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Reconstruction and Restoration of Monuments as a part of City Identity Formation: Case Study of Teuku Umar's Kupiah Meuketop Monument in Meulaboh City, Indonesia ¹

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Abstract

Teuku Umar's Kupiah Meuketop Monument is the structure endorsed by the Meulaboh City government to represent the city as the land of Teuku Umar. Initially, the Dutch colonizers built the monument to celebrate the killing of Teuku Umar, a hero of the independence rebellion in Aceh. However, after Indonesia's independence, it was structurally and conceptually reconstructed by the local government and an NGO to foster the formation of city identity. How did the process change the monumentality of the structures? To answer this inquiry, semi-structured interviews and field observation was conducted to perform an analysis of the responses by the Meulaboh City residents and government officials toward the monument. As a result, the responses from the residents showed positive recognition and integration towards the reconstructed and restored monument as intended by the government officials. The study significantly contributes to the scholarship of identity formation boosted by monument construction in Indonesia.

Keywords: City Identity; Monuments; Reconstruction; Restoration; Teuku Umar; Meulaboh City.

1. Introduction

In 2004, a tsunami devastated the Aceh Province, including the *Kupiah Meukeutop* monument. It is the structure that the West Aceh government endorses to represent Meulaboh City's identity as the land of Teuku Umar. However, reconstruction on the previous site of the first two monuments proved implausible since the place where it once stood now became part of the sea. Therefore, it was decided to be performed elsewhere but still in the same area where the Dutch martyred Teuku Umar for the reconstruction. Another reason was that the site's land use is comprised of residential and commercial areas. In 2008, *Badan Rekonstruksi dan Rehabilitasi Aceh-Nias*², a non-profit group in Aceh, spearheaded the rebuilding process in another location. The government could not provide funding due to an inadequate budget; therefore, it was delegated to the non-profit group. The site was previously for the Prasamya monument and was destroyed during the tsunami.

The West Aceh government had dedicated funds to rebuild the Teuku Umar monument in a different location, one hundred meters away from its current location, eight years after the non-profit group rebuilt the monument. The government can surmise rebuilding the monument in the same area for three reasons; first, the Prasamya monument, where the 2004 meukeutop monument currently stands, will be rebuilt; second is about the observation that the people have abandoned its significance. They deemed its location unsuited for the monument as weeds had grown. The paint started to peel off, but most importantly, the people did not want to spend their time in the area where the 2004 Meukeutop monument was rebuilt; lastly, the Aceh government wanted to educate the youth about the history of Teuku Umar and redesign the monument (Karnita, 2015). The government hopes that the relocation place will attract more visitors and tourists who would be able to know about Teuku Umar and Meulaboh. By this, people would be learning the history behind Teuku Umar and how significant Meulaboh is for the history of Indonesia's independence from Dutch colonialism. Therefore, the monument was rebuilt, and people can read the information about the history of Teuku Umar on the inscriptions around the monument. Among the structures named after Teuku Umar, the government of Aceh endorses the *Tugu Kupiah Meukeutop Teuku Umar* monument as the official structure to recognize Teuku Umar and build the city's identity with it.

1.1. History of Indonesia and Aceh

The colonization of Indonesia by the Dutch began in 1800. Its numerous colonizers, including the British, French, and Portuguese, initially fragmented Indonesia. However, as wars progressed with the victory of the French and Dutch, the French monarchy granted more territories to the Dutch in 1824. Indonesian people and resources have been exploited for the benefit of the Dutch (Vickers, 2005). Because of the predicaments of the Indonesian people,

¹ This is an ongoing research article. Please contact the author before citing.

² *Badan Rekonstruksi dan Rehabilitasi Aceh-Nias* is a non-profit group established by the presidential office of Indonesia in 2004 to assist in the rehabilitation of those who are affected by the tsunami during the same year. The Ministry of public works was the in charge of the monument design constructed by the BRR.

different revolutionaries have begun claiming their independence from the Dutch. Teuku Umar was one of these revolutionary figures that fought for independence against the Dutch. Teuku Umar and his Acehese revolutionaries successfully drove the colonizers away from the province by employing guerilla warfare from 1873 to 1899 (Muda, 2019). In 1883, the Dutch government troops stationed in Aceh had come to terms with Teuku Umar, but a year later, another war broke out between the people of Aceh and the Dutch government. Teuku Umar left the Dutch forces and successfully brought weapons, ammunition, and money from the Dutch government on March 30, 1896. After discovering his true intentions, Teuku Umar became one of the Dutch government's top enemies, and he died in an ambush on February 11, 1899.

