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The Function and Meaning of Mantras in the Ngabungbang Ritual of Rancakalong

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Article Info

Article history:

Received 2026-05-03

Revised 2026-05-24

Accepted 2026-06-03

Keywords:

Islamization
Mantra
Ngabungbang ritual
Oral literature
Sundanese culture.

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the functions and meanings of mantras in the Ngabungbang ritual in Rancakalong, Sumedang, as a representation of symbolic Islamization in Sundanese culture. The research addresses the limited studies examining oral ritual texts as media for cultural negotiation and religious transformation. The study aims to identify the ritual functions of the mantras, interpret their symbolic meanings, and explain their role in representing the spread of Islam within local traditions. A qualitative descriptive method with an ethnographic approach was employed. Data were collected through observation, interviews with traditional leaders and ritual practitioners, and documentation of five mantra texts used in the ritual. The analysis applied Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic theory and William R. Bascom's folklore function theory. The findings reveal that the mantras function as media for purification, protection, gratitude, and social regulation. Their meanings reflect harmony between humans, nature, and divine power while demonstrating the integration of Islamic expressions, such as the shahada and prayers to Allah, into older Sundanese cosmological beliefs. The study highlights how Islamic teachings are culturally adapted through oral ritual traditions without entirely eliminating local identity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ritual traditions are an essential part of cultural heritage, reflecting a community's values, beliefs, and historical experiences [1]. Beyond functioning as ceremonial practices, rituals also become cultural texts that preserve collective memory, social identity, and religious transformation within society. In many traditional communities, ritual practices serve as an important medium for transmitting values and maintaining continuity between

past and present generations. One such tradition is the ngabungbang ritual practiced in Rancakalong, Sumedang, which involves bathing in sacred springs believed to purify both the body and the soul. This ritual is not merely a cultural activity but also serves as a symbolic commemoration of the spread of Islam in the region, particularly associated with the arrival of Islamic teachings brought by the disciples of Sunan Bonang. The ritual is performed annually on the 14th of Rabiul Awwal (Mulud), accompanied by traditional musical performances such as koromong, which further strengthens its spiritual and cultural significance. The uniqueness of the ngabungbang ritual lies in its ability to preserve local Sundanese traditions while simultaneously integrating Islamic spiritual values, making it an important site for examining the interaction between religion, culture, and oral tradition in contemporary Indonesian society.

The ngabungbang ritual is closely connected with oral literature, especially mantras, which are recited throughout the ceremony. These mantras function as a medium of communication between humans and the spiritual realm, reflecting both pre-Islamic beliefs and Islamic influences that have merged over time [2]. Historically, the ritual illustrates a cultural transformation from Hindu traditions to Islamic practices, where elements such as deities are gradually replaced with concepts related to Allah, angels, and Islamic spirituality [3]. This shift demonstrates how local traditions adapt to religious changes while maintaining their original cultural identity [4]. Such cultural adaptation reflects a process of religious syncretism in which local beliefs are neither entirely eliminated nor reconstructed, but are instead integrated into Islamic values and symbols. Studies in symbolic anthropology emphasize that ritual language often becomes a space for ideological negotiation and cultural reinterpretation, especially in societies undergoing religious transformation. In this context, the ngabungbang ritual represents not only a spiritual practice but also a cultural strategy for preserving local identity amid the Islamization process.

Mantras, as a form of oral literature, are considered metaphysical poetry that carries philosophical meanings and spiritual intentions [5]. They are often associated with supernatural power and are used to achieve specific purposes, such as healing, protection, or invoking blessings [6]. In Sundanese tradition, mantras can take various forms, including *jangjawokan*, *jampe*, *kinasih*, and *ajian*, each serving different functions within the community [7]. These oral expressions are not only linguistic artifacts but also represent the worldview, belief systems, and social norms of the society that preserves them [8]. From the perspective of oral literature studies, mantras can also be interpreted as ritual language that symbolically connects human experience, sacred belief, and collective cultural consciousness. Their linguistic structures, metaphors, and symbolic expressions contain cultural meanings that cannot be separated from the social and religious context in which they are performed. Therefore, the study of mantras requires not only descriptive explanation but also critical interpretation regarding their symbolic, ideological, and spiritual dimensions.

