

MEMANG LAMPUNG: Discursive Relations of Islam and Local Culture Within The Bark Manuscript No. 2476

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ABSTRACT

Studies on Islam in Lampung have thus far provided limited insight into the nature of the relationship between Islam and local culture during the early period of its introduction. This study aims to examine that relationship as represented in Memang (ritual chants) from Lampung. This research employs a qualitative design using a philological approach. The primary data source consists of the transcription and transliteration of a bark-paper manuscript from the Lampung Museum, inventory number 2476. The data are analyzed through the theoretical framework of Islam as a discursive tradition, as articulated by Talal Asad. The findings indicate that Bark Manuscript No. 2476 contains four Memang texts that reflect a discursive relationship between Islam and Lampung culture. This relationship is manifested through five key indicators: (1) the positioning of Islam as a source of sacred legitimacy; (2) the integration of Islamic discourse into local ritual language; (3) the continuity and rearticulation of local cosmology; (4) the construction of a semantic hierarchy within the structure of the Memang texts; and (5) the performativity of ritual language as an operational expression of Islamic discourse. This study concludes that the configuration of Memang texts in Lampung reflects a discursive mode of interaction between Islam and local culture, in which local religious practices operate within Islam as a discursive tradition.

Keywords: Islam; Local Culture; Lampung Memang; Discursive Tradition; Talal Asad.

INTRODUCTION

Scholarly studies on the relationship between Islam and local culture in Indonesia have commonly categorized local Islamic expressions into three broad patterns: syncretic Islam, acculturative Islam, and collaborative Islam. The syncretic pattern is prominently reflected in the works of scholars such as Geertz (1981), Mulder (1997), Beatty (1996: 271-88), Simuh (2003), and Hutomo (2001), who emphasize the blending of Islamic elements with pre-Islamic beliefs and ritual practices. In contrast, the acculturative pattern of Islam is articulated in the studies of Hefner (1985), Woodward (1999), Muhammin (2002), Budiwanti (2000), and Hilmi (2001) Prasetyo (1994), Headley (1997), Nakamura (1983), Mulkan (2000), Radam (2001), and Bartholomew (2001), which highlight processes of cultural negotiation whereby Islamic norms are integrated into existing local symbolic systems without entirely displacing them.

A third pattern, referred to as collaborative Islam, is proposed in Nur Syam's study *Tradisi Islam Pesisiran* (2005). Rather than constituting a distinct category, collaborative Islam can be understood as a mode of interaction situated within the continuum between syncretic and acculturative Islam. It denotes a form of Islam-local culture relationship shaped through ongoing discursive and practical negotiations between social agents—particularly local elites—and the wider community. This pattern underscores a continuous dialectical process in which Islamic meanings are not merely adopted or adapted but are actively rearticulated within local cultural frameworks.

Upon closer examination, the typologies of syncretic Islam, acculturative Islam, and collaborative Islam each entail unresolved conceptual problems. These categories tend to imply a blending of Islam with local traditions, thereby positioning Islamic practices in Indonesia as forms of religiosity that deviate from doctrinal purity and are implicitly characterized as heterodox. Consequently, the labeling of Indonesian Islam as syncretic, acculturative, or collaborative effectively displaces local Islamic practices from the domain of Islamic orthodoxy and situates them within a framework of heterodoxy. Although Nur Syam's notion of collaborative Islam seeks to mitigate this problem by emphasizing interaction rather than fusion, it does not eliminate the perception of locality as an external element that compromises Islamic normativity within Indonesian Muslim religious practices.

The academic debate on the relationship between Islam and local culture, as shown in these three patterns, shows that Islamic practice in Indonesia has always been in a space of negotiation between the norms of Islamic teachings and the local socio-cultural context. The syncretic, acculturative,

and collaborative patterns not only serve as a classification tool but also reflect the way scholars understand the historical and cultural dynamics of Islam in the archipelago. However, the diversity of these findings also indicates a model that is fully able to explain the complexity of social Islamic practices in different regions. Therefore, the study of Lampung Islam, especially through the tradition of *Memang*, is important to enrich the discourse. Islam Lampung offers a distinctive empirical terrain, where ritual language, local cosmology, and normative references of Islam are intertwined in the religious practices of the community, thus opening up space for a more contextual reading of Islamic dialectics and local culture.

From a historical perspective, Islam has long operated as a normative religious tradition within indigenous Lampung society. Hilman Hadikusuma observes that the Lampung ethnic community had become acquainted with Islam and began rearticulating their existing belief systems within an Islamic framework as early as the fifteenth century CE (Hadikusuma, 1985: 41). Nevertheless, scholarly attention to the discursive processes through which Islamic norms and local cultural practices were negotiated during this formative period remains limited. This gap is particularly significant given that, before Islam's presence, Lampung society was already shaped by Hindu teachings and deity-centered cosmologies (Hadikusuma, 1985: 161). As a result, the establishment of Islam in the region did not simply replace earlier traditions but unfolded through a discursive engagement in which Islamic concepts, ritual languages, and forms of authority were continuously interpreted and re-embedded within local cultural idioms. This study addresses this lacuna by examining the early dialectical configurations of Islam and Lampung culture as manifested in ritual texts, thereby situating Lampung Islam within Islam's broader discursive tradition.