1.2. Teuku Umar: a local Hero of Meulaboh

Teuku Umar was born in 1854 and fathered by Teuku Mahmud, a renowned revolutionary fighter in Aceh (Dadek, 2019). During his time, Aceh was a colony under the Dutch. He served as the village chief in Meulaboh as early as when he was 19 years old. However, Teuku Umar unexpectedly joined the Dutch forces. His decision to transfer his allegiance had angered the Acehese and labelled him a traitor. Governor Van Teijin intended to use Teuku Umar to appease the Acehese people. On January 1, 1894, Teuku Umar has conferred the title Hero of Johan and was allowed to conscript his troops of 250 soldiers that were geared with weapons and ammunition (Barnard, 1997). His accomplishments were recognized both by his allies and enemies alike. Teuku Umar was also recognized in Meulaboh City and broader Indonesian territory.

In 1899 the Dutch executed Teuku Umar by accusing him of being a traitor and enemy. In the same year of his execution, following the Dutch governor's order to celebrate Teuku Umar's killing, an assistant resident, JJ Smicth, erected a monument where Teuku Umar was shot. The monument was painted white, so people referred to the location as the Batee Puteh (white stone). The monument had the shape of a pillar. On the monument, there was an inscription reading "Heir Sneuvele Teuku Oemar February 11, 1899," which translates to "here where the death of Teuku Umar February 11, 1899" (Dadek, 2019). In contemporary times, we commemorate Teuku Umar on the same date by presenting a short drama about his struggle during the colonization of Aceh by the Dutch. From thereon, Meulaboh City has been oral-historically known as the land of Teuku Umar. Generations of Meulaboh residents have adopted the idea alone but have yet to be identified in any formal literature.



Figure 1. First Monument of Teuku Umar (KITLV, 2017)

Teuku Umar is the most recognizable with his meuketop (Dadek, 2019). The Kupiah Meuketop was a traditional hat often worn by the Acehese men. It is worn during traditional ceremonies such as wedding parties and other traditional events. Kupiah Meuketop is divided into four sections with their respective philosophies. The first part means law; the second part means custom; the third part means qanun or regional regulations; and the fourth part means reusam, referring to everything with elements of customs, procedures and rules of life. The hat has carried out these meanings since ancient times.

Moreover, Kupiah Meuketop has yellow and red base colours. The colours used here also have meanings. Red symbolizes heroism; yellow means kingdom or state; green signifies religion; black means firmness or determination; and white means purity or sincerity, representing how Acehese should live. Thus, both the colours and the parts of the Kupiah Meukeutop represent the way of life of the Acehese people, which should be based on religion, custom, qanun and reuse. According to this, Teuku Umar is still remembered with his Kupiah Meuketop, which embodies the Acehese spirit.



Figure 2. Kupiah Meuketop (Tropenmuseum, 1954)

1.3. Reconstruction and Rebuilding: Monument

Monuments are built to commemorate a place or person's significance to the country or city's history. These also contribute to the identity of where these are located (Antonova et al., 2017). They are landmarks to present the city's image, identity, and recognition. This study's structure was titled the Kupiah Meuketop Teuku Umar Monument. The Kupiah Meuketop (name of his hat) has been synonymously identified with him, and it is one of a kind in the whole Indonesian archipelago. The Aceh Government has designated the Tugu Kupiah Meukeutop Teuku Umar as the centre of its identity formation, making Meulaboh City the "land of Teuku Umar." Eight years after the nonprofit organization repaired the monument, the West Aceh government set funds aside to reconstruct it in a different place, 100 meters from where it is now. The justification for moving the 2004 Meukeutop monument to a new place may be broken down into three categories: first, the Prasamya monument will be renovated; second, it is believed that the people have forgotten the meaning of the monument. Its location was deemed unsuitable for the memorial because of the plant growth and paint peeling. More importantly, the locals do not want to remain long in the vicinity where the 2004 Meukeutop Monument was rebuilt. Lastly, the Aceh government wanted to educate the youth about the history of Teuku Umar and redesign the monument (Karnita, 2015).