Furthermore, oral literature such as mantras plays an important role in maintaining cultural continuity [9]. It serves as a documentation of traditional knowledge, values, and ideologies that are passed down from generation to generation [10]. Local traditions contain ideological values that contribute to a community's identity and resilience [11]. In the

context of ngabungbang, the mantras embody symbolic meanings related to purification, spiritual connection, and harmony between humans and the universe. The preservation of these oral traditions becomes increasingly important in modern society, where globalization and cultural transformation gradually reduce community engagement with traditional rituals. Consequently, documenting and analyzing ritual mantras contributes not only to literary studies but also to cultural preservation efforts and the strengthening of local identity.

In addition to their symbolic meanings, mantras also have pragmatic functions within the ritual. Folklore serves several functions, including as a projection system of collective imagination, a means of validating cultural institutions, an educational tool, and a mechanism for enforcing social norms [12]. In the ngabungbang ritual, mantras serve as tools to seek permission, express gratitude, request protection, and strengthen participants' spiritual awareness. These functions highlight the importance of mantras not only as literary texts but also as integral components of social and religious practices. The ritual performance of mantras also demonstrates how oral expressions operate simultaneously as spiritual communication, cultural legitimization, and social control within traditional communities. This multidimensional role indicates that mantras should be examined through interdisciplinary perspectives involving oral literature, anthropology, religion, and cultural studies.

Despite their significance, the study of mantras in traditional rituals remains limited, particularly in terms of their structure, meaning, and function within specific cultural contexts [13]. Previous studies on mantras generally focus on linguistic forms, magical functions, or textual meanings without specifically examining how ritual language reflects the process of Islamization and cultural negotiation in local traditions. Several studies also describe Sundanese oral traditions, yet few analyze the ngabungbang ritual as a representation of syncretic interaction between Islamic teachings and pre-Islamic cultural beliefs. This condition reveals a research gap concerning the relationship between mantra functions, symbolic meanings, and religious transformation within ritual practices. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the functions and meanings of mantras in the ngabungbang ritual in Rancakalong, Sumedang. This study specifically seeks to explain how the mantras construct symbolic communication, preserve cultural identity, and reflect the process of Islamization within Sundanese society. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of oral literature studies by positioning mantras not merely as traditional expressions but as cultural texts that represent ideological negotiation and religious transformation. In practice, the findings are expected to enrich documentation of Indonesian oral traditions and strengthen awareness of the importance of preserving local cultural heritage in contemporary society.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method with an ethnographic approach to analyze the function and meaning of mantras in the ngabungbang ritual in Rancakalong, Sumedang. This approach is considered appropriate because oral literature, including mantras, is a humanistic cultural phenomenon that requires interpretation grounded in the community's lived experiences and beliefs [14]. The ethnographic approach enables the

researcher to understand ritual practices from the perspective of the indigenous community while examining the interactions among language, belief systems, and cultural symbols embedded in the ritual performance. The study focuses on documenting, analyzing, and interpreting mantra texts within traditional ritual practices. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer during the ritual activities while maintaining cultural sensitivity toward local customs and sacred practices. The researcher's positionality as an external academic observer was continuously reflected upon throughout the fieldwork to minimize subjective interpretation and to maintain respect for indigenous perspectives and ritual values.

The object of this research consists of five mantra texts used in the *ngabungbang* ritual, which takes place in Cikubang Village, Sukahayu, Rancakalong District. The ritual is conducted annually on the 14th of Rabiul Awwal (Mulud). The selected texts include: (1) *Jampe Ngaibakan Waditra Koromong*, (2) *Jampe Ijab Qobul*, (3) *Jampe Ibak Ngabungbang*, (4) *Jampe Sabada Ibak Ngabungbang Istri*, and (5) *Do'a Mapag Nyi Pohaci Sanghyang Sri*. These mantra texts were selected purposively because they represent different stages of the ritual process and contain symbolic expressions related to purification, protection, gratitude, and spiritual communication. The selection also considered the frequency of use, cultural significance, and recognition by traditional leaders within the Rancakalong community.

