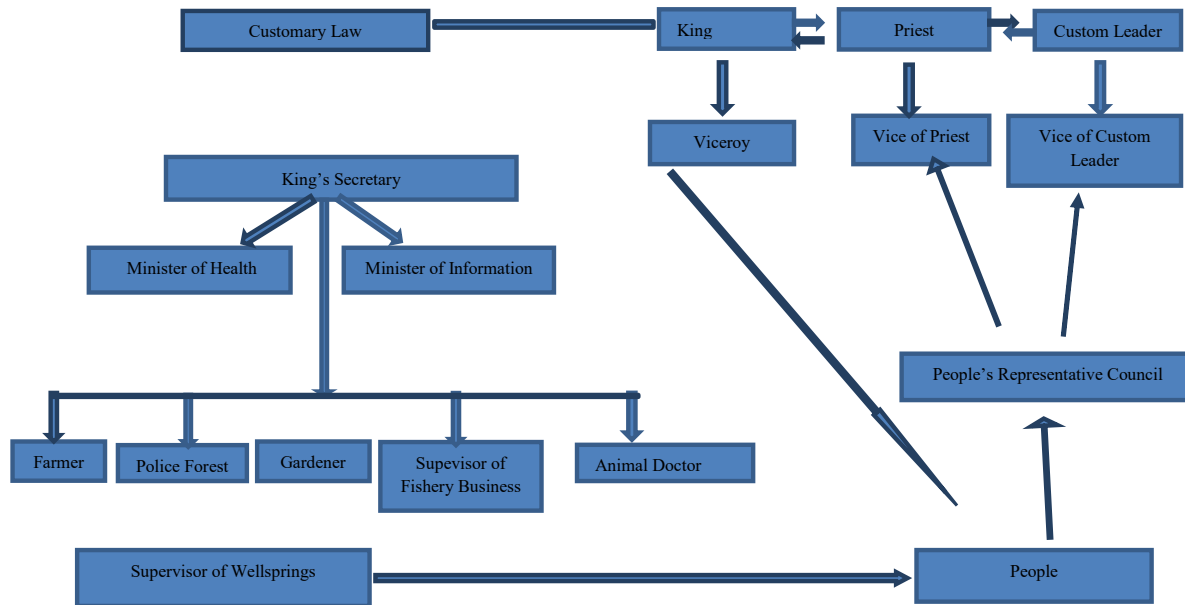


Figure 2. The *Sarakopat* Government

- 1) *Kejuruan Belang* : The person who is authorized in agricultural and horticulture.
- 2) *Penghulu Uten* : The person who is authorized to oversee the forest.
- 3) *Penghulu Uwer* : The person who is obliged to oversee the farm.
- 4) *Penghulu Lu* : The person who is obliged to oversee the fishery business.
- 5) *Pawang Deret* : The person who is obliged to oversee the animals and wildlife
- 6) *Penghulu Rerak* : The person who is obliged to keep the river (source of water/ water rope)

*Sarakopat's* relevance to the implementation of the OTDA in the Central Aceh region was caused by several factors, First, by giving Regional Autonomy to Central Aceh, so that it could free to have a strong legal basis to increase and accelerate prosperity and equity for the people. Secondly, by giving greater autonomy, the Gayo people can be more free in carrying out their customs / culture, religion and education, which in turn is the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh, especially in the Gayo Land. Thirdly, Regional Autonomy is very strong in reviving the cultural elements of the local wisdom of the Gayo community to be developed and preserved.

In Law No. 22 in 1999 about Regional Government, a new channel has been opened for provincial and district governments to take greater responsibility for public services to the local community. But the important issue to be studied and discussed is how far the Law opens a new channel for the district, especially Central Aceh to take responsibility in the service of the local community to regulate and manage their own households.

Even more the interest something to be discussed is how the implementation of the *Sarakopat* political system, both in the Gayo community itself and in relation to the Regional Government or Regional Autonomy which carried out in Central Aceh. For example, how do *Reje* (kings) carry out and maintain the application of customary law in government in Tanah Gayo, how does *Imem* (imam) or priest carry out their duties in dealing with religion, how does the *petue* (petua) observe the state of society, as well as how people (people) deliberate to achieve the word consensus in resolving and realizing the needs of the people. Based on all the task, the *Sarakopat* Government has close relevance in the effort to implement Regional Autonomy in Central Aceh.

The other issues that are very urgent to discuss are whether this *Sarakopat* Government system is preserved in the era of Regional Autonomy in realizing the local wisdom of the people of Central Aceh? and is *Sarakopat* still actual and needed as a Gayo customary institution and republican institution in the era of Regional Autonomy to build cooperation in diversity to preserve the peace of NKRI? Even, with Regional Autonomy, it is time the Gayo community has listened to the basics of philosophy, policies, and norms of the current structure of regional government, or which will be promulgated or will be transmitted. Including whether the *Sarakopat* Government stands alone and does not interact with other aspects such as the

kinship system, arts, economics, and religion. What approach is used in understanding the *Sarakopat* system, so that it can be understood radically and holistically?

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The *Sarakopat* government is based on the *patrilineal* republic or republics which are based on "*patriarchal monarhiheredetis*" (kingdom of male descendants). *Sarakopat* is relevant in the implementation of Regional Autonomy. This is natural because, in terms of the function of the *Sarakopat* political system, which is now sometimes synergetic with various life aspects of the Gayo Aceh community, Indonesia is already advanced and developing. In the implementation of Regional Autonomy, the *Sarakopat* Government system have the function as security control, peace, harmony, and public order, so that democracy can be realized based on local wisdom and efforts to build cooperation in diversity to preserve the peace Republic of Indonesia.

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