



## **Mantra Text Tradition of *Mambang Lukah Menari*: A Social Culture View in North Sumatra Indonesia**



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### **Abstract**

This research aims to describe the meaning of the mantra text of *Mambang Lukah Menari* tradition using a semiotic approach by Michael Riffaterre based on two reading stages: heuristics and hermeneutics. The research data were obtained using a *purposive sampling* method through observation, interview and documentation techniques. Observations were made in Sei Paham village, Asahan, North Sumatra. The results showed that in the heuristic reading, structurally, the *Mambang Lukah Menari* mantra text begins with the reading of *basmalah*, which reflects the teachings of Islam in Malay culture, namely strengthening faith and devotion. In the hermeneutic reading, the meanings of the *Mambang Lukah Menari* tradition mantra text reflect social culture such as strengthening the social system of the society, harmonizing behaviour towards the environment, strengthening the solidarity of the local society, and as a manifestation of social welfare.

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### **1. Introduction**

Oral literature is a work that includes cultural expressions that are passed down through oral means both in terms of time, namely from one generation to the next, or in terms of space, namely from society to other societies within the same time and place (Dan & Septevany, 2020). Even though a society already has a written system, oral literature will continue to live, especially in certain parts of society, such as aspects of customs and language arts.

Syaifuddin (2016) states that oral literature is born in two forms, the first is the form of folklore, myths, legends, and fairy tales. The second form is the form of folk songs, proverbs, riddles, poems,

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rhymes, seloka, gurindam, and mantras. Both forms are manifested in prose and poetry that live in the society.

The tradition of *Mambang Lukah Menari* in the Asahan Malay society in North Sumatra is a form of oral literature. The Asahan Malay society uses *lukah* as a tool to catch fish in the sea. Along with that, the *lukah* is considered a sacred tool for most members of society, because they believe that not only the sea is inhabited by supernatural beings, but every tool used to catch fish such as *lukah* is also believed to have inhabitant as a savior from various disturbances, both supernatural beings and human ignorance.

The sacredness of the *lukah* is manifested through a tradition ceremony, namely *Mambang Lukah Menari* which is a tradition carried out by a Pawang who presents mantra texts by singing. The Pawang chants the mantra text until he is possessed by the spirit of the ancestor. One of the things that attracted the attention of researchers was the use of a mantra for a fishing tool in the sea, namely *lukah*, so that people could get an adequate fish catch. Syaifuddin (2016) says that mantra has an important position in the context of oral literature in Malay society.

Mantra is a tradition that thrives in Indonesian society. Endraswara (2018) says that in the literary world, mantra are categorized as oral literature, namely literary works that are passed down from generation to generation. Mantra as oral literature is spread through speech conveyed orally and it doesn't rule out that in its inheritance there is also a reduction and addition due to differences in place, situation and condition. It is people who are deemed to meet the requirements who can inherit oral literature and continue to practice it from generation to generation, thus forming a tradition.

Mantra has the meaning of words that have supernatural powers, for example, they can heal or cause harm, and so on. Mantra is also included as a work of old poetry, because in terms of form, it is more suitable to be classified into a free poetic form, which is less tied to the aspects of lines, rhymes, and the number of words in each line. Initially, the existence of mantras in Malay society was not a literary work, but had more to do with customs and beliefs.

The tradition of *Mambang Lukah Menari* is found in various regions in Indonesia, especially in Sumatra, even abroad with different terms and mantra texts. In Kedayan society, Brunei Darussalam, this tradition is known as *Tak Bamban* (Metrasat, 1989). In Melanau, Serawak, Malaysia, this tradition known as *Pisak Bubou* (Noviana, 2016). Next in Bonai society, Rokan Hulu, Riau, this tradition is known as *Lukah Gilo* (Nofrita et. al, 2018). Then in Sijunjung society, West Sumatra, this tradition is known as *Lukah Gilo* (Santi, 2019). Although it is known by different terms and mantra, however this tradition is performed in almost the same way and leads to mystical elements and still uses the same tool, namely *lukah*, a tool for catching fish in the sea.

