

The STRUCTURE of MANTRA TEXTS in the BEROKAN TRADITION of TAMBI VILLAGE, SLIYEG DISTRICT, INDRAMAYU REGENCY, and THEIR PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS for INDONESIAN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Rifa Liyanda Fadillah¹, Suntoko², Wienike Dinar Pratiwi³

Email: 21106380019@student.unsika.ac.id

Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang

Abstract. *Oral traditions play an important role in preserving local cultural values because they contain moral, spiritual, and social teachings delivered through spoken expression, one of which is through the mantra in the Berokan Tradition. The Berokan local culture is one of the traditional arts that includes a customary ritual called ruwatan in Indramayu Regency, which is believed by the community to ward off misfortune, purify oneself, and expel all forms of illness. This study aims to describe the text structure of the mantra in the Berokan Tradition among the community in Tambi Village, Sliyeg District, Indramayu Regency. The research method used is qualitative with an ethnographic approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The data analysis techniques used include data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of this study show that the Berokan Tradition contains a mantra for offering sesajen (ritual offerings), which is analyzed through physical and inner elements. Physically, this mantra consists of typography, diction, imagery, concrete words, figurative language, rhyme, and rhythm. Meanwhile, the inner elements include theme, feeling, tone, and message. Overall, these elements indicate that the mantra for offering sesajen embodies distinctive religious, moral, social, and symbolic values found within the Berokan Tradition.*

Keywords: *Mantra, Berokan Tradition, Text Structure*

Abstrak. Tradisi lisan memainkan peran penting dalam melestarikan nilai-nilai budaya lokal karena mengandung ajaran moral, spiritual, dan sosial yang disampaikan melalui ekspresi lisan, salah satunya melalui mantra dalam Tradisi Berokan. Budaya lokal Berokan merupakan salah satu seni tradisional yang mencakup ritual adat yang disebut ruwatan di Kabupaten Indramayu, yang diyakini oleh masyarakat dapat menangkal kesialan, menyucikan diri, dan mengusir segala bentuk penyakit. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan struktur teks mantra dalam Tradisi Berokan di kalangan masyarakat Desa Tambi, Kecamatan Sliyeg, Kabupaten Indramayu. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan etnografi. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan meliputi pengumpulan data, reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Tradisi Berokan mengandung mantra untuk mempersembahkan sesajen (persembahan ritual), yang dianalisis melalui unsur fisik dan batin. Secara fisik, mantra ini terdiri dari tipografi, diksi, citra, kata-kata konkret, bahasa kiasan, rima, dan ritme. Sementara itu, unsur-unsur internalnya meliputi tema, perasaan, nada, dan pesan. Secara keseluruhan, unsur-unsur ini menunjukkan bahwa mantra untuk persembahan sesajen mewujudkan nilai-nilai keagamaan, moral, sosial, dan simbolis yang khas yang ditemukan dalam Tradisi Beroka.

Kata kunci: Mantra, Tradisi Beroka, Struktur Teks

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is widely recognized as a country rich in cultural and traditional diversity, reflected in its languages, arts, traditional ceremonies, belief systems, and oral traditions passed down from generation to generation. Oral tradition is part of intangible cultural heritage and plays an important role in social life. According to Sibarani (2024:123), oral tradition is a cultural practice transmitted orally across generations, both in verbal and nonverbal forms. Therefore, oral tradition does not merely consist of spoken utterances but also includes nonverbal elements that contribute to the comprehensive preservation of community culture.

Oral traditions encompass various forms such as mantras, pantun, folktales, and poetic chants, which function as entertainment, educational media, conveyors of moral values, and markers of community identity. However, public knowledge and appreciation of these traditions have gradually declined. Utomo (in Siregar et al., 2022:114–115) states that oral tradition is a habit inherited across generations and used to convey verbal messages to younger generations. Piliang (in Sari, 2023:14) explains that oral tradition can be understood as a form of work or expression passed down from the past to the present, tending to remain stable and repeatedly practiced as part of cultural continuity. Today, younger generations—and even some adults—rarely recognize or deeply engage with oral traditions. The main contributing factors include globalization, the rapid development of digital technology, and lifestyle shifts that prioritize popular culture over local wisdom. As a result, oral traditions are increasingly replaced by digital communication, and values of togetherness and cultural heritage gradually fade.