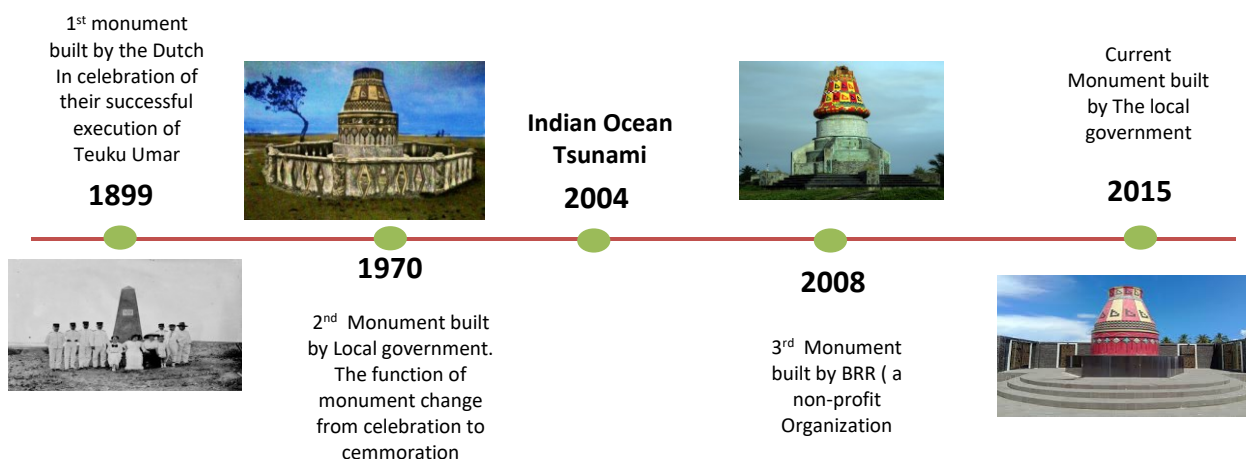


Figure 3. Monument Teuku Umar Timeline (Illustration by the Author)

Reconstructing and rebuilding the new monument present the unenviable task of addressing the usual problems as cities inevitably evolve, and each particular building also does so throughout time. As a result of the complexity and saturation brought on by these adjustments, more beneficial changes are now possible (Gnezdilov, Kapnina, & Martynyuk, 2019). It is essential to restore architectural history in the right way to boost the building's relevance for all people and preserve it. Memory serves as a bridge between generations (Coane et al., 2022). Reconstruction is the mostly archetypal repair of destroyed architectural monuments, historic buildings, or portions of buildings in architecture and monument preservation. It is a typical process that dates back to many years ago. Historically significant structures and ensembles are often rebuilt after being damaged by conflict, deterioration, structural

alterations (such as demolding), or demolition. Many rebuilt structures are now recognized as cultural landmarks, and some are even UNESCO World Heritage Sites. These processes are particularly prevalent in several regions affected by post-war cultural asset destruction and wartime casualties, such as Poland and Germany (Jeleński, 2018). Partial reconstruction refers to restoring particular elements of an existing structure, such as a facade, after removing stucco. This study intends to answer several crucial questions. For instance, what motivations or goals drove the government to relocate-rebuild the Teuku Umar monument? How did this process change the monumentality embodied in the monument's structures? How did the local population perceive these government's actions in connection to local identity?