Scholarly studies on Islam in Lampung have largely been conducted through historical and cultural approaches. Within the historical framework, these studies have produced three major perspectives concerning the origins of Islam's arrival in Lampung: first, the view that traces the introduction of Islam to the Pagaruyung region; second, the perspective that associates it with Palembang; and third, the argument that links the spread of Islam in Lampung to Banten (Hadikusuma, 1985:41; Bukri et al., 1977: 7). Such historically oriented accounts can be found in the works of Hadikusuma (1985: 36), Bukri (1977: 7), Syahputra (2007), Juliadi et al. (2005), Hakiki (2020), and Wijayati (2011).

Meanwhile, studies of Islam in Lampung employing a cultural approach have primarily focused on identifying and interpreting Islamic values embedded

within Lampung traditions. Research in this vein has been conducted by Yusuf (2016), Zarkasi (2007, 2020), and Setiawan (2019), who examine Islamic values within *Piil Pesenggiri*, the ethical philosophy of indigenous Lampung society. Similarly, Isnaeni and Hakiki (2016) explore the presence of Islamic values in Lampung Pepadun customary marriage practices. In addition, numerous other studies have concentrated on Islamic values articulated in various Lampung traditions, including the works of Ambara (2020) and Kurniawan (2018). Nevertheless, these studies have not yet offered a sustained analysis of the discursive relationship between Islam and Lampung culture during the early phase of Islamization in the region.

As with the process of Islamization in other parts of the Indonesian archipelago, the successful dissemination of Islam in Lampung was supported by a conciliatory and accommodative mode of engagement between Islamic teachings and the local traditions through which those teachings were articulated. In this regard, esoteric dimensions of Islam constitute an important epistemological key. Put differently, the form of Islam that initially took root in Indonesia was largely characterized by Sufistic or mystical orientations. As noted by Braginsky, this was because the Sufi ethos resonated closely with the prevailing religious mentality of Indonesian societies (Braginsky, 1993: XI). Moreover, M. C. Ricklefs's study of Islamization in Java demonstrates that the process was fundamentally inaugurated through what he terms a "mystic synthesis" between Islam and the existing mystical traditions of the North Coast polities. This synthesis subsequently provided a crucial gateway for the more extensive and institutionalized spread of Islam (Musadad, 2016).

Traces of mystical synthesis as evidence of Islamization in the Indonesian archipelago can be observed in mantra traditions, namely sacred invocations believed to possess magical and supernatural efficacy and employed as ritual means to facilitate the attainment of particular goals (Saputra, 2007: 9). Etymological inquiry suggests that the term *mantra* derives from the Sanskrit *mantra*, referring to sacred utterances found in the Vedic scriptures and associated with magical practices, particularly those oriented toward benevolent purposes (Humaeni, 2004: 58). Another perspective argues that the term *mantra* originates from the Javanese language, emphasizing the creative power and mental force of human cognition as a means of protection against malevolent disturbances (Hartata, 2010: 38; Saddono et al., 2016).

Within both traditions, the poetic sequences of words that constitute mantras are understood to possess symbolic, spiritual, or supernatural efficacy (Saputra, 2007: 95-96; Sudjiman, 1990: 51). On this basis, Bronisław Malinowski argues that the mantra represents the most crucial element of magic. For Malinowski,

the mantra embodies the esoteric dimension of magic, inseparably embedded within magical ritual and accessible only to the practitioner. Among indigenous societies, magical knowledge is often synonymous with knowledge of mantras, and analyses of magical action consistently reveal that ritual practices revolve around the utterance of mantras. Magical formulas, or mantras, thus constitute the core of magical performance (Humaeni, 2004: 59).

Mantras, as one of the most archaic forms of oral cultural production, holistically represent social reality, encompassing multiple dimensions of life, including belief systems, social structures, and human responses to natural phenomena and suffering (Malinowski, 1948: 67). Accordingly, mantras do not function merely as esoteric strings of words but rather as manifestations of a community's value orientations and worldview in confronting the uncertainties of reality (Geertz, 1976: 142). In practice, mantras thus reflect how human actors organize and mobilize spiritual forces to intervene in the physical realm, whether for purposes of protection, healing, or the invocation of prosperity (Malinowski, 1948: 72).

Within the context of plural belief systems, the structure and substance of mantras often reflect processes of profound cultural assimilation, in which multiple civilizational layers engage in dialectical interaction without necessarily negating one another (Woodward, 1989: 150). This assimilative dynamic becomes apparent when elements of local or pre-Islamic belief—such as the personification of natural forces and divine entities—are articulated alongside monotheistic theological concepts, resulting in distinctive forms of spiritual hybridity (Woodward, 1989: 153). In the context of the Indonesian archipelago, mantras function as dynamic spaces of identity negotiation, wherein religious values introduced at a later stage are absorbed, reinterpreted, and embedded within local wisdom, thereby forming a coherent and functional religious system for the communities that sustain them.

Traces of mystical synthesis resulting from conciliatory and reconciliatory engagements between Islam and local traditions can also be found in Lampung mantras. Within the cultural repertoire of Lampung society, mantras are known as *Memang*. The presence of *Memang* constitutes an integral component of the Lampung belief system (Hadikusuma, 1985: 161-162). In everyday life, *Memang* functions as a medium through which individuals seek to engage with supernatural forces believed to assist in the realization of particular aims. Accordingly, *Memang* is commonly recited as part of specific ritual practices or incorporated into daily devotional utterances intended to establish proximity to these perceived supernatural powers. In addition, *Memang* is also employed to acquire forms of ritual potency believed to facilitate the smooth conduct of

one's life.