One form of oral tradition closely associated with indigenous communities is the mantra, which is a sequence of words believed to possess magical or spiritual power to seek protection, health, safety, and other purposes in religious or customary rituals. According to Maizar Karim (in Karmila, 2022), a mantra is a series of words believed to contain supernatural power, such as spells or charms. Mantras are usually recited using distinctive diction, specific rhythms, and are often accompanied by body movements or the use of ritual offerings (*sesajen*). Hasan (in Ifadah, 2018:2) adds that a mantra is a rhythmic formulation of words with a supernatural bond, functioning as a prayer for both the reciter and the listener, and must be memorized accurately to avoid undesirable consequences. Syam (in Wulansari, 2023:3) states that a mantra is a sequence of utterances or expressions containing expressive, rhyming, and rhythmic words, believed to possess supernatural power when recited by a ritual specialist. In traditional belief systems, mantras are not only used as a medium of communication with supernatural entities but also

serve as an essential component in the execution of customary ceremonies and rituals. Thus, mantras reflect the culture of traditional societies by integrating language, belief systems, and social practices. Waluyo (in Wandu et al., 2021:181) emphasizes that mantras are forms of oral literature with religious nuances, whose power lies not only in their wording but also in their inner meaning. Trisnawati (in Nurfatin et al., 2023:3) also states that mantras are poetically structured expressions with rhyme and rhythm that are believed to have supernatural power.

According to Sibarani (2024:243), oral traditions consist of three main elements: text, co-text, and context. Text refers to the verbal element in the form of oral utterances passed down through generations. Waluyo (1987) explains that traditional poetry consists of two aspects: physical elements and inner elements. Co-text includes supporting nonverbal elements such as intonation, body movements, facial expressions, and cultural attributes accompanying the delivery of the tradition. Meanwhile, context refers to the social, cultural, temporal, and spatial background underlying the occurrence of an oral tradition. These three elements are interconnected in shaping and enriching the meaning of oral traditions.

In Tambi Village, Sliyeg District, Indramayu Regency, the Javanese and Sundanese communities preserve oral traditions, particularly mantras, as part of the Berokan cultural performance. Berokan is known as a form of community entertainment performed at family events such as circumcision ceremonies, thanksgiving rituals (rasulan), birthdays, and major celebrations. It is often presented by traveling around villages while performing and receiving voluntary contributions (saweran). Berokan is a traditional art form from Indramayu that resembles the Chinese Barongsai but differs in its facial shape, which resembles a hippopotamus. Its head is made of wood with large glass eyes and mouth, its body is covered with goat fur, burlap sacks, or black cloth, and its tail is made of wood. Berokan is believed to function as a medium for warding off misfortune, expelling diseases, and repelling negative influences. In addition to serving as entertainment, this art form also contains a sacred ritual known as ruwatan, which is a purification ceremony intended to release individuals from misfortune. The ritual is led by a Mu'alim, a spiritual figure who inherits and understands the Berokan tradition across generations. In its performance, Berokan not only presents physical attractions but also conveys moral messages through interactions between the Mu'alim and the Berokan figure, followed by the ruwatan ritual procession as the closing event.

However, in reality, the Berokan tradition has become increasingly less known, especially among the younger generation in Indramayu. Many people are unaware of the existence of mantras within Berokan performances that contain profound moral and social meanings. The community tends to view Berokan merely as entertainment without recognizing its spiritual and cultural values. This condition is exacerbated by the declining frequency of Berokan performances, as only a limited number of cultural practitioners continue to preserve and develop the tradition. Due to changing times, the Berokan tradition is increasingly threatened with extinction because society lacks understanding of its forms, meanings, and functions, particularly the noble values embedded in its mantras. A more logical and practical mindset has led traditional customs to be perceived as outdated and irrelevant, resulting in decreasing interest among younger generations to learn about and preserve them.

Several previous studies have examined mantras from various perspectives. Amrullah and Imayah (2023), in their study titled Socio-Religious Aspects of the Mamaca Tradition among Coastal Madurese Communities, employed Muhammad Iqbal's socio-religious theory using a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through direct observation, recording, interviews, and note-taking. The findings reveal teachings about divinity in the form of prayers, wasilah, karamah, and humility contained within the Mamaca tradition.

Wiranze et al. (2025), in their study Analysis of the Meaning and Function of Healing Mantras among the Lebong Community in Turan Lalang Village, used a descriptive qualitative method based on Roland Barthes' semiotic theory of meaning and Danandjaja's theory of function. The results show the presence of denotative and connotative meanings in the mantras. Denotative meaning refers to direct requests for healing, while connotative meaning involves deeper interpretations through symbols and metaphors reflecting spiritual beliefs and cultural values. The functions include entertainment, education, cultural validation, and social norm regulation. These healing mantras function not only as a medium for treatment but also as cultural heritage reflecting the community's belief system.