Many works of art, literature, and tradition culture of the Malay society were inherited from their ancestors living in pre-modern times. There are also many traditional Malay literary works that have changed their form and function as a result of changes in the history of people's thinking. However, the moral message and the meanings contained therein have not changed much. Therefore, the researcher conducted research on the *Mambang Lukah Menari* tradition in the Asahan Malay society in North Sumatra to show how this tradition can be related to the life system of the Asahan Malay society in their interactions with others such as nature, supernatural beings, and other creatures based on meanings of its mantra text. Next, in order to preserve the society's traditions so that they aren't lost because they are rarely practiced and as a feature of local culture, this tradition needs to be widely introduced.

In interpreting the meaning of the *Mambang Lukah Menari* tradition mantra text in the Asahan Malay society, the researcher uses the theory and semiotic method offered by a literary expert, namely Riffaterre (1959, 1966, 1980, 1984). According to him, language and literary systems are two important aspects in semiotics. Moreover, Literary work is a sign system that uses a language

medium (Kartini et al., 2020). Riffaterre (1959, 1966, 1980, 1984) said that it is the reader whose job is to give the meaning of the signs contained in literary works. These signs will have meaning after reading and interpreting them (Langkameng & Latupeirissa, 2020). Indeed, in the reader's mind the transfer of semiotics from sign to sign occurs. Semiotics Riffaterre (1959, 1966, 1980, 1984) is the appropriate theory to understand the meaning of a poem. The discussion of the meaning of *Mambang Lukah Menari* mantra text using the method is carried out in two stages, namely heuristic and hermeneutic reading.

In heuristic reading, each linguistic unit used in the text is interpreted in accordance with applicable language conventions. Because language has a referential meaning, readers must have linguistic competence in order to grasp meaning. According to Riffaterre (1959, 1966, 1980, 1984), in the heuristic stage, text reading is in accordance with syntactic grammar, which is read based on the linguistic structure, the sentence structure is adjusted to the standard sentence, if necessary, the sentence structure is reversed to clarify the meaning. Then according to the morphological grammar, that is, given the insertion of words or synonyms of the words which are placed in brackets, adding affixation if needed to clarify the meaning. Next, according to semantic grammar. This means that heuristic reading produces text as a whole according to grammar as a means of understanding several things which are referred to as text irregularities (Ratih, 2017).

Heuristic reading is called the first stage semiotic reading. In heuristic reading, there are still many diverse meanings that are incomplete, and not grammatical. For this reason, this first stage of reading still needs to be continued to the second stage of reading, namely the hermeneutic reading. Hermeneutic reading is the meaning of the text interpreted in accordance with the literary and cultural conventions behind it (Latupeirissa et al., 2018). In this second stage of reading, it will be seen that things that were not grammatical in the first place become an equivalent set of words (Ratih, 2017). Using this theory, this research reveals the meaning contained in the mantra text of *Mambang Lukah Menari* and to present the realization of the meaning of the mantra text in the social culture of the Asahan Malay society.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The method used in the research of *Mambang Lukah Menari* tradition mantra text in the Asahan Malay society is a qualitative research method. Sugiyono (2018) explains that qualitative research are research methods used to examine the conditions of natural objects, where the researcher is the key instrument. Sugiyono argued that the activities in qualitative data analysis were carried out interactively and continued continuously to completion. Activities in data analysis are data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and data verification.

Primary data used in this research is oral data from interviews obtained from key informants. Key informant characteristics namely; the person who performs the *Mambang Lukah Menari* tradition, the person who knows the meaning of the tradition mantra text and the regional leader. Secondary data used in this research is in the form of additional written data obtained from books related to the *Mambang Lukah Menari* tradition, previous research, articles, and other scientific works.

Primary and secondary data were obtained using *purposive sampling* method, meaning that in the sample of data source had been taken with certain considerations, namely that the informant was considered to know the most about what the researcher expected, or perhaps the informant was the ruler so that it would make it easier for researchers to explore the object or social situation under study (Sugiyono, 2018).

The data collection technique used in this research was observation, interview, and documentation techniques. Observations were made in Sei Paham village, Asahan, North Sumatra. The selection of Sei Paham village as the location for this research was based on the presence of fishermen who practice the *Mambang Lukah Menari* tradition every year. These mantra practitioners continue the tradition to younger fishermen, including their children and grandchildren who are fishermen or not.

The interviewees in this study were the previous Pawang and the descendants of the Pawang who continued the tradition of Mambang Lukah Menari, the leader of Sei Paham village, and the local society. The data obtained through interviews answered the problem of the meaning of the mantra text heuristically and hermeneutically based on the social culture of the Asahan Malay society (Cf. Latupeirissa et al., 2019). Documentation is a complement to the use of observation and interview techniques in qualitative research. The documents used in this research are the writing of the *Mambang Lukah Menari* mantra text and related books and scientific articles.