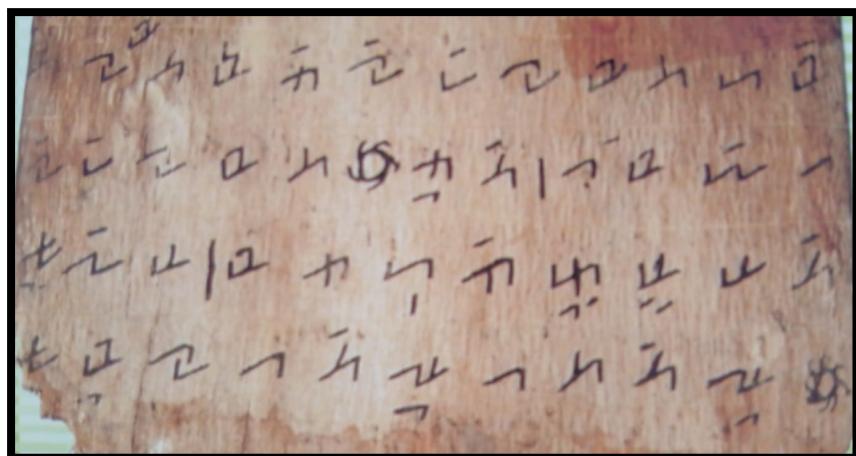
This article explores the relationship between Islam and local culture at the textual and semantic levels as reflected in Lampung mantra manuscripts. It is based on qualitative research employing a philological approach. The primary data derive from the transcriptions and transliterations produced by Zuraida Kherustika et al. (2009) and published by the Lampung Provincial State Museum "Ruwai Jurai." In several instances, limited textual reconstruction has been undertaken where certain readings appear semantically or linguistically problematic. These reconstructions are conducted with reference to the structural features of the Lampung language and the religious context of the text. All reconstructions remain tentative and are presented explicitly to ensure analytical transparency.

This article further focuses on the *Memang* contained in Bark Manuscript No. 2476 and analyzes the patterns of relationship between Islam and Lampung culture as articulated in the text. The analytical process is guided by Talal Asad's theory of Islam as a discursive tradition, which conceptualizes Islam as a living tradition sustained through historically transmitted practices, forms of authority, and disciplinary frameworks enacted within specific social contexts (Asad, 1986: 14-15). Such a discursive tradition not only produces meaning but also regulates the conditions under which particular practices are recognized as legitimate or regarded as deviant within an Islamic horizon. This theoretical framework enables a more contextualized reading of *Memang* practices in Bark Manuscript No. 2476, which have often been interpreted reductively as instances of syncretism or as residual elements of pre-Islamic belief.

MEMANG IN BARK MANUSCRIPT NO. 2476

Memang is the term employed by the indigenous Lampung community to denote ritual incantations or mantras. The persistence of *Memang* reflects the long-standing presence of ritual knowledge within Lampung society, comparable to analogous practices found in other regional cultures. Such practices have been transmitted across generations and are deeply embedded within the Lampung cosmological imagination. Historical traces of *Memang* are preserved in the Lampung written tradition, particularly in ancient manuscripts inscribed on bark media. These manuscripts, now housed in the Lampung Museum, provide material evidence of the continuity of *Memang* as an integral component of indigenous Lampung systems of knowledge, ritual practice, and cosmological understanding.

The manuscript examined in this study is preserved in the Lampung Museum collection under inventory number 2476. The codex is written on *halim* bark and measures 15 cm in length, 9.6 cm in width, and approximately 1.2 cm in thickness. It consists of nineteen leaves, arranged on two sides: Side A and Side B. Side A comprises seven leaves, while Side B consists of twelve leaves. The manuscript is generally in fair condition; however, damage is evident on leaves 11 and 12, resulting in partial loss of legibility. The text is inscribed in the ancient Lampung script (*Had*) (Kherustika, 2009: 2-3).



Picture. Photograph of Bark Manuscript No. 2476

Side A contains three *Memang*, namely a *Memang* for protection (*keselamatan*), a *Memang* for warding off evil spirits (*penolak setan*), and a *Memang* for repelling slander (*penangkal fitnah*). The *Memang* for protection appears on pages 1, 2, and 3 of the manuscript and constitutes a single, continuous incantation. The text of this *Memang* reads as follows:

O Allohumma wujuti ma, ya Bumi ya Siti usung khajeki
 Ya jagat usung bakhekat. Ya jagat pratala ngabar panca baya.
 Sukma luhur ruh ilapi ratu ni nyawa, ya manan ya manan ya santa
 Ya Dahiyan ya Burhan ya Ghopuron, warna-warna sekaliyan berupa
Ya Nabi Rasululloh, Allohumma Nagara Deli, Mekah, Madinah
Neda selamat Tuhanku Alloh. Jahi Alloh kahiri¹ Allohu ta'ala,
Ya Nabi Muhammad mintak tulung Tuhanku Alloh wal malaikatihi wa
Rasulihai birahmatika ya Arhamar Rahimin (Kherustika et al. 2009: 5-7).

¹ read as “kahiri” in Kerustina et al. (2009, p. 7). Referring to Islamic tradition, it is likely to be read as “khoiri.”

Translation:

O Allah, the source of all existence. O earth, O soil, bring forth sustenance.

O universe, bestow blessing. O cosmic realm, dispel all forms of harm.

Noble soul, indwelling spirit (*rūh idāfi*), sovereign over all life.

O Most Generous, O Most Generous, O Most Holy Lord.

O Supreme Judge, O Bestower of Proof, O Most Forgiving, you are the creator of all forms and manifestations that exist in this world.