1.4 Monument and Monumentality

Monuments have been the subject of numerous studies conducted from the Western perspective. It fosters curiosity about the Western and Southeast Asian, specifically Indonesian perspectives on monumentality studies. Johnston and Ripmeester have studied in St. Catharines, Canada, looking over a monument dedicated to Alexander Watson. Their study aims to identify how the local population of St. Catharines has engaged in the monument commemorating Alexander Watson's service and his death (Aziz Amen & Nia, 2018, Amen & Kuzovic, 2018, Amen & Nia, 2021, Aziz Amen, 2017). The authors employed archival research and surveys among the local population to understand the monument's role in the residents of the city. The Watson monument is a replication of the person with an engraving underneath that reads Watson. Based on the survey result, the study concludes that the local population could no longer know who Alexander Watson was. However, the statue resembles of a soldier. The people at least recognized the characteristics and idea of what a soldier is capable of doing. The heroic deed by Watson was mentioned, but the person himself was no longer remembered (Johnston & Ripmeester, 2007; Nia & Suleiman, 2017).

Aside from studies written in English about Indonesia pertaining to monuments as a symbol, there are studies written in Bahasa Indonesia. As an example, there was a study in West Sumatera specifically at Koto Tinggi. The struggles of the monumental PDRI creation is one of the identities to commemorate or remind their people. However, the recent condition of the monument is poor because there were no people trying to maintain it, and most members of the society does not know about the monument itself. This research was purposed for describing and analyzing the monument building of PDRI through examining its structures and the meaning of its building (Wimas, 2016).

This research uses the qualitative methodology with description research to describe everything found in the field and agrees with the research and reality. The purpose of the descriptive method is to describe or analyze the result of research, but it does not use to make a more comprehensive conclusion. The research results show that the PDRI monument was built to remember the PDRI (The Emergency Government Monument of the Indonesian Republic) events (Wimas, 2016). It is about moving the capital from Jakarta to West Sumatra. The significant factors that influence PDRI monuments are historical features such as the person who was in the event and the designers.

Meanwhile, the meaning of it becomes the core principle of how to design the monument. Besides that, a monument is not just evidence of an event that happened, but it is built to be a characteristic or identity of a place. Thus, the monument must simultaneously tell the history and send a message to society. Overall, the literature review shows similar results brought on by the varied studies conducted to examine different monuments. How similar are the results of studies conducted regarding different monuments? A common theme has been shown among the presented studies, which were similar and different. It also presents why the monument was created. Mostly, it was through the creation of social unity among the local residents of an outstanding resident that significantly contributed to developing a shared consciousness among the residents.

2. Material and Methods

To answer the questions, the study would employ several qualitative and phenomenological methods, including:

1. Semi-Structured Interview with Meulaboh City Government

The benefit of conducting a semi-structured interview with the city government is to gather their side of the story, particularly about the numerous reconstruction processes of the monument. It is crucial because it would allow the researcher to determine whether the government's motivation has been correctly conveyed to the residents. It would also prove helpful in examining whether the government's actions have effectively improved the monument's condition and if the residents have integrated the monument into their urban activities. Monuments in Aceh continue to have significance as time passes. However, despite the effects of a recent disaster, the newest monuments appear to receive less attention than the older ones. It simply means that it will take longer for a more recent symbolic monument to root in people's memories or easily be recalled (Van Leeuwen, 2011).

2. Field Observation

As the researcher is also a city resident, I would get the opportunity to conduct participatory observation on the residents' responses to the novel monument and compare observation outcomes with the interview results and the government's narrative. During this process, the researcher would visit the monument area at different times, both on weekdays and weekends. The residents' varied behaviors during these two periods of time in a week could be added to the study's findings. Based on such a considerable amount of observation findings, the researcher would also have a better capacity to express, through writing, the state of the monument and how the city's residents interact with it and integrate the structure as part of their urban activities.

3. Results

The study was carefully conducted in compliance with the standard ethical requirement set by the Ministry of Education of Taiwan for research. It requires the researcher to pass an online exam to obtain a certificate of research ethics. The document assures that the researcher has a basic understanding of the current ethical guidelines in research set by international institutions. The study participants were briefed about the ethical guidelines of the research prior to the formal conduct of the study. The responses from the Meulaboh City Government and the field observation were discussed independently but synthesized before concluding.

