

HIKAYAT PERANG SABIL: A STUDY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ISLAMIC COMMUNICATION ETHICS IN ACEHNESE SOCIETY

*HIKAYAT PERANG SABIL: UM ESTUDO SOBRE A
IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DA ÉTICA DA COMUNICAÇÃO ISLÂMICA
NA SOCIEDADE ACEHNESE*

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Abstract

This article examines Hikayat Perang Sabil as a medium of Islamic communication, focusing on the implementation of Islamic communication ethics within the socio-cultural context of Acehese society. The hikayat functions not only as a war literary work but also as a means of dawah that conveys religious, moral, and spiritual values. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using textual analysis and field research methods. Data were collected through a literature review of Hikayat Perang Sabil manuscripts and in-depth interviews with Acehese religious scholars, academics, and traditional leaders. The findings reveal that Hikayat Perang Sabil contains elements of Islamic communication ethics derived from the Quran and Hadith, with tawhid as its fundamental foundation. These elements include truthfulness, mauizah hasanah, obligation, humility, courage, sacrifice, prayer, and re-

Received: 16 Oct 2025

Accepted: 04 Dec 2025

Published: 20 Dec 2025

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membrance of God. The implementation of these ethical values remains relevant and can be observed in various aspects of Acehnese social life, particularly in education, literary arts, and religious practices. This study highlights the significance of Hikayat Perang Sabil in contributing to the development of Islamic communication studies based on local culture and to the preservation of Acehs intellectual heritage.

Keywords: Hikayat Perang Sabil. Islamic communication ethics. dawah communication. Acehnese culture.

Resumo

Este artigo examina o Hikayat Perang Sabil como um meio de comunicação islâmica, com foco na implementação da ética da comunicação islâmica no contexto sociocultural da sociedade acehnesa. O hikayat funciona não apenas como uma obra literária de guerra, mas também como um instrumento de dawah, ao transmitir valores religiosos, morais e espirituais. O estudo adota uma abordagem qualitativa descritiva, utilizando métodos de análise textual e pesquisa de campo. Os dados foram coletados por meio de revisão bibliográfica de manuscritos do Hikayat Perang Sabil e de entrevistas em profundidade com estudiosos religiosos acehneses, acadêmicos e líderes tradicionais. Os resultados revelam que o Hikayat Perang Sabil contém elementos da ética da comunicação islâmica derivados do Alcorão e dos Hadith, tendo o tawhid como fundamento central. Esses elementos incluem veracidade, mauizah hasanah, obrigação, humildade, coragem, sacrifício, oração e lembrança de Deus. A implementação desses valores éticos permanece relevante e pode ser observada em diversos aspectos da vida social acehnesa, especialmente na educação, nas artes literárias e nas práticas religiosas. O estudo destaca a importância do Hikayat Perang Sabil para o desenvolvimento dos estudos em comunicação islâmica baseados na cultura local e para a preservação do patrimônio intelectual de Aceh.

Palavras-chave: Hikayat Perang Sabil. ética da comunicação islâmica. comunicação da dawah. cultura acehnesa.

Introduction

The Aceh War (1873–1904) was one of the longest colonial conflicts in the history of the Dutch East Indies. This war was not confined to military confrontation alone but also involved strong social, cultural, and religious dimensions. Islam played a crucial role as a source of moral and ideological legitimacy in shaping the collective consciousness of the Acehnese people to resist colonial domination and to defend their religion as well as human dignity (Siegel, 2008). Within this context, communication grounded in Islamic values assumed a strategic role in mobilizing resistance and sustaining its continuity.

One of the most influential media of Islamic communication during the Aceh War was *Hikayat Perang Sabil*. This hikayat was transmitted orally and preserved through religious and social spaces such as *meunasah* and *dayah*. *Hikayat Perang Sabil* functioned not only as a form of war literature but also as a medium of da'wah and ethical communication that conveyed religious, moral, and spiritual messages. Through symbolic and poetic language, the hikayat shaped the mental attitudes of Acehnese society and instilled the values of *jihad fi sabilillah* as a moral obligation to defend religion and homeland.

Previous studies have generally examined *Hikayat Perang Sabil* from historical and literary perspectives, particularly in relation to its role in constructing resistance ideology and Acehnese identity (Alfian, 1977; Hasjmy, 1971). However, studies that specifically analyze this hikayat from the perspective of Islamic communication ethics remain relatively limited. In fact, the text of *Hikayat Perang Sabil* contains principles of Islamic communication derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, such as truthfulness, *mau'izah hasanah*, moral responsibility, exemplary conduct, and sacrifice.