O Prophet, the Messenger of God. O Allah, by virtue of the sanctity of the lands of Deli, Mecca, and Medina, I seek protection from You, my Lord Allah.

O Prophet Muhammad, I seek assistance from my Lord Allah, as well as from His angels and His messengers. By Your mercy, O Most Compassionate of the compassionate.

This *Memang* functions as a ritual incantation for protection and the invocation of sustenance. It consists of a sequence of supplications and invocations addressed to God, the cosmos, and religious figures. The text opens by identifying Allah as the source of existence and being, followed by the invocation of the earth and *jagat pratala* as integral components of the cosmic order. The incantation further refers to spiritual elements of the human person—such as the soul (*sukma*), spirit (*rūh*), and life force (*nyawa*)—and incorporates divine attributes that emphasize generosity and forgiveness. Subsequently, the text invokes the Prophet Muhammad alongside sacred Islamic cities such as Mecca and Medina, articulating a plea for protection addressed to God. In its concluding section, the *Memang* expresses a request for assistance from Allah, His angels, and His messengers, with the ultimate aim of attaining divine mercy and protection.

The second *Memang* is located on page 4 of the manuscript. The text of this incantation is as follows:

Cakhita sihibul karima, Tikhon tikhon masakhon, nur ligang namamu bumi, nur gaya namamu langit, nur hikhang nama bulan, nur nur hurip nama mu angin, nur ni Muhammad Adam Rosululloh. nata sarka sari sasi anwil sian bursa jasa khon bumi tidanga (Kherustika et al. 2009: 10).

Translation:

(This is) The account of the possessor of glory. O unseen entity (Tikhon), submit and be obedient. Vast light is your name, O earth; great light is your name, O sky; radiant light is your name, O moon; living light is

your name, O wind. The light of Muhammad, Adam, the Messenger of God, orders the cosmos and the essence of the moon. That breath is real; become the firm earth, boundless and enduring.

This *Memang* text constitutes a “*putihan*” mantra, functioning as a form of “*pagar bumi*” (earth-bound protective barrier or spiritual safeguarding) or warding off evil spirits. Such mantras are widely attested in Nusantara Sufi traditions and reflect a harmonious synthesis between Islamic-Sufi cosmology and the local wisdom of Sumatran societies, particularly those of Lampung and its surrounding regions. The invocation of the term “*Tikhon*” as an unseen entity (demonic being) at the opening of the mantra forms part of a ritualized procedure of spiritual purification and boundary-setting, intended to clear the metaphysical pathway so that the sacred intention articulated in the subsequent lines remains uncontaminated by supernatural interference. This invocation does not imply alliance or communion with demonic forces; rather, it serves to affirm the ontological hierarchy in which humans, as descendants of Adam and bearers of the *Nur Muhammad*, are positioned above both natural elements and demonic entities.

The third *Memang* is located on pages 4 and 5 of the manuscript. The text of this incantation is as follows:

Minyak khatuni segala ya khatu bakha isini alam, pala sekhoba hatuni taala, amakho buwang hiba, taalalulloh tawagh, nang ning bawas, siyang di kulen mula-mula jadi hatu lawek, hatu kima si pakha huku tawagh (Kherustika et al. 2009: 11-12).

Translation:

The oil, sovereign over all things, is the ruler (essence) of all that fills the cosmos. This liquid is none other than the sovereign force derived from the Highest. By divine command, remove misfortune and all that brings sorrow. By the exaltation of Allah, become neutral and purified; enter a state of inner calm and stillness. Cleanse the remaining traces of misfortune, illuminating the inner self in accordance with your primordial origin as the Queen of the Sea, Queen Kima, sovereign of all rulers. Neutralize and purify.

This *Memang* constitutes a *Panawar* formula structured around two distinct spiritual dimensions: Islam and the indigenous wisdom of the Lampung community. The Islamic element is evidenced by the term “*Pala sekhoba*”, a loan from the Arabic phrase “*fa laa syarooba*”, which is interpreted as “this

liquid does not exist." Additional Islamic references include the terms "amaro" (command), "Ta'ala", and "Ta'alalulloh", collectively reflecting the integration of Islamic religious discourse within the Lampung spiritual framework.

Meanwhile, side B of the manuscript no. 2476, which consists of 12 pages, can only be read for 10 pages. Pages 11 and 12 are no longer readable. It contains one mantra, namely (Kherustika et al. 2009):

O Ibu Bapa Ibu Pertiwi buka kancing Muhammad keluar penutup bumi.
Batara Guru Tuha Batara Guru Muda Batara Rahma Batara Bassa muku lapak (p. 17).²
*Khadu wawangkun ulahni Alloh hahghobeti kikasi a gho ngala ni Alloh nyak hambani Alloh.*³
Pangikhan Halas sikam mena jadi nabi Halas ngawangku bumi tanoh sakin duwa (p. 18)⁴ *hambani Alloh.*
Anakni nabi Suliman maka diwi Sangkebut diwi Aminah diwi Amunah diwi sang hening nyak hamba kilu suka kilu khejeki.
Puteri Keling anakni diwa Langkati nga lan di kayin.
Diwa Langkati ngalan tukhun nukhun ka sengiek bawang bangkek luhni puteri Keling kayu sengek punya sanya jalani puteri keeling balapu ke sengiek hal takani puteri keeling puteri papotokh keling sengiek.
Yeh ni puteri keeling sapa hik lidah nginjam bumi khadu sukani Alloh sapa hik lidah khik nyak nunggu bumi sa.
Ruhi kana lumu bumi ruhi, dung nyawa mu langik ruhi dung nyawa mu ayakh nyawa ni adam tutep nyawa pak di kutup Alloh sapa nyengiek.
Nabi Sim. Nabi Halas.
Batara Wasenu, Batara Barahmana, Batar Kuni (p. 24).⁵ *Sayih malikuni taparaku lana huwa kala Adam jangardis sejatan di cuba* (p. 16-25).