The data analysis technique used in this study used interactive analysis. The form of data analysis in this research is collecting primary and secondary data related to the mantra of *Mambang Lukah Menari* tradition, transcribing oral data into written data, classifying data found regarding the *Mambang Lukah Menari* tradition, translating the text data of the tradition mantra into Indonesian, analyze the meaning of the mantra text in its relation to the social culture of the Asahan Malay society.

### 3. Results and Discussions

[1] *Bismi'llahi-Rahmanni'l-Rahim*

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent and the Most Merciful

*Basmalah* pronunciation is the initial part of every activity carried out by Muslims. If a person starts his activities with and in the name of Allah, then the activity will be good and will bring benefits to himself, society and the surrounding environment. *Basmalah* pronunciation can reflect the teachings of Islam in the context of Malay cultural customs, namely strengthening faith and devotion.

[2] *Silawasi tahu dandi asal jadi*

Someone who knows the origin of the drum beats

The sentence above means that an ancestor of the Malay society knew the origin sound of the drum beats which became a rhythm to sing the mantra texts performed by Pawang in the *Mambang Lukah Menari* tradition.

[3] *Duduk di balai kota mangka*

Because sitting in city hall

The sound of the drum beats became an inspiration for their ancestors so that they created mantra texts while sitting pensively in the city hall.

[4] *Lima raut, raut rotan*

five pieces of rattan sharpened

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The number five becomes the benchmark for the ancestors of the Malay society to create a mantra text which means five prayer times. Because prayer is the pillar of Islam. Meanwhile, rattan is a tool for making a *lukah*.

- [5] *Kalau rautan penjalin lukah*  
If the rattan sharpener becomes a lukah braid

The results of the sharpening of five rattan pieces become a *lukah*, which is a fishing tool used as a medium for carrying out the *Mambang Lukah Menari* tradition.

- [6] *Ke lukah sebagai Allah*  
Creatures who enter into the *lukah* by the permission of Allah

After the Pawang sings the mantra text, the creatures that the Asahan Malay society believes in as sea inhabitant will enter into the *lukah* by Allah's permission and can interact with the Pawang.

- [7] *Kaciti kambing kaciti*  
*Nonsense*

*Nonsense* is a word or sentence that has no meaning linguistically because it is only a series of sounds, and isn't in the dictionary. In a mantra, *nonsense* means to generate magical power.

- [8] *Pucuk katari lumba jangan*  
Don't compete katari's shoots

Shoots is the highest part of a tree. Tree means life. So the ancestors of the Malay Asahan society advised in the mantra text that they shouldn't only compete to be rulers in world affairs.

- [9] *Fikir-fikir dalam hati*  
Think to yourself

The ancestors of the Malay Asahan society wanted that the message conveyed could be thought about and pondered on the heart of its successors.

- [10] *Bisik nan tadi lupa jangan*  
Don't forget that earlier whisper

The ancestors of the Asahan Malay society hoped that the messages conveyed through the mantra texts of *Mambang Lukah Menari* tradition wouldn't be forgotten.

#### 4. Conclusion

*Mambang Lukah Menari* is a tradition of the Asahan Malay society which is carried out from generation to generation. They believe that the power position of a Pawang is only in harmony with his descendants so that other people can't become a Pawang if they aren't descendants of his previous. This is a sign that they are always strengthening the social system of their society.

From the meaning of the heuristic and hermeneutic reading above, it can be seen that with the *Mambang Lukah Menari* tradition, the Asahan Malay society believe that the fishermen's fish catch is adequate so that they are always grateful by protecting the environment and not taking excessive amounts of sea or river products. The tradition of *Mambang Lukah Menari* is believed to bring prosperity to the Malay Asahan society so that until now they still carry out this tradition at least once a year so that this tradition is not lost by the increasingly modern era.

In the implementation of the *Mambang Lukah Menari* tradition, every community needs to be social in providing help to individuals or groups of people who experience difficulties in life based on the spirit of togetherness. This form of solidarity can increase the helping-to-help activities carried out through mutual cooperation in the process of making a *lukah*, then together holding onto the *lukah* who starts move like dancing, and mutual cooperation cleaning up the place for the implementation of the tradition before it starts to finish.

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