Islamic communication ethics emphasize the importance of communication based on *akhlak al-karimah* and oriented toward the welfare of the ummah. These values are both normative and applicable across various aspects of social, educational, cultural, and religious life (Hamka, 1992; Mowlana, 1996). In the context of Acehnese society, *Hikayat Perang Sabil* represents the internalization of Islamic communication ethics through a living and continuous oral literary tradition.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the implementation of Islamic communication ethics in *Hikayat Perang Sabil* and its relevance in contemporary Acehnese society. This research employs a qualitative approach through textual analysis and field studies to examine the ethical communication values embedded in the hikayat and their application in the fields of education, literary arts,

and religious practices. The study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of Islamic communication studies and practically to efforts aimed at preserving Aceh's cultural heritage.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design, aiming to understand and explain the implementation of Islamic communication ethics in *Hikayat Perang Sabil* and its relevance in Acehnese society. The qualitative approach is chosen because this research focuses on meanings, values, and socio-religious interpretations embedded in the text and in the cultural practices of the community.

Types and Sources of Data

The data in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through textual analysis of *Hikayat Perang Sabil* and in-depth interviews with competent and experienced informants, including Islamic scholars (*ulama*), academics, cultural practitioners, and Acehnese community leaders. Secondary data were drawn from books, scholarly journal articles, historical documents, and previous studies relevant to Islamic communication ethics, Acehnese literature, and the Aceh War.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using several techniques, namely:

1. **Literature review**, conducted to examine sources related to *Hikayat Perang Sabil*, Islamic communication ethics, and the socio-historical context of Acehnese society.
2. **Textual analysis**, carried out by examining the content of the hikayat to identify the Islamic communication ethics values embedded in the text.
3. **In-depth interviews**, conducted in a semi-structured manner to gain insights into how the ethical communication values contained in the hikayat are understood and implemented in contemporary Acehnese society.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted thematically through several stages, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data obtained from textual analysis and interviews were classified based on themes of Islamic communication ethics, such as truthfulness, *mau'izah hasanah*, moral responsibility, exemplary conduct, and sacrifice. Subsequently, the data were analyzed by establishing connections between the ethical messages conveyed in *Hikayat Perang Sabil* and communication practices in Acehnese society.

Data Validity

To ensure data validity, this study applied source and method triangulation by comparing findings from textual analysis, interviews, and supporting literature. This process was undertaken to enhance the consistency and credibility of the research findings.

Development

A. Elements of Islamic Communication Ethics in *Hikayat Perang Sabil*

Hikayat Perang Sabil constitutes an integral part of the socio-cultural life of Acehnese society in the past. As a literary work that is living and continuously practiced, *Hikayat Perang Sabil* forms a unified whole in which its parts are interconnected and bound by strong internal communal ties (*ashabiyah*). These ties reflect the ethical values, aesthetics, and historical consciousness of a nation. Such communities, through the accumulation of shared bonds, shape distinctive cultural characteristics and reflect a particular worldview (*way of life*) that influences both collective and individual attitudes. In this sense, *Hikayat Perang Sabil*, when communicated innovatively, was able to produce individuals and communities dynamically characterized by religiosity, humanity, and heroism.

Ethical commitment constitutes one of the central missions of communication in *Hikayat Perang Sabil*. This aligns with the spirit of creative works influenced by Qur'anic teachings and the Prophetic message, which serves as *uswatun hasanah* for Muslims. Islam is a religion that strongly emphasizes moral education, requiring its

followers to cultivate noble character. Morality (*akhlaq*) functions as a psychological and social control mechanism for individuals and society. Without morality, human beings would be no different from animals. The success of communication in *Hikayat Perang Sabil* is grounded in its mission to build moral character among Acehnese fighters.

Moral education in Islam, as stated by Usman Abdul Muiz, is encapsulated in the principle of *da'wah*, namely the enforcement of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*. This principle is closely related to the broader objectives of Islam, including piety, obedience, and devotion to Allah (Ruslan, 2000, p. 91). This foundational principle is vividly illustrated in the text of *Hikayat Perang Sabil* and transmitted orally to the community.

The religious ethics portrayed in *Hikayat Perang Sabil* are not limited to religious values alone but are also supported by conscience-based values and the noble traditions of Acehnese society. The rhetoric employed by religious leaders in translating and interpreting the war verses served to reinforce the moral and psychological resilience of the fighters. Islamic scholars (*ulama*) played a crucial role in transmitting the moral and intellectual values contained within the text of *Hikayat Perang Sabil*.