Hasanah and Andari (2021), in their study Oral Tradition as a Medium for Teaching Social and Cultural Values, employed a qualitative ethnographic approach. Their findings show that oral traditions developing within the community include the histories of Beciro and Ngengor, Haul rituals of Mbah Janten and Mbah Surogati, the Kleman tradition, Paseban Karang Jiwo, the MBET tradition, and Slametan. These traditions contain implicit social and cultural values such

as mutual cooperation, humility (*andap ashor*), empathy (*tepo seliro*), respect for elders (*aji mareng sesepuh*), social bonding, tolerance, mutual respect, religiosity, and historical values.

Nugraha (2018), in his study *The Bandung Bondowoso Mantra as a Speech Act*, used a descriptive qualitative method based on John R. Searle's (1983) speech act theory. The findings indicate the presence of locutionary acts, where the speaker recites the mantra without intending to attract attention; illocutionary acts, where the utterance contains a specific intention as a form of request; and perlocutionary acts, where the speaker experiences certain feelings and energies as a result of the utterance.

These four studies contribute to the understanding of mantras from perspectives such as semiotics, prayer, humility, *wasilah*, social values, cultural values, and speech acts. Therefore, this study addresses a research gap that has not been explored in previous studies, namely the analysis of the text structure of mantras in the Berokan Tradition. Based on the discussion above, the focus of this research lies in examining the text structure of mantras within the Berokan Tradition. This study is expected to contribute to literary scholarship, particularly in the study of mantras within oral traditions, while also serving as an important document for recording and preserving cultural values embedded in the Berokan Tradition. Furthermore, the results of this study may serve as a reference for the development of Indonesian literary and cultural studies.

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research aims to achieve an in-depth understanding of social phenomena through the interpretation of context, experiences, and perspectives of the individuals involved. According to Anggito and Setiawan (2018:7), qualitative research focuses on understanding the meaning and complexity of the phenomena under study. Creswell (as cited in Jailani, 2023:3) emphasizes that the primary goal of qualitative research is to gain a deep understanding of a particular phenomenon. Moleong (as cited in Gusti et al., 2025:169) further explains that in qualitative research, the researcher serves as the main instrument in data collection, either independently or with assistance from others.

This study employed an ethnographic method, which is a research approach that describes the life and culture of a particular community within a specific place and time (Marzali, as cited in Manan, 2021:1). According to Spradley (as cited in Sari et al., 2023:86), the purpose of ethnography is to understand how people perceive their lives and world by learning directly from

them through close engagement. This method was used to describe the form, meaning, and function of mantras in the Berokan Tradition in Tambi Village, Sliyeg District, Indramayu Regency. The stages of the ethnographic research process are presented as follows.

Table 1.1 Ethnographic Research Procedures

No.	Ethnographic Research Step	Description
1.	Selection of Research Site	Determining the location that becomes the focus of cultural or traditional observation.
2.	Selection of Informants	Identifying traditional leaders, cultural practitioners, or local community members who understand the tradition.
3.	Field Observation	Directly observing the community's cultural activities at the research site.
4.	In-depth Interviews	Conducting open-ended interviews to obtain detailed information from informants.
5.	Documentation	Recording activities through photographs, audio, or video as supporting data.
6.	Active Participation	The researcher actively participates in cultural activities to gain direct understanding.
7.	Data Analysis	Processing and interpreting data based on the socio-cultural context of the community.
8.	Report Writing	Compiling the research findings into academic writing or an ethnographic report.

The research subject refers to sources of information that provide data related to the research topic (Rahmadi, as cited in Nashrullah, 2023:19). In this study, the research subject is the mantra used in the Berokan Tradition, while the research object includes the form, meaning, and function of the mantra. The research was conducted in a natural setting, reflecting real conditions in the field that encompass economic, cultural, legal, administrative, and religious aspects (Nawawi & Mimi, as cited in Bado, 2022:27). Data were collected through direct participatory observation to understand the ritual context, in-depth interviews with the Mu'alim and members of the traditional community, as well as audio-visual documentation and transcription to authentically record oral data. The research was conducted in Tambi Village, Sliyeg District, Indramayu Regency, involving seven supporting informants consisting of ritual practitioners, users or event organizers, audiences, traditional leaders, religious leaders, youth leaders, and representatives of the local government.

RESULTS

Based on the research findings, three mantras were identified within the Berokan Tradition in Tambi Village, Sliyeg District, Indramayu Regency. The forms of mantras used in this tradition include the mantra for preparing offerings, the Syahadat Bumi mantra, and the mantra for disposing of the pillow.

A. Forms of Mantras in the Berokan Tradition

The three mantras found in the Berokan tradition were analyzed based on their forms, which were examined through the aspects of text, co-text, and context.