Data collection techniques include observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The researcher recorded the mantra recitations during the ritual and conducted interviews with key informants, including: (1) the traditional leader (*rurukan*), (2) the ritual elder (*saehu*), (3) the female guardian of the sacred space (*nini candoli*), (4) traditional musicians, and (5) members of the indigenous community. These methods are consistent with oral literature research, which emphasizes direct recording and interaction with informants to obtain authentic data [15]. A total of ten in-depth interviews were conducted with the selected informants using purposive sampling techniques based on their active involvement and knowledge of the *ngabungbang* ritual. Each interview lasted approximately 45–90 minutes and was conducted in Sundanese or Indonesian, depending on the informants' preferences. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission and supported by field notes documenting ritual situations, gestures, symbolic objects, and community interactions during the ceremony. Documentation techniques also included photographs, audio recordings of mantra recitations, and transcription of oral performances into written texts.

The data analysis process involves several stages. First, the recorded data are transcribed into written form. The transcription process preserved the original Sundanese expressions, ensuring linguistic authenticity and cultural nuance. Second, the data are classified into categories of mantra texts. Third, the analysis focuses on three main aspects: structure, meaning, and function. The interpretation of meaning is based on the hermeneutic theory of Paul Ricoeur, which views meaning as a dialectical relationship between the speaker's intention and the structure of the text [16].

Meanwhile, the functional analysis applies the folklore theory of William R. Bascom, which explains that folklore serves functions such as projection, validation of cultural institutions, education, and social control [17]. The thematic interpretation process was conducted through repeated readings of the texts, identification of symbolic keywords,

categorization of ritual expressions, and interpretation of cultural meanings in the context of performance. Meanings were categorized into themes such as purification, protection, gratitude, harmony, and spiritual devotion, while mantra functions were identified based on their ritual usage and the explanations provided by informants during interviews. To ensure validity, the researcher applied triangulation techniques by comparing observational data, interview results, and textual analysis of the mantras. Member checking was also conducted with several key informants to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations and cultural meanings identified during the analysis.

Furthermore, the study applies a coding system to organize the data. Each dataset is labeled with “D” (Data) and each text with “T” (Text), for example, D1T1, D1T2, and so on. The coding system facilitated the organization of textual units, thematic categories, and functional classifications throughout the analytical process. In addition, the study employed interpretive translation techniques to render the mantra texts from Sundanese into Indonesian and English, while preserving semantic nuance and symbolic meaning. Particular attention was given to culturally specific vocabulary, metaphoric expressions, and sacred terminology that may not have direct equivalents in other languages. The researcher, therefore, combined literal and contextual translation strategies to preserve both linguistic meaning and ritual significance. Challenges in translation mainly concerned symbolic phrases and spiritual expressions whose meanings depended heavily on cultural context and oral performance traditions. The final stage involves interpreting the findings by connecting the structure, meaning, and function of the mantras to the cultural and religious context of the Rancakalong community. This interpretation highlights how the mantras reflect both traditional beliefs and Islamic values within the ngabungbang ritual. Ethical considerations were also applied throughout the study. The researcher obtained permission from traditional authorities and community leaders before conducting observations and interviews. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection, and the researcher respected cultural restrictions regarding sacred ritual knowledge and performance. Confidentiality and cultural sensitivity were maintained by using the data solely for academic purposes and by ensuring that the interpretation of ritual practices did not contradict community values or local beliefs.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Sentence Patterns

Table 1. Ngabungbang ritual text data

Text No.	Text Name	Data Source
Text 1	<i>Jampe Ngaibakan Waditra Koromong</i>	Traditional leader (<i>rurukan</i>)
Text 2	<i>Jampe Ijab Qobul</i>	Ritual elder (<i>saehu</i>)
Text 3	<i>Jampe Ibak Ngabungbang</i>	Indigenous community members
Text 4	<i>Jampe Sabada Ibak Ngabungbang Istri</i>	Guardian of the <i>goah</i> (<i>nini candoli</i>)
Text 5	<i>Do 'a Mapag Nyi Pohaci Sanghyang Sri</i>	Traditional leader (<i>rurukan</i>)

The function of mantras in the *Ngabungbang* ritual reflects a complex interaction between spiritual belief, cultural symbolism, and social practice [18]. Although each mantra has a different ritual role, all of them, together, reinforce purification, protection, gratitude, and harmony among humans, nature, and divine power. The analysis also indicates that the

ritual functions not only as a religious practice but as a cultural mechanism for preserving collective identity and social continuity. To improve analytical clarity, the findings are summarized in the following table.