Translation:

O Mother and Father, O Mother Earth, undo the buttons of Muhammad, unveil the veil of the earth.

Batara Guru Tua, Batara Guru Muda, Batara Brahma, Batara Vassa, who stretches across the world.

It has been brought into existence by the will of Allah, granted and cherished, (it is) a creation of Allah; I am a servant of Allah. Prince Halas, when he was elevated to become Prophet Halas,

² Referring to Hindu tradition, the possibility reading is *Batara Brahma* and *Batara Vassu* which means Batara Brahma and Batara Vassu

³ Read as "a gho ngala ni Alloh". Referring to the Lampung language pattern, it is likely that the reading is "aghung ulahni Alloh" which means ... adik oleh Alloh.

⁴ It is written as "sikin duwa". However according to the Lampung dictionary, it is more likely to be written as "sikinduwa", which means "we".

⁵ Written as "Batara Wasenu, Batara Barahmana, Batara Kuni". Referring to Hindu tradition, it is likely to be read as "Batara Wisnu, Batara Brahma, Batara Agni".

Who guards and protects the earth and the land, we are Allah's servants. The child of Prophet Solomon, namely Dewi Sangkebut, Dewi Aminah, Dewi Amunah, Dewi Sang Hening, I, the servant, ask for sustenance.

The Keling princess, child of Dewa Langkati, who holds authority in the heavenly realms.

Dewa Langkati himself descended to confront *sengiek bawang bangkek* (a festering and destructive disease). The tears of Princess Keling became wood (a medicinal remedy) to counter this disease, truly and manifestly enacted. She, Princess Keling, sweeps away [strikes] towards the afflicted.

All power belongs to Princess Keling, the princess who severs/eradicates the Keling disease.

The water (power) of Princess Keling—whatever's tongue draws upon the power of the earth; it is by Allah's will. Whoever speaks with me indeed protects this earth.

O spirits bound to the earth, O spirits whose souls resound in the sky, O spirits whose echoes resound in the water, the life of Adam (the patient) is enclosed (protected) at the four poles of Allah against anyone who harms.

(In the name of) Prophet Sim, Prophet Halas, Batara Vishnu, Batara Brahma, Batara Kuni. O Sheikh Malikut, we seek blessing (*tabarruk*) through Him (Allah) as in the time of Adam. (Thus, all) mighty weapons shall not prevail when tested.

The foregoing text indicates that this *Memang* functions as a healing *Panawar* (*tambar*) mantra. Its primary purpose is to treat a specific physical ailment, referred to as *sengiek bawang bangkek*, a disease characterized by inflammation and putrefaction. Thus, this mantra is not merely a general prayer but constitutes a spiritual prescription for skin diseases or chronic infections.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ISLAM AND LOCAL CULTURE IN MEMANG

Studies on the relationship between Islam and local cultures in the Nusantara region generally indicate that the process of Islamization more often occurs through symbolic integration and the transformation of meaning within cultural practices—including oral traditions and rituals—rather than through the radical rupture of existing traditions. This aligns with Clifford Geertz's perspective, which posits that religion functions as a system of symbols always interpreted through the lens of local culture, such that religious expressions are never entirely detached from their local context (Geertz, 1976: 4-7). Within this framework, Lampung can indeed be understood as a ritual text

representing the dialectic between Islam and local culture at both the semantic and symbolic levels.

Within the framework of Talal Asad's thought, the existence of *Memang* Lampung can be understood as part of the discursive tradition of Islam—a field of practice and discourse in which Islamic meanings are produced, transmitted, and interpreted through diverse cultural forms (Asad, 1986:14-15). From this perspective, the mantra is not merely regarded as a residue of pre-Islamic tradition but as a symbolic space where the encounter of meanings between Islam and local culture occurs. Islam manifests in *Memang* Lampung not as a normative system detached from context, but as a discourse articulated through ritual language, local cosmology, and symbolic structures embedded in Lampung society. As Asad emphasizes, the Islamic discursive tradition allows for diversity of expression as long as it remains connected to historically transmitted core Islamic concepts (Asad, 1986: 16-17). Accordingly, the mantra texts on bark manuscripts should not be read as vague syncretism but as a local articulation of Islamic discourse operating at both semantic and symbolic levels. From this perspective, the dialectic between Islam and local culture in *Memang* Lampung unfolds as a continuous process of meaning-making, in which Islamic symbols are recontextualized within local ritual language without losing their foundational theological reference.

Within this discursive framework, the mantra, or *Memang*, as found in bark manuscript number 2476, is understood as a representation of the discursive encounter between Islamic discourse and the local ritual traditions of Lampung. The mantra text demonstrates how Islamic concepts are introduced through pre-established ritual language, which remains influenced by Hindu and Buddhist traditions. This encounter is dialogical and integrative, whereby the Islamic elements do not erase the local ritual structure but instead impart a new layer of religious meaning. This understanding aligns with Paul Ricoeur's perspective, which conceives the text as an autonomous entity that constructs a *world of the text*—a meaningful domain that can be analyzed through its semantic and symbolic structures (Ricoeur, 2016: 142-147). Through this approach, the *Memang* Lampung text is read as a space of religious meaning articulation, recorded and preserved within the manuscript.