3.1. Semi-Structured Interview with Meulaboh City Government

In 2008, four years after the tsunami in Aceh, the local government of Meulaboh City assigned Badan Rekonstruksi dan Rehabilitasi Aceh-Nias, a non-profit organization in Aceh, to lead the rebuilding process in a different location but still in the same area. After seven years, the Meulaboh City government decided to reconstruct the monument somewhere else but still in the same area, Batee Puteh. Two reasons explain the decision to relocate the Meukeutop monument from the location it was built in 2004: first, the Prasamya monument will be rebuilt instead since it was the original monument prior to its destruction from the tsunami; second, it is thought that the public no longer understands the significance of the monument so rebuilding and redesigning the monument will help them re-understand its significance.

Moreover, to commemorate the effort of the Acehnese soldier who carried Teuku Umar's body to his burial, located 25 kilometers from Batu Putih, the local government often holds an annual event called Tracing the Path of Teuku Umar. Participants in the event begin their journey to Teuku Umar's burial in Meugo, west Aceh, at the Kupiah Meukeutop monument location. The local authority makes a route map, simply guiding people to travel through during the event. Relocating and reconstructing the monument in Batu Putih could satisfy both the government's and the local people's demands, providing a more suitable location to hold the event and simultaneously responding to other reasons mentioned above. These reasons also ensured that people would remember the monument as a symbol of Meulaboh City. Also, the government could change the design to its original way and add more structures to suit the current needs. For instance, a stage was built for theatre performances during the event, and a wall with the script from which visitors can read the history.

We rebuilt this monument to commemorate Teuku Umar's fight against Dutch colonialism. Batu Putih area is a historical place. When Teuku Umar passed away, the Dutch built the first monument to celebrate their success in killing Teuku Umar. Later on, the monument was destroyed by a natural disaster. Then the local government built a monument symbolizing Teuku Umar's hat as a reminder and a form of recognition for Teuku Umar's struggle. This Teuku Umar monument shattered once again because of another natural disaster in 2004. In 2016, the local government moved the monument 100 meters away and built the new

monument in its current setting. The reason [is that] the site for the monument built by the non-profit group originally belongs to another monument called the Prasamya monument (Alaidinsyah, 2019/08/24).

After a long-term debate, the West Aceh Government agreed to relocate the monument 100 meters away from its prior location. The West Aceh Regent (2012-2017) emphasizes the following concerns of the plan. Relocation and reconstruction of Teuku Umar's Kupiah Meukeutop Monument became a significant undertaking for the local administration. They invited the specialists to participate in the monument's design and renovation process. The monument was designed with input from the West Aceh region's Department of Culture and Tourism. After examining the monument's physical form, they sought to create a memorial as close to Teuku Umar's original hat as possible. They modified the design and penned Teuku Umar's biography on the monument's surrounding area. Another reason for transferring and reconstructing it is to inform the next generation of the monument's significance to Meulaboh city. Teuku Ahmad Dadek, the executive director of the Regional Development Planning Agency, said,

"We want to educate residents and tourists about the history of Meulaboh City and Teuku Umar. That is why I put the history of Teuku Umar on the monument's wall. This intends to educate people on why this structure exists in Meulaboh. We want to show that Meulaboh City is a city with a long and exciting history. This city was built on the blood of the heroes. So, we have to appreciate this thing. We hope residents and visitors can read and learn from Teuku Umar's story and learn that this city is a city of Teuku Umar". (Dadek, 2019/08/19).

After time passed since its announcement in early 2015, the architect Tonyak and his crew began the project of relocating and rebuilding the monument 100 meters away from its original location. The monument's official grand design site now includes more space within *Batee Puteh*.