Table 2. Symbolic meanings and functions of mantras in the ngabungbang ritual

Original Text	Translation	Symbolic Meaning	Function
<i>Bismillahirrahmanirrahim</i>	In the name of Allah	Islamic spiritual foundation	Opening sacred ritual
<i>Punika ngaadusing waditra</i>	Cleansing the instruments	Physical and spiritual purification	Ritual purification
<i>Abdi amit ka nu kagungan</i>	Asking permission from guardians	Respect toward visible and invisible realms	Seeking protection
<i>Nyucikeun diri nyetrakeun manah</i>	Purifying body and heart	Inner moral purification	Spiritual refinement
<i>Alhamdulillah rabbil 'alamin</i>	Praise be to Allah	Gratitude and divine submission	Ritual closure
<i>Asyhadu alla ilaha illallah</i>	Declaration of faith	Islamic monotheism	Legitimizing ritual spirituality

Mantra 1: *Jampe Ngaibakan Waditra Koromong*

This mantra functions as a ritual medium for cleansing the *koromong* musical instruments before the main *Ngabungbang* ceremony. The ritual washing of gamelan instruments using flower-infused water symbolizes the purification of both physical objects and spiritual energy. The recitation begins with Islamic expressions such as the *syahadat*, indicating the integration of Islamic elements into local ritual practices [19].

The symbolic structure of the *koromong* instruments also reflects Islamic cosmology, in which the number of instruments corresponds to the pillars of Islam and the pillars of faith. At the same time, the ritual preserves older Sundanese cosmological concepts related to harmony between humans and the universe. This demonstrates that the ritual does not entirely replace pre-Islamic beliefs but reinterprets them through Islamic symbolism [20]. The mantra primarily emphasizes purification and spiritual preparation. Expressions such as *nyucikeun diri* symbolize inner cleansing and moral refinement, while the use of water represents sacred transformation. The ritual, therefore, functions as both a spiritual and cultural preparation before entering the sacred ceremony.

Mantra 2: *Jampe Ijab Qobul*

The *Jampe Ijab Qobul* mantra functions as an opening prayer requesting permission and protection before the ritual begins. The text combines Islamic invocations with references to invisible guardians of nature and place. This dual orientation reflects the coexistence of Islamic monotheism and indigenous cosmological beliefs within the ritual tradition.

The repeated expressions of apology and permission-seeking indicate the importance of ethical conduct and respect toward both human and non-human entities [21].

Symbolically, the mantra reinforces balance between the visible and invisible worlds while maintaining communal harmony.

However, this syncretic aspect also reflects cultural negotiation within the community. Several informants explained that some reformist Islamic groups consider the invocation of spiritual entities incompatible with orthodox Islamic teachings. Despite such criticism, local practitioners interpret the ritual not as worship of spirits but as a symbolic expression of respect for creation and ancestral heritage. This indicates that the Ngabungbang ritual remains a contested cultural space where local identity and religious orthodoxy continue to interact dynamically.

Mantra 3: *Jampe Ibak Ngabungbang*

This mantra is recited during the ritual bathing process at the seven sacred springs. Water symbolizes purity, renewal, and spiritual awareness, while the act of immersion represents the cleansing of physical and inner impurities [22]. The recitation of Islamic declarations during the bathing process also illustrates the ritual's historical association with Islamization practices in the region.

Nevertheless, the linkage between the *Ngabungbang* ritual and the spread of Islam by followers of Sunan Bonang is primarily preserved through oral narratives and collective memory rather than written historical documentation. Therefore, the association should be understood as a cultural and symbolic narrative maintained by the community rather than as a fully verified historical fact.

The mantra reflects the belief that spiritual purification is necessary for achieving harmony between worldly life and the afterlife. The ritual simultaneously functions as self-reflection, spiritual preparation, and communal reaffirmation of shared beliefs.