The understanding of *Memang* as a space for the discursive encounter between Islam and local culture can be elaborated through five main indicators, namely:

First, Islam as a Source of Sacred Legitimacy. One of the primary themes in the *Memang* Lampung text is the presence of Islam as a source of sacred legitimacy. This is evident through the inclusion of key terms from Islamic teachings. A reading of the *Memang* in the bark manuscript no. 2476 reveals

at least fourteen Islamic keywords strategically placed within the text. These fourteen terms are: *Alloh*, *Ya Dahiyan*, *Ya Burhan*, *Ya Ghofuron*, *Ya Manan*, *Ya Nabi*, *Ya Rasululloh*, *Malaikat*, *Ya Arhamar Rahimin*, *Adam*, *Nabi Sulaiman*, *Jahi Alloh*, *Khoiri Alloh*, and *Birohmatika* (Kherustika et al., 2009). This pattern aligns with the findings of Pigeaud and Zoetmulder, who demonstrated that in Javanese mantras and prayers, Islamic elements were frequently employed as markers of religious legitimacy without displacing pre-existing ritual structures (Pigeaud, 1967: 12-15; Zoetmulder, 1991: 32-35).

Furthermore, in the *Memang Lampung* text, lines such as “*Allohumma*,” “*buka kancing Muhammad*,” “*ulahni Allah*,” “*Sukani Allah*,” “*Allohumma*,” and “*birohmatika ya Arhamar Rahimin*” indicate that Islamic symbols function as a sacred foundation legitimizing ritual action. In this context, Islam does not appear as a normative system strictly regulating practice, but rather as a source of religious meaning that enhances the performative power of the mantra language. Such a pattern of symbolic Islamization is also emphasized by M. C. Ricklefs, who views cultural Islamization in the Nusantara as a gradual and adaptive process (Ricklefs, 2006: 7-9).

The phrases in the manuscript indicate that Islam functions as a source of transcendent authority, forming the central basis of ritual legitimacy. The repetition of expressions such as *Allohumma*, *ulahni Alloh*, and *nyak hambani Alloh* underscores that the entire ritual process is situated under the will of Allah. Within Asad's framework, such affirmations are not merely verbal symbols but constitute part of a discursive discipline that delineates the boundaries of Islamic practice (Asad, 1986: 16). Consequently, although these mantras employ the Lampung language and local cosmological symbols, their normative orientation remains grounded in *tauhid* and the acknowledgment of divine authority.

Second, the Integration of Local Ritual Language. The incorporation of Islamic symbols into local ritual language is a phenomenon widely documented in studies of philology and oral traditions in the Nusantara. Zoetmulder notes that ritual texts often exhibit a mixture of Arabic, Sanskrit, and local language terms within a coherent textual structure (Zoetmulder 1991: 41). In *Memang Lampung*, phrases such as *ulahni Allah* and *hambani Allah* demonstrate that Islamic concepts of divinity are expressed through the grammar and idiom of the local language.

In addition to the two phrases mentioned above, the phrase *ruh ilapi*, referring to *ruh idhofi*, is also found. This phrase represents a spiritual concept in Sufism and local mysticism, denoting the “primordial soul” or the essential life force within humans, which serves as the source of life and the highest

spiritual consciousness. This soul is also frequently described as the “true teacher,” the “pure primordial essence,” or the “true prince within the self.” It is understood as a direct emanation from Allah, governing other souls and guiding the evolution of the spirit toward perfection (*al-Kamilah*). The *Ruh Idhofi* is believed to have existed before the creation of human beings (Faizin, 2018: 147). This supports Azyumardi Azra’s argument that Islamization in the Nusantara occurred through a process of localization, in which Islamic teachings took root within local culture without necessitating drastic changes to language or symbolic structures (Azra, 2002: 23-26). Consequently, Islam manifested in *Memang Lampung* operates as a religious meaning expressed through the medium of the local language.

The Arabic language that appears in these mantras shows a significant process of vernacularization. Words such as “Allohumma” are not used in standard Arabic grammatical structures, but rather as a sacred language that has performative power. Talal Asad emphasizes that religious language works primarily through practice and repetition, not solely through semantic clarity (Asad, 1993: 37-38). Therefore, the use of vernacular Arabic in *Memang Lampung* cannot be understood as a linguistic error, but rather as a form of internalization of Islamic authority into local ritual practices. Arabic functions as a medium of spiritual legitimacy and the formation of piety, not as a tool for formal textual communication.

Third, the Continuity and Rearticulation of Local Cosmology. Overall, the *Memang* text under study preserves local cosmology as an indigenous body of knowledge. Its depiction is not positioned in opposition to Islam but rather serves as a symbolic space in which Islamic teachings are articulated. The continuity of local cosmology is reflected in the mention of entities such as Mother Earth (*Ibu Pertiwi*), Tikhon-Tikhon, Batara Guru, Batara Brahma, Batara Vassu, Batara Vishnu, and Dewa Langkati. Anthropological studies of religion indicate that pre-Islamic worldviews were rarely entirely erased upon the arrival of Islam; instead, they underwent processes of reinterpretation (Koentjaraningrat, 1992: 89-92). This phenomenon aligns with Mark Woodward’s findings in his study of Javanese Islam, which show that local symbols and cosmology continue to play a crucial role in shaping the religious expressions of Muslim communities (Woodward, 1989: 56-60). Thus, the dialectic between Islam and local culture in *Memang Lampung* demonstrates the continuity of cosmological traditions reinterpreted within a new religious framework.