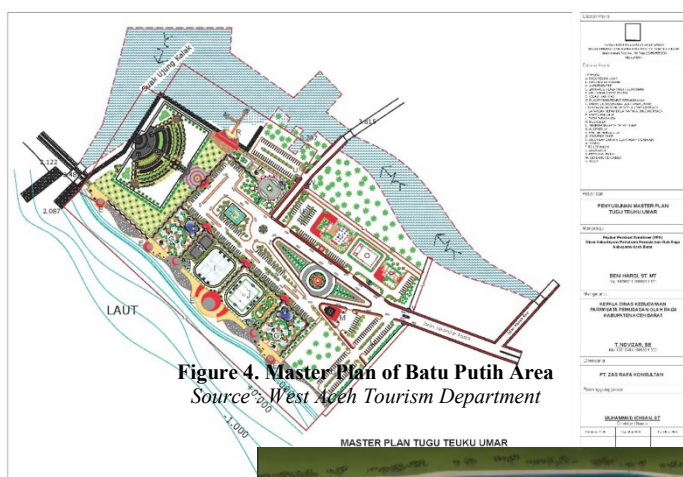


Figure 4. Master Plan of Batu Putih Area
Source: West Aceh Tourism Department

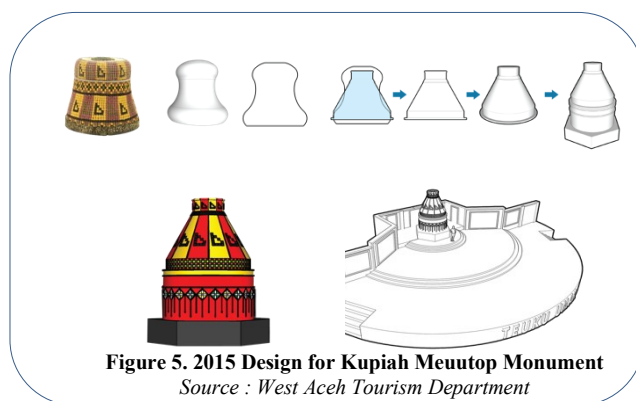


Figure 5. 2015 Design for Kupiah Meuutop Monument
Source : West Aceh Tourism Department



Figure 6. Grand Design of Batu Putih Area
Source: West Aceh Tourism Department

3.2. Field Observation

The observations were conducted from morning until early evening when nobody was allowed to wander around, particularly after sunset, due to religious regulations. Generally speaking, the surrounding area of the monument needs a pedestrian space. There was also no parking space, such as parking lots around the monument. With access

to public transportation, a private vehicle is needed if you welcome the idea of going to the place on foot. Therefore, a parking space is necessary in the area for order and safety precautions for the visitors. As most of the residents in Meulaboh City rely on personal scooters and vehicles instead of public transportation, having parking lots near public facilities is necessary. Inside the monument park are no more stores besides one cafeteria, a small-scale business like a street vendor, or other mobile businesses that could have provided employment opportunities. This is because the monument has a limit on what could it serve as both a public space and a government-owned tourist attraction. Based on the restrictions and social norms established by the city government, younger people typically participate in more entertaining activities. Older adults, on the other hand, prefer more social activities. Those who fish in the neighboring rivers are the exceptions. Activities in the park of the monument constantly change between weekends and weekdays.

An information booth was also not found even though the local government aimed to boost tourism by guiding traffic toward this area. Several panels are newly placed around the monument that are engraved with inscriptions to educate people the meaning and history of this monument. The following table lists all the facilities that I identified as observed and lacking around the monument:

Table 1. Observed and Lacking Facilities around the monument

Observed Facilities	Lacking Facilities
Open space	Proper parking space
Cafeteria	Signages for rules
Resting Huts	Restrooms
	Garbage bins
	Complete concrete pavement
	Emergency station
	Information booth

3.3 Relationship Between the People and Monument

This section investigates whether the monument's new spatial arrangement induces positive changes and how the local population uses the area. Due to the monument's sites being away from the area where people used to hold activities during the earlier relocations, the public valued these locations less. The monument's first and second relocations were unsuitable for social gatherings and became gloomy over time (Karnita, 2015). The absence of local events at the old sites caused these two previous monuments to have little urban significance. This time, based on the strong intentions that the administration had to impact what the residents of Meulaboh City do, the monument has become a valid component of the city's character incorporating the urban dynamics and the intensive activities in the urban region.

Different age groups have their preferences for conducting varied activities around the monument. Younger people typically participate in more entertaining activities. Older adults, on the other hand, prefer more social activity and to be remarkably close to the cafeteria. Those who fish in the neighboring river are among the exceptions—the activities in the area of the monument change on weekends and during weekdays. Given the social context and resources available in the city, the actions of the people and their relationship to the buildings that create their urban identity have some restrictions. It also explains why, despite developments in technology and entertainment options, more people continue to be drawn to spend more time outdoors.