Mantra 4: *Jampe Sabada Ibak Ngabungbang Istri*

This mantra serves as a closing prayer after the ritual bathing, especially for female participants. Expressions of gratitude, such as *Alhamdulillah*, indicate recognition that purification ultimately depends on divine mercy. Symbolically, the mantra associates purity with spiritual radiance, ethical behavior, and self-control.

The gender dimension within this ritual is particularly significant. Women are positioned as symbolic bearers of purity, harmony, and moral balance within the community. The emphasis on female spiritual beauty reflects broader Sundanese cultural values that associate femininity with refinement and inner calmness. At the same time, these expectations may also reinforce gendered ideals concerning women's moral responsibilities and bodily purity.

From a critical perspective, the ritual demonstrates how women's spiritual roles are simultaneously empowered and culturally regulated. Female participants are given important ritual positions, yet they are also expected to embody ideals of obedience, modesty, and spiritual perfection. Thus, the mantra reflects both recognition of women's sacred roles and the persistence of gendered cultural expectations within ritual traditions.

Mantra 5: *Do'a Mapag Nyi Pohaci Sanghyang Sri*

This mantra functions as a prayer for fertility, prosperity, and communal well-being [23]. The symbolic figure of Nyi Pohaci Sanghyang Sri represents agricultural abundance and ecological balance within Sundanese cosmology. However, the mantra simultaneously emphasizes Islamic monotheism through repeated declarations of faith and prayers directed to Allah.

The coexistence of Islamic expressions with references to Nyi Pohaci illustrates a process of cultural adaptation rather than complete religious replacement. Local communities reinterpret traditional symbols within an Islamic framework so that ancestral traditions can continue without abandoning religious identity.

This syncretic structure also reveals a complex negotiation between local belief and Islamic orthodoxy. While some community members interpret Nyi Pohaci symbolically as a representation of sustenance created by God, others maintain stronger spiritual associations with older cosmological beliefs. The ritual, therefore, reflects an ongoing process of reinterpretation shaped by cultural continuity, religious transformation, and social negotiation.

Overall, the functions of the mantras in the Ngabungbang ritual demonstrate a dynamic synthesis between indigenous traditions and Islamic teachings [24]. The mantras operate not only as ritual utterances but also as cultural texts containing ethical values, social norms, ecological awareness, and collective memory. At the same time, the findings reveal that syncretism within the ritual is not entirely harmonious, as it involves negotiation, reinterpretation, and occasional tension between local cultural identity and reformist religious perspectives.

3.2. Sentence Types

The Meaning of *Jampe Ngaibakan Koromong*

The meaning of *Jampe Ngaibakan Koromong* reflects the relationship between ritual purification, cultural continuity, and spiritual philosophy within the indigenous community. This mantra is recited during the annual Mulud ritual, particularly before the cleansing of the koromong ensemble and sacred heirlooms such as keris, gongs, drums, and spears. The ritual demonstrates that purification is directed not only toward ritual objects but also toward the moral and spiritual condition of the participants.

The ritual preparation emphasizes both material and spiritual readiness. Before the cleansing begins, prayers such as *Al-Fatihah* are dedicated to the Prophet Muhammad, Islamic figures, and ancestral spirits (*karuhun*), illustrating a syncretic framework in which Islamic teachings coexist with local ancestral reverence [25]. However, this syncretism should not be viewed as entirely harmonious. Several informants explained that some reformist Islamic groups criticize the inclusion of ancestral elements within ritual practices, considering them incompatible with orthodox Islamic teachings. Meanwhile, indigenous practitioners interpret these practices as symbolic respect toward heritage rather than acts of worship directed to spirits. This indicates an ongoing cultural negotiation between local tradition and Islamic orthodoxy.

The ritual performance involving saehu, dancers, and colored scarves symbolically represents ethical values and human emotions. Red symbolizes anger, yellow represents

worldly desire, white signifies purity, and green reflects knowledge. These symbolic colors function as moral reminders that ritual practice should lead participants toward self-control and ethical balance rather than merely ceremonial participation.

The prohibitions (pamali) within the ritual—such as restrictions on bodily movement and rules regarding interaction between men and women—reinforce social discipline and ritual respect [26]. These restrictions also illustrate how ritual authority regulates communal behavior through symbolic norms and cultural ethics.