The ethical elements in *Hikayat Perang Sabil* are derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. The religious ethics constructed in this hikayat are fundamentally based on *tawhid* (monotheism). *Tawhid* functions as a controlling principle that prevents individuals from engaging in actions that degrade human dignity. Faith grounded in the concept of *tawhid* ultimately contributes to human liberation from various forms of oppression, including colonial domination. Hamka emphasized that the essence of Islamic teachings lies in *tawhid*, which then gives rise to morality as a manifestation of faith in social life. He stated:

“Tawhid is the essence of Islamic teachings. From tawhid emerges morality, and from morality arises human behavior in social life. Sharia serves to regulate social life so that humans remain within the framework of faith and noble humanity.” (Hamka, 1992, p. 66)

Hikayat Perang Sabil is a war-themed literary work in the form of a hikayat written in Acehnese using Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script. It consists of four distinct stories centered on a single main theme, namely *jihād fi sabilillah*. These stories are fictional narratives with historical Islamic settings, authored by Teungku Chik Pante Kulu and comprising a total of 854 verses. Overall, *Hikayat Perang Sabil* contains positive values for society, including religious values, educational values, transcendental communication values, cultural values, and aesthetic values. The Islamic

communication ethics embedded in *Hikayat Perang Sabil* include: (a) beginning with *basmalah*; (b) initiating communication with greetings (*salam*); (c) truthfulness; (d) *mau'izah hasanah*; (e) obligation; (f) humility (*tawadhu'*); (g) courage; (h) criticism; (i) sacrifice; (j) religious commitment; and (k) prayer and remembrance (*dhikr*). These elements constitute ethical commitments as part of the mission of Islamic communication in the context of struggle, in line with the spirit of creative works influenced by the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition.

B. *Hikayat Perang Sabil* as a Medium of Islamic Communication

Acehnese society traditionally perceives hikayat as possessing a certain spiritual and symbolic power, believing that the substance of hikayat represents realistic historical events. The construction of hikayat does not occur randomly; rather, it is shaped by factual historical settings. The worldview of Acehnese society is transferred into hikayat, making it a living tradition within the community. The strong orientation toward spiritual life and religious values is prominently reflected in hikayat, which seamlessly integrates into the sociological and communicative life of Acehnese society. Hikayat instills beneficial values (*utile*) into society, while society, in turn, channels its life spirit through hikayat. Together, hikayat and Acehnese society form an integrated network of social communication.

The influence of Malay literature on Acehnese literature is evident in adapted works and in the use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script that mirrors Malay orthography. The term *hikayat* used for written literary works reflects the adoption of Malay literary traditions, where hikayat developed as court literature (Fang, 1971).

The development of hikayat in Acehnese literary tradition underwent a long adaptation process. First, adaptation involved reworking familiar stories while maintaining oral poetic traditions to ensure audience acceptance (Teeuw, 1983). Second, during the Malacca renaissance, Acehnese poets adapted Malay and Arab-Persian hikayat, establishing a distinctive structure that included opening sermons (*khutbah*) and closing prayers. Third, in the seventeenth century, alongside the rise of Sufism and religious literature, hikayat became a medium for Islamic propagation, with religious teachings poetically conveyed to the public (Sudirman, 2012).

Historically, *Hikayat Perang Sabil* functioned as an effective medium of Islamic communication in Acehnese religious life. This effectiveness is evidenced by several factors: (a) its grounding in the Qur'an and Hadith; (b) its use of Arabic-Malay script; (c) its delivery accompanied by Islamic symbols; (d) its transmission

by credible figures such as *ulama*, teachers, community leaders, imams, poets, and fighters; (e) its role as a medium for prayer and spiritual contemplation; (f) its incorporation of religious, educational, ethical, aesthetic, and philosophical values; (g) its alignment with social reality; and (h) its performance in religious spaces such as *dayah*, *balee*, *meunasah*, *rangkring*, and mosques after the Maghrib prayer until midnight.

More specifically, *Hikayat Perang Sabil* functioned as a medium of entertainment, education, da'wah, and social interaction. Through these traditional media roles, it significantly contributed to the Islamization of Acehnese society. Today, *Hikayat Perang Sabil* continues to be utilized as a traditional communication medium with unique appeal, as part of efforts to revitalize Acehnese cultural and intellectual heritage.

C. Implementation of *Hikayat Perang Sabil* in Various Spheres of Acehnese Life

Composed in the late nineteenth century by Teungku Chik Pante Kulu, *Hikayat Perang Sabil* is not merely a war narrative but implicitly carries a long-term mission to guide future generations of Acehnese society in understanding and practicing *jihad* in its broader sense. In this context, *jihad* encompasses not only armed struggle but also conveying truth, sacrificing life and property, pursuing knowledge, praying, and striving for martyrdom as an ultimate spiritual aspiration. Thus, the author envisioned *Hikayat Perang Sabil* as relevant beyond the colonial period and applicable to the modern era. The implementation of Islamic communication ethics contained in the hikayat continues to be preserved in contemporary Acehnese society, particularly in the fields of education, literary arts, and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*).