1. Text

a. Mantra of the Ritual for Preparing Offerings



Figure 1.1 The ritual of providing offerings

The mantra of the ritual for preparing offerings is a crucial component in the ruwatan ritual conducted by the host. The recitation of this mantra serves as a form of respect and homage to the ancestors of the village, as well as to the ancestral figures believed to have originally created the Berokan tradition. This mantra functions as a request for permission and blessing from the ancestors before the ritual activities are carried out. The textual form of the mantra for preparing offerings is presented as follows.

Original Text:

*Bismillahirrohmanirrohim
Sangka matu sangka matuka
Menyan putih sapa aran sirih
Linggur putih kuwus ing menyan
Trungcang jati urug ing menyan
Sembah batik katur enang
Sinenek, sikakek, sirama, siibu
Singe jaga karang kurung sapu jaba sejerone karang kurung umah iki*

*Mangga diaturi segae, mangga sadayana
 Kula ngaturi sejabane sejerone karang kurung umah iki
 Ngaturi malih sampune punten para leluhur ning wilayah
 Sakukubane ning wilayah kene badane ning kene
 Ning desa Tambi maturi mabuyut tambi, mabuyut bulu, mabuyut jemila,
 mabuyut majabatatusiah ya mangga diaturi dahar*

Translated Text:

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
 Preparation to seek permission from the ancestors
 White incense, what is your name
 A cluster of white smoke from the incense
 The container or place for burning incense
 Offering devotion and reverence to the ancestors
 Grandmother, Grandfather, Father, Mother
 Who guard the areas inside and outside the house
 Within the surrounding area of the house
 Please partake of the rice, and please accept it, all of you
 I present this offering inside and outside this house
 I then present it once again, seeking permission from the ancestors in their
 respective domains
 Who protect and watch over the territory and its inhabitants here,
 In Tambi Village, calling upon Mbah Buyut Tambi, Mbah Buyut Bulu,
 Mbah Buyut Jemila, and Mbah Buyut Majabatatusiah,
 Please partake of this offering

Table 1.2 Analysis of the Physical Elements of the Offering Preparation Mantra

Physical Elements	Description
Typography	This offering mantra consists of one stanza comprising 13 lines and does not employ punctuation marks.
Diction	The diction of the mantra reflects a blend of linguistic and cultural elements that characterize the speech community. It includes religious diction derived from Islamic teachings in Arabic, local Javanese and Sundanese languages, as well as ritual-specific mantra language.
Imagery	Several images are found in the mantra, as reflected in the lines “Linggur putih kuwus ing menyan,” “Trungcang jati urug ing menyan,” and “sejerone karang kurung umah iki.”
Concrete Words	Concrete words in the mantra include “menyan” (incense), “Trungcang jati urug ing menyan,” which refers to a container or place for burning incense, “sejerone karang kurung umah iki,” and “Mangga diaturi segae mangga sadayana.”

Figurative Language	Figurative language appears in the lines “ <i>Mangga diaturi segae mangga sadayana,</i> ” “ <i>Singe jaga karang kurung sapu jaba,</i> ” and “ <i>sembah batik katur enang.</i> ”
Rhyme and Rhythm	The mantra contains various rhyme patterns, including assonance, alliteration, and consonance. The rhythm is structured, repetitive, linear, and sacred in nature.

Table 1.3 Analysis of the Inner Elements of the Offering Preparation Mantra

Inner Elements	Description
Theme	The central theme of the mantra is a request for permission and respect toward the ancestors.
Feeling	The mantra evokes feelings of solemnity, reverence, and sincerity toward the ancestral spirits.
Tone	The tone of the mantra is sacred, devout, and humble.
Message	The message conveyed by the offering mantra emphasizes that humans must respect their ancestors and maintain spiritual relationships while honoring the balance between the human world and other spiritual dimensions.

DISCUSSION

The Berokan tradition is one of the local cultural practices in the Indramayu region that is believed by the community to function as a means of warding off misfortune. Through the Berokan performance, there is a tradition known as the ruwatan ritual, which serves as a form of purification, healing, and protection from various negative influences. Beyond its function as a form of performing art, Berokan embodies deeper meanings and functions, one of which is reflected in the use of mantras during its ritual implementation.

Based on the analysis presented in Table 1.2 concerning the physical elements of the offering preparation mantra, the textual form reveals distinctive characteristics. Typographically, the mantra consists of a single long stanza comprising thirteen lines without repeated stanzaic structures and without punctuation marks. Functionally, this textual form is not merely a stylistic choice but carries profound spiritual values and meanings. The mantra serves as an opening ritual intended to seek permission and express reverence to the ancestors who are believed to be present during the ritual process.