At the textual level, phrases such as “Punika ngaadusing waditra” and “nyucikeun diri nyetrakeun manah” symbolize self-purification and emotional balance. The concept of nyucikeun diri parallels the Islamic notion of tazkiyatun nafs, emphasizing purification of the soul and closeness to God [27]. Rather than functioning solely as a magical incantation, the mantra serves as a spiritual reflection aimed at restoring harmony among human beings, nature, and divine order.

The symbolism of water in phrases such as “cur banyu” and “rap sirna” represents the removal of negativity and spiritual burden. Meanwhile, expressions like “sup sukma” and “rup komarana” signify the restoration of dignity, emotional calmness, and inner stability. The repeated use of purification imagery throughout the mantra demonstrates that ritual cleansing is interpreted not only physically but psychologically and socially.

Structurally, the mantra begins with an expression of intention and continues with symbolic elaboration regarding purification, protection, and spiritual balance. The use of east-facing spring water and midnight performance reflects cosmological symbolism associated with renewal and transformation. Although local narratives frequently associate this ritual with the Islamization process and the legacy of Sunan Bonang, these claims are primarily preserved through oral tradition and collective memory rather than written historical evidence. Therefore, the association should be understood as a symbolic-cultural narrative maintained by the community.

Ultimately, the meaning of Jampe Ngaibakan Koromong lies in the concepts of spiritual purification and ethical refinement. Purity is interpreted not as absolute freedom from sin but as an effort to return to moral balance through repentance and divine forgiveness [28]. This interpretation aligns with Islamic teachings regarding *istighfar* and self-purification [29]. Human beings are viewed as inherently pure at creation, and the ritual symbolically functions as an attempt to restore that original state [30].

Table 3. Symbolic meaning of *jampe ngaibakan koromong*

Original Text	Translation	Symbolic Meaning	Function
<i>Punika ngaadusing waditra</i>	Cleansing the instruments	Ritual and self-purification	Spiritual preparation
<i>Nyucikeun diri nyetrakeun manah</i>	Purifying oneself and the heart	Moral and emotional balance	Inner refinement
<i>Cur banyu</i>	Flowing water	Sacred cleansing	Removing negativity
<i>Sup sukma</i>	Returning soul	Spiritual restoration	Restoring harmony

The Meaning of the *Doa Ijab Qobul Mantra*

The Doa Ijab Qobul mantra symbolically represents a spiritual request for permission, protection, and harmony before carrying out an important commitment. The metaphor of flowing water reflects hopes for continuity and smoothness in life transitions.

The lines “Abdi amit ka nu kagungan...” express humility and respect toward both visible and invisible realms. This reflects a worldview in which humans coexist with spiritual forces and therefore must maintain ethical awareness. The act of asking permission (amit) symbolizes recognition of human limitations within a broader cosmic order.

The invocation of parental and divine authority in “Ka sang ratu waraga langit...” demonstrates the integration of family values and Islamic belief. The mantra emphasizes that important decisions require both social legitimacy and divine approval. This dual orientation illustrates how local ethics and religious values are intertwined within ritual communication.

The final lines concerning apology and sincerity reinforce the importance of beginning sacred actions with moral cleanliness and honest intention. Rather than functioning solely as a marriage-related prayer, the mantra also operates as a moral framework emphasizing humility, responsibility, and social harmony.

The Meaning of *Jampe Sabada Ibak Ngabungbang*

The meaning of Jampe Sabada Ibak Ngabungbang is gratitude, reflection, and spiritual transformation following the ritual bathing. The Ngabungbang tradition itself emphasizes contemplation of nature (tadabbur alam) and awareness of divine blessings through symbolic interaction with water and moonlight.

The phrase “Alhamdulillah rabbil ‘alamin” indicates the integration of Islamic expressions into older Sundanese ritual traditions. Historically, local ritual language relied on jangjawokan, yet Islamic teachings gradually influenced the structure and vocabulary of ritual prayers. This transformation illustrates a process of adaptation rather than complete replacement of local culture.

The expression “mubyar cahayana” symbolizes enlightenment, clarity, and moral awareness following purification. The symbolism of light reflects the expectation that ritual participants should demonstrate ethical behavior and spiritual consciousness after completing the ceremony.