People in Meulaboh City, for instance, have no access to shopping centers or movie theaters, so they are limited to two recreation options: staying inside their homes or stepping outside to mingle with the community. Most of the residents in Meulaboh City are familiar with their neighbors because they frequently visit the same leisure spots, such as the monument area. The limited communal places that everyone could be during their leisure time in Meulaboh city make the community so connected.

Some parts of the monument should be improved, such as a need for government ordinances to maintain its cleanliness and missing necessary facilities supporting the public to utilize this area as an open space. There are lull moments in the monument area due to the absence of vital activities. The traffic of the people dictated the dynamism in the monument area without intervention from the government. According to the field observation notes, the monument area was often littered, and no trash bin was found. There was also no public toilet installed. The absence of a parking area and the unfinished pavement near the entrance/exit showed that the government's development and investment in completing the monument area was only going halfway towards finishing all the projects. Other activities can be held here due to a private-owned cafeteria near the monument. Otherwise, it could

only attribute to the natural environments, such as the beach and river near the monument, which were the significant features that lured people into visiting it.

The negative factors deserve improvement by the local government to maximize the opportunity provided by the social structure, professional environment, and limited infrastructure in the city. The residents and visitors utilize the area as a public space and employ small-scale enterprises as people enter the monument. The absence of other stores except for the lone cafeteria provides income opportunities for small-scale enterprises such as street vendors and other mobile businesspeople based on the social norms and limitations imposed in the city.

Regardless of these flaws, the current site of the monument is better than the previous one. The current location was nearer to the main road, but the monument was dedicated to a larger space than the previous one. Comparing the two sites, this study discovers, despite the distance between the site and the main road, people preferred a larger space (Karnita, 2015). I observed that more activities could occur in the current area because more roads lead people to the monument's location. The other finding was that the activities conducted in the current area were more diverse than in the previous monument, which only has a few due to limited facilities.

The monument became a crucial part of the city's identity formation when it began to incorporate into people's everyday life and beyond. It has become a "living" monument compared to the concept of a "dead monument," as Elliot (1964) described. The monument has become part of Meulaboh City's identity as people often simultaneously visit the monument, and the dynamics increase at certain times during the day. The social interaction also differed from day to day. No matter how people who visit and conduct activities in the monument area remained the same: residents and visitors from Meulaboh City.

4. Discussion

The results reflect the dynamism of the monument, as reiterated by the review of related literature. The monument has transformed from a symbol of Acehnese defeat towards Acehnese heroism. Furthermore, its function has also evolved throughout time through reconstruction and redesign. As the monument changes form and becomes more suitable for public use, its importance to the city has also increased. As stated by the head of the Regional Development Planning Agency, Teuku Ahmad Dadek, they convey their intention to elevate the monument's function:

- They do not wish to confine the structure and serve mainly as a display to commemorate someone's death.
- The agency wanted to create dynamism and a self-functioning monument to educate the people about its importance and become an integral part of their daily or weekly activities.
- The current monument design integrates the efficiency of the space utilization with the available information about Teuku Umar.
- The procedure itself has no hidden meaning on itself, but rather, it is simple. The hat of the national hero became part of the Acehnese custom, and his story became a serving guideline to becoming a model Meulaboh resident.
- The government has propagated the life of Teuku Umar through literature and designs. His life became a mould for the residents to follow, creating the social construct of being a resident of Meulaboh.

It has been underlined that the local government's capacity to reconstruct the monument and make it more dynamic to fulfil its function changed with time. The provincial government is still challenged by or enabled by several underlying issues. It was also determined that there would be better solutions than reconstructing one monument in favour of the other. In addition to Teuku Umar, the city's limited concept also impacts how the government can move forward and implement public infrastructures that enable the city's residents to establish a sense of shared identity.

Meanwhile, visitors respond more favourably based on the field observation of the monument and the people.

- Their diverse reactions could be seen in their activities around the monument, which their age group also influenced.
- Given the social context and resources available in the city, the actions of the people and their relationship to the buildings that create their urban identity have some restrictions.
- It also plays a role in why, despite developments in technology and entertainment options, more people continue to be drawn to spending more time outdoors.