The presence of local cosmological figures such as Batara Guru, Batara Brahma, Batara Vassu, Batara Vishnu, and Dewa Langkati is often cited as evidence

for labeling *Memang* Lampung as a syncretic practice. However, Talal Asad critiques syncretism approaches that assume the existence of a “pure” religion separate from the historical practices of its adherents. In the mantras of Bark Manuscript No. 2476, these local figures are never positioned as autonomous powers rivaling God; rather, they are consistently subordinated under the will of Allah, as reflected in expressions such as *khadu wawangkun ulahni Alloh* and *khadu sukani Alloh*. This pattern demonstrates that Islamic orthodoxy does not always manifest through formal law or written theology but also operates through the regulation of symbolic relations within ritual practice (Woodward, 1989: 29).

Moreover, in the context of healing, the *Memang* Lampung mantras also demonstrate how the body and illness are understood within a religious framework. Disease is not reduced merely to a biological disorder but is interpreted as a cosmological and existential trial. This is particularly evident in the phrase *kala Adam jangardis sejatan di cuba*, which positions the patient in the role of Adam, the first human tested by God. Within Talal Asad’s framework, the interpretation of suffering as a trial forms part of the process through which the religious subject is constituted, involving the discipline of the body and the production of meaning (Woodward, 1989: 69-70). Consequently, the mantra functions not only as a means of healing but also as a mechanism for internalizing the ethics of submission and piety.

Fourth, the Semantic Hierarchy of the *Memang* Text. The study of *Memang* Lampung also indicates that the structure of ritual texts often establishes a specific hierarchy of meaning. Divine entities are generally positioned as the central source of legitimacy, while other entities function as cosmological intermediaries (Pigeaud, 1967: 18). This pattern is evident in *Memang* Lampung, where Allah and the Islamic prophets occupy the highest semantic positions, whereas local entities operate as agents facilitating ritual actions. This hierarchy is textual and symbolic rather than social. Consequently, the analysis of textual structure is crucial for understanding the system of religious meaning embedded in the mantra, as emphasized in Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutical approach (Ricoeur, 2016: 145-147).

The *Memang* Lampung text demonstrates that the religious elements it contains are not arranged randomly but rather constitute a layered semantic hierarchy. This hierarchy can be discerned through the order of mention, the direction of supplication, and the symbolic function of each element within the mantra. From the perspective of the anthropology of religion, such a semantic structure reveals how a ritual practice internally organizes its religious meaning, allowing it to be read as a coherent discursive system

rather than merely a loosely assembled collection of symbols (Geertz, 1973: 89-95).

The highest semantic layer in the *Memang* text is consistently occupied by Islamic divinity, represented through references such as *Alloh*, *Allohumma*, *Allohu ta'ala*, as well as explicit petitions for mercy, safety, and protection directed toward God. At this level, Allah functions as the primary source of legitimacy for the entire operative power of the mantra. There is no indication that other cosmological elements are positioned as equal or autonomous forces. This structure aligns with Talal Asad's view that a practice can be understood as part of Islam insofar as it operates within a normative horizon referencing divine authority, even when expressed through local forms (Asad, 1993: 205-210).

Beneath the layer of divinity lies a stratum of prophetic and Islamic religious authority, manifested through references to "Prophet Muhammad," "the apostles," "angels," as well as symbolic allusions to "Mecca" and "Medina." Semantically, this layer functions as an intermediary between God and humans. The prophets and angels are not positioned as independent sources of power but rather as components of the Islamic cosmic order that channel human supplications to Allah. This pattern underscores that the *Memang* text operates within an Islamic discursive framework, recognizing a structured religious authority, rather than within a fluid belief system lacking normative reference (Asad, 1993: 214-218).

The subsequent layer comprises local and cosmic cosmology, encompassing references to the earth, the universe (*jagat*), *pratala*, *sukma*, *ruh*, the human soul, as well as cosmological figures such as "Batara Vishnu," "Batara Brahma," "Batara Agni," "Dewa Langkati" and "Puteri Keling." The presence of these elements indicates the continuity of pre-Islamic cosmology preserved within ritual language. However, semantically, these elements do not occupy the highest positions but remain subordinated to the authority of Islamic divinity. In this context, local cosmology functions as a symbolic language for understanding the world and the human body, rather than as an alternative theological system. Such patterns are common in Nusantara religious traditions, where older symbols are reinterpreted and repositioned within new frameworks of meaning (Syam, 2005: 67-75).

The lowest semantic layer concerns the human subject and their practical needs, marked by self-references such as *nyak hamba* and petitions related to safety, health, sustenance, and protection. Humans are positioned as weak and dependent, rather than as controllers of cosmic forces. In this context, the mantra does not function as a means of domination over nature but rather as

a medium for acknowledging human limitations before the divine order. Such a semantic structure indicates that *Memang* guides ritual subjects toward a particular ethical stance, namely dependence upon and submission to God, as is customary within Islamic religious practice (Asad, 1993: 125-130).

Overall, the semantic hierarchy in the *Memang* Lampung text demonstrates that Islamic and local cultural elements do not occupy equivalent positions but are arranged in a stratified manner. Islam—through *tauhid*, prophetic authority, and supplication—constitutes the central source of meaning and legitimacy, while local cosmology functions as a medium of symbolic expression. This structure indicates that *Memang* Lampung is not merely a “mixed” practice but a ritual discourse with an internally coherent system of meaning and a relatively stable religious logic. By reading this semantic hierarchy, the *Memang* practice can be understood as part of the dynamics of local Islam without being reduced to categories of syncretism or mere acculturation (Syam, 2005: 92-98).