In a broader sense, the mantra represents harmony among human beings, nature, and divine order. The ritual, therefore, functions not merely as ceremonial cleansing but as a reminder of ethical responsibility and social conduct within everyday life.

The Meaning of *Rengse Ibak Ngabungbang Istri Mantra*

The meaning of Rengse Ibak Ngabungbang Istri reflects women’s spiritual transformation and moral renewal after completing the Ngabungbang ritual. The immersion of the body seven times symbolizes efforts to control worldly desires and achieve inner balance.

The alignment of cipta, rasa, and karsa represents harmony between thought, feeling, and intention. Water symbolizes purity and repentance, while repeated immersion reflects

dependence on divine forgiveness and mercy. The mantra, therefore, emphasizes that purification involves ethical and psychological dimensions in addition to ritual practice.

This mantra also reveals important gender dimensions within Sundanese ritual culture. Women are symbolically associated with purity, harmony, beauty, and spiritual responsibility. Female participants occupy important ritual roles, yet they are simultaneously expected to embody ideals of modesty, sincerity, and moral discipline. These expectations demonstrate how femininity is culturally constructed through ritual symbolism and spiritual values.

At the same time, the ritual provides women with an active spiritual role within the ceremonial process. Thus, the mantra reflects both empowerment and regulation, in which women are respected as guardians of spiritual harmony while remaining bound by gendered cultural expectations.

The Meaning of the Mantra *Do'a Mapag Nyi Pohaci Sanghyang Sri*

The mantra *Do'a Mapag Nyi Pohaci Sanghyang Sri* reflects the integration of agricultural symbolism, ecological awareness, and Islamic theology. The term *mapag* symbolizes welcoming prosperity and spiritual readiness, while *Nyi Pohaci* represents fertility and agricultural abundance within Sundanese cosmology.

The repeated recitation of the *syahadat* establishes an Islamic theological foundation, affirming Allah as the ultimate source of life and sustenance. Expressions regarding angels, divine blessing, and natural elements emphasize that all existence operates under divine authority.

The phrase concerning the four directions (*kaler, kidul, wetan, and kulon*) symbolizes ecological interconnectedness and human dependence on water and nature. This ecological symbolism demonstrates that the ritual concerns not only spirituality but also local awareness of environmental balance and agricultural survival.

At the same time, the invocation of *Nyi Pohaci* reflects a continuing negotiation between local cosmology and Islamic monotheism. Some community members interpret *Nyi Pohaci* symbolically as a representation of sustenance created by Allah, while others continue to associate the figure with older mythological beliefs. Consequently, the mantra represents an ongoing reinterpretation of local tradition within changing religious contexts rather than a completely unified belief system.

The concluding lines emphasizing forgiveness and preparation for death reinforce the temporary nature of worldly life and the importance of spiritual readiness for the hereafter. Therefore, the mantra ultimately positions Islamic monotheism as the dominant theological framework while preserving symbolic elements of Sundanese cultural identity.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the mantras in the Ngabungbang ritual function not only as ritual utterances but also as cultural texts that preserve collective memory, ethical values, ecological awareness, and religious identity within the Rancakalong community. The findings reveal a dynamic interaction between Sundanese local traditions and Islamic teachings through symbolic expressions of purification, protection, gratitude, and spiritual

devotion, while also showing that the ritual reflects ongoing cultural negotiation between indigenous beliefs and Islamic orthodoxy rather than a fully harmonious form of syncretism. The study contributes theoretically to oral literature and cultural studies by positioning mantras as symbolic and ideological texts that represent religious transformation, cultural adaptation, and social continuity, while also practically supporting the preservation of Indonesian oral traditions and local cultural heritage. However, the research remains limited by interpretive subjectivity, dependence on oral narratives, localized cultural context, and limited historical verification regarding associations with Islamization and figures such as Sunan Bonang. Future research is recommended to conduct comparative ritual studies across regions, explore linguistic aspects of Sundanese ritual language, and examine ritual transformation among younger generations in response to modernization and changing religious perspectives, thereby strengthening interdisciplinary understanding of oral literature, ritual practice, and cultural resilience in contemporary society.

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