The people have only sometimes had a positive experience with the monument. Some areas for improvement were discovered, including the absence of government regulations to maintain its cleanliness, the absence of facilities for a location used by the public as an open space, and lulls in the monument area caused by the lack of other suitable activities. The traffic of the people determined the dynamism without government intervention. The negative aspects demand improvement from the local government to make the most of the chances provided by the social structure, work environment, and restricted infrastructures present in the city. Also, the present study was limited by the following factors:

- Limited number of respondents from the residents.
- Some research materials needed to be translated as their source is not English.
- The interview could have been expanded to several Meulaboh residents; however, due to time constraints, the interview was only conducted among government officials.

As the limitations could have influenced the results and conclusion of the study, it remains essential to acknowledge that this study is a novel attempt at a discourse of how the Kupiah Meukutop monument has changed throughout time and retained its monumentality through reconstruction and redesign.

5. Conclusions

Due to the monument's location being away from the usual activity areas during the previous move, the public valued it less. The monument's first and second relocations were unsuitable for social gatherings and became gloomy over time (Karnita, 2015). The absence of local events at the historical site, which gives these two antecedent monuments little urban significance, demonstrates this negative remark about the two earlier monuments. The intentions of the administration have an impact on what the residents of Meulaboh City do. The monument becomes a valid component of the city's character and a part of the urban dynamics related to the intensity of activity in the urban region.

Regarding a direct comparison between the monument's former location and the current one, the relocation and reconstruction have benefited the monument. The monument was built in a greater area than the previous one, dedicated to a location near a major road. This survey revealed that although the second location was farther from the main road, individuals preferred it because of its greater accessibility (Karnita, 2015). Due to increased social traffic toward the monument's current position, additional activities were seen. Compared to the former monument, which had a monument as its facility, the other artefacts have also attracted a wider variety of activities.

When a structure or element is interwoven into people's daily lives and interacts with them, it legitimately becomes a part of the city's identity. Even after considering the periods of inactivity noted from the responses, the monument has contributed to the city's identity of Meulaboh City because visitors have a general understanding of when to visit it, and activity levels are at their highest at particular times of the day. Although there are daily variations in the social interactions in the monument, Meulaboh City inhabitants and tourists continue to visit and participate in the activities there.

Furthermore, the decision to restore and reconstruct the monument has been in congruence with the motivation of the Meulaboh City government to foster a sense of monumentality in the rebuilt monument of Teuku Umar's Kupiah Meuketop. Lastly, the key points from this study can be summarised as follows:

- A monument catalyzes people to socialize, carry out their daily activities, and integrate them into their daily lives. It is more than just an object. A site offers the chance for activities to be carried out and the community to enjoy itself, whereas an object is merely static and serves itself.
- Individuals recognize, experience, and wander around the monument as a location. The Meulaboh residents have incorporated the monument into their daily life concerning the city. Nevertheless, based on the input from the study participants, its potential is still not being thoroughly utilized. People's comments and the researcher's observations were used to identifying improvements that may help the monument become even more part of the city's identity.
- Because of how the citizens interacted with the location and the kind of activities they were able to engage in, their daily experiences, lifestyles, and perceptions of the monument will all be influenced by these factors. By examining the responses from the semi-structured walking interviews, it is possible to determine how the participants perceived the monument about the time they spent there and the activities they engaged in. Additionally, it was found that who they are matters because their purpose depends on their companions.
- To increase the monument's relevance to the city and society, the government, urban planners, and architects must situate it within a broader urban context. People felt excluded by the government when they were not allowed to contribute to the monument's design, making it challenging to acknowledge its

place in society. The people, instead of the government, would use the structure more. As a result, the public should be involved in the design and construction of the monument.

Future studies could address the limitations stated above to confirm the study's findings and expand the discourse involving Teuku Umar's Kupiah Meukutop. Other research methodologies may also enable other studies to support or provide a different avenue for discourse involving the monument. A more extended observation period may also be a welcome approach to determine and further validate the initial findings based on this study which represents a novel attempt at providing an academic discourse towards Teuku Umar's Kupiah Meukutop.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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