Fifth, the Performativity of Ritual Language as an Expression of Operational Islamic Discourse. Studies on ritual language emphasize that mantras and prayers do not merely represent meaning but also function as symbolic acts believed to possess effective power. Austin and Tambiah argue that ritual language operates performatively, that is, it “does” something through its utterance. In *Memang* Lampung, this performative function is reinforced by the use of Islamic symbols, which confer sacred legitimacy upon ritual actions. The deployment of Islamic symbols in this performative context aligns with Andrew Beatty’s observations that local religious practices often integrate Islamic symbols with the logic of indigenous rituals, resulting in a form of contextualized religiosity (Beatty, 1999: 103-105).

The utterances in *Memang* do not merely “depict” religious reality but actively bring it into being, actualize it, and operationalize Islamic beliefs within the local context. Within the framework of speech-act and performativity theory, a religious utterance functions not by virtue of its propositional truth but because it is spoken under appropriate conditions, authority, and context, thereby producing religious effects recognized by the community (Austin, 1962: 94-101).

In *Memang* Lampung, the performativity of language is clearly demonstrated through the use of invocative forms such as *Allohumma, ya Allah*, and the mention of the Prophet Muhammad’s name. These utterances are not merely recited prayers but constitute linguistic acts that directly position the ritual practitioner in relation to God. By invoking the names of Allah and the Prophet, the speaker of *Memang* is not explaining Islamic theology but

actively “doing” Islam through practice. This aligns with Talal Asad’s view that Islam, as a discursive tradition, lives through historically disciplined practices—including ways of speaking, praying, and petitioning—rather than solely through written doctrine (Asad, 1993: 205-210).

The performativity of ritual language in *Memang* is also evident in the structure of direct and repetitive petitions. The repetition of God’s name, divine attributes, and formulas for invoking protection demonstrates that the efficacy of the mantra does not depend on linguistic creativity but on adherence to utterances considered religiously legitimate. In this context, ritual language functions as a mechanism for disciplining the subject, shaping the speaker to address God in a specific manner. Such practices illustrate how Islamic discourse operates operationally through language, forming an ethical relationship between humans and God (Asad, 1993: 218-223).

Furthermore, the ritual language of *Memang* integrates local vocabulary and Islamic terms within a single sequence of performative utterances. References to cosmological elements such as the earth, the universe (*jagat*), and the soul are never presented in isolation but are always embedded within petitions directed to Allah. Performatively, the local language does not serve as a source of religious authority but as a medium for articulating lived experience oriented toward God. Thus, the ritual language of *Memang* demonstrates that Islamic discourse does not require linguistic uniformity but demands alignment in the orientation of meaning and ethical purpose (Keane, 2007: 67-72).

From this perspective, the performativity of *Memang* Lampung ritual language can be understood as a form of operationalizing Islamic discourse at the practical level. Islam does not appear as an abstract theological system, but rather as a series of linguistic actions that are repeated, transmitted, and validated by the community. Ritual language serves as the primary medium through which Islam is enacted, negotiated, and maintained within the local cultural context. This approach allows *Memang* to be read not as a deviation from Islam, but as one of how Islam has been historically and contextually practiced (Asad, 2003: 222-226).

Thus, the analysis of the performativity of ritual language indicates that *Memang* Lampung constitutes a religious practice operating within the discourse of Islam through linguistic action. Mantric language not only conveys religious meanings but also generates the religious condition itself, namely, the human dependence on God, the acknowledgment of prophetic authority, and the ethical orientation toward salvation. It is in this capacity that ritual language functions as a bridge between Islamic teachings and the lived experience of the Lampung community, while also serving as evidence

of how Islam operates concretely in local practice (Syam, 2005: 88-94).

Building on the analysis above, the relationship between Islam and local culture in *Memang* Lampung cannot be understood as an opposition between “Islam” and “tradition,” but rather as a productive interaction that shapes Islam as a lived practice. Islam does not erase local cosmology but disciplines it through the orientation of *tawhīd* and divine legitimacy, while local culture provides the language, symbols, and cosmological structures that make the meaningful practice of Islam possible in the life of the Lampung community. From Talal Asad’s perspective, *Memang* Lampung represents an expression of Islam as a discursive tradition—Islam that is lived through practice, rather than solely through normative texts.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study above, this research concludes that the *Memang* Lampung tradition constitutes a religious practice operating within the framework of local Islam as a discursive tradition. The structure of the mantric texts reveals a semantic hierarchy that positions God, the Prophet Muhammad, and the orientation toward the request for salvation as the centers of religious legitimacy, while elements of cosmology and local cultural symbols function as a medium for articulating the lived experiences of the community. *Memang* ritual language operates performatively to enact the relationship between humans and God and to shape the ethical orientation of ritual subjects. These findings underscore that *Memang* cannot be reduced to mere syncretism, but must be understood as a form of Islamic praxis historically and contextually enacted within the Lampung community.

Furthermore, this study recommends that future research on Islam and local culture should not be limited to typologies of relations such as syncretism, acculturation, or collaboration, but should also develop analyses that trace discursive mechanisms, the performativity of language, and the authority of religious practices. Subsequent studies are also encouraged to integrate philological examinations of local manuscripts with approaches from the anthropology of religion and discourse analysis, thereby enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of local Islam. Through such an approach, the study of Nusantara ritual traditions can make a more significant contribution to the development of Indonesian Islamic studies and to understanding the diversity of Muslim religious practices.

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