1. Education

Hikayat Perang Sabil, with its thematic and passionate character, remains inspirational and relevant for contemporary education. Acehnese society continues to practice culturally based education through four main institutions: family, mosque/*meunasah*, community, and school. Family education includes traditions such as *peuratep aneuk* (lulling children), storytelling, and poetic narratives as early character education. Mosques and *meunasah* serve as centers for Qur'anic learning, Jawi texts, public speaking, religious discussions, and Islamic arts.

These activities demonstrate that Islamic communication ethics from *Hikayat*

Perang Sabil—such as greetings, deliberation (*musyawarah*), sacrifice, *amar ma‘ruf nahi munkar*, honesty, patience, and sincerity—remain embedded in Acehnese education across formal, non-formal, and informal contexts. Interviews confirm that these values continue to shape social practices in Aceh:

“The values contained in *Hikayat Perang Sabil* are still practiced today, particularly in children’s education, religious activities in *meunasah*, and traditional Acehnese arts. Values such as honesty, courage, and sacrifice remain highly relevant.” (Interview with A. Rahman, Vice Chairman of the Aceh Adat Council, April 18, 2016)

2. Literary Arts

Historically, the arts have served as a major form of public entertainment in Aceh. During the height of the Aceh Sultanate, artistic performances were held not only in royal courts but also across various social strata. Consequently, literary arts rooted in Acehnese society were actively supported and preserved. Many prominent Acehnese scholars and poets—such as Hamzah Fansuri, Syamsuddin as-Sumatrani, Nuruddin ar-Raniri, Abdurra‘uf as-Singkili, and Teungku Chik Pante Kulu—produced Islamic literary works that also functioned as *da‘wah*.

Hikayat Perang Sabil influenced various art forms, including music and dance. Traditional dances such as *Seudati*, *Rapa’i Geleng*, and *Dabus* reflect the spirit of jihad and bravery embodied in the *hikayat*. These performances incorporate Islamic communication ethics such as greeting practices, gender separation, modest dress, respect for guests, and the inclusion of moral advice.

3. Fiqh

From a *fiqh* perspective, *Hikayat Perang Sabil* contributes to shaping public understanding of *jihad* as an obligation to protect faith and communal integrity. It emphasizes religious values that encompass *aqidah*, *‘ubudiyah*, and *akhlaq*, all rooted in Qur’anic and Prophetic teachings. In this regard, *Hikayat Perang Sabil* establishes two models of communication: horizontal communication between humans and vertical, transcendental communication between humans and God. These ethical values continue to be practiced in Acehnese society, particularly within the framework of Islamic law implementation, including obligation, peace, *amar ma‘ruf nahi munkar*, prayer, remembrance (*dhikr*), firmness in faith, and trustworthiness (*amanah*).

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *Hikayat Perang Sabil* is an Acehnese literary work that functions not only as a historical narrative of resistance but also as a medium of Islamic communication rich in ethical values. The hikayat constitutes an integral component of Acehnese socio-cultural systems and has played a significant role in shaping religious, moral, and collective consciousness during the Aceh War as well as in subsequent periods.

The findings reveal that the elements of Islamic communication ethics embedded in *Hikayat Perang Sabil* are derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, with *tawhid* serving as the primary foundation. These elements include truthfulness, *mau'izah hasanah*, obligation, humility (*tawadhu'*), courage, sacrifice, prayer, and remembrance (*dhikr*), as well as both vertical (human–God) and horizontal (human–human) dimensions of communication. These ethical values are conveyed not merely in a normative manner but are communicated persuasively through symbolic language, literary aesthetics, and the exemplary conduct of religious figures.

This study further confirms the continued relevance of *Hikayat Perang Sabil* in contemporary Acehnese society. The implementation of Islamic communication ethics contained in the hikayat can still be observed across various spheres of life, particularly in education, literary arts, and *fiqh* practices. This indicates that *Hikayat Perang Sabil* functions as a medium for the intergenerational transmission of Islamic ethical values and remains a living tradition within the dynamic socio-cultural context of Aceh.

Accordingly, *Hikayat Perang Sabil* can be positioned as an important source in the study of Islamic communication grounded in local culture. This research contributes theoretically to the development of Islamic communication ethics studies and practically to efforts aimed at preserving and revitalizing Aceh's cultural heritage. Future research is recommended to expand the scope to other forms of traditional media and to examine the relevance of Islamic communication ethics within digital media and modern society.

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