The diction used in the mantra includes religious expressions, as seen in the opening phrase “*Bismillahirrohmanirrohim,*” which reflects a blessed prayer and demonstrates the influence of Islamic teachings within the Berokan tradition. Other diction found in the mantra,

such as “Singe jaga karang kurung sapu jaba,” “Sejerone karang kurung umah iki,” “Mangga diaturi segae mangga sadayana,” and “Kula ngaturi sejabane sejerone karang kurung umah iki,” indicates linguistic acculturation between Sundanese and Javanese languages. This linguistic blending reflects cultural diversity and unity within traditional communities. In addition to local languages, the mantra also contains ritual-specific diction such as “Sangka mantuk sangka mantuka,” “Menyan putih sapa aran sirih,” and “Sembah batik katur enang,” which symbolize reverence and requests for permission addressed to the ancestors. These lines illustrate a form of spiritual communication between the community and their ancestral spirits during the offering preparation ritual.

Imagery in the offering preparation mantra vividly depicts the ritual atmosphere, as reflected in the lines “Linggur putih kuwus ing menyan,” “Trungcang jati urug ing menyan,” and “sejerone karang kurung umah iki,” which present concrete visual representations perceivable by the senses. The mantra includes concrete words such as “menyan” (incense), which refers to the primary offering object symbolizing prayers and hopes directed to God and the ancestors to ensure the smooth execution of the Berokan ritual. Furthermore, the phrase “Trungcang jati urug ing menyan” refers to the container or incense burner, symbolizing respect for the ancestors and serving as a medium through which prayers are conveyed via the rising smoke.

The offering preparation mantra also contains figurative language in the form of symbolism that implicitly and profoundly conveys spiritual messages. These symbols function as offerings and expressions of reverence toward ancestral guardians of the territory. This is evident in the line “Mangga diaturi segae mangga sadayana,” which symbolizes the spiritual relationship between humans and the unseen world; “Singe jaga karang kurung sapu jaba,” which signifies the presence of supernatural guardians in each territory; and “Sembah batik katur enang,” which represents a respectful request for permission so that the ritual may proceed smoothly.

Rhyme in the offering preparation mantra demonstrates sound variations that create aesthetic beauty and a sacred atmosphere. Assonance appears in the line “Sangka mantuk sangka mantuka,” through the repetition of the /a/ vowel, producing a soft and memorable rhythm. The line “menyan putih sapa aran sirih” combines alliteration and assonance through the repetition of the /ih/ sound, enhancing musicality. Meanwhile, “sinenek sikakek sirama siibu” exhibits consonant rhyme with the repetition of /si/, creating a rapid and mystical rhythm. The final rhyme

/an/ in “linggur putih kuwus ing menyan” and “trungcang jati urug ing menyan” contributes to a smooth and consistent sound flow. The rhythm of the mantra is regular and repetitive, reinforcing its spiritual and aesthetic qualities, thereby positioning it not only as a medium of prayer but also as a highly artistic form of oral literature.

Based on Table 1.3 concerning the inner elements of the offering preparation mantra, the central theme revolves around seeking permission and expressing reverence toward the ancestors. This theme is reflected in lines such as “Sangka mantuk sangka mantuka,” “Sembah batik katur enang,” “Singe jaga karang kurung sapu jaba,” “sejeronone karang kurung umah iki,” and “Ngaturi malih sampune punten para leluhur ning wilayah.” These expressions illustrate the Mu’alim’s request for permission from ancestral guardians of the surrounding environment.

The emotional dimension of the mantra reflects solemnity, reverence, and sincerity on the part of the reciter toward the ancestors. This is evident in phrases such as “Sembah batik katur enang” and “Punten para leluhur,” which convey respectful supplication. The tone of the mantra is sacred, devout, and humble, reflecting spiritual obedience and respect. Its recitation is performed with full awareness, controlled voice, regular rhythm, and gentle intonation to create harmony between the reciter and spiritual entities such as ancestral spirits.

The message conveyed by the offering preparation mantra emphasizes the importance of honoring ancestors as guardians of the territory and maintaining balance between the human world and the supernatural realm. The mantra teaches spiritual ethics that promote politeness, respect, and the act of seeking permission before engaging in activities within spaces considered sacred. This reflects a form of cultural awareness and caution in interacting with the environment and unseen entities, reinforcing the moral and spiritual values embedded within the Berokan tradition.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, the Berokan Tradition in Indramayu represents a form of local performing art that carries profound spiritual meaning, particularly through the offering preparation mantra as part of the ruwatan ritual intended to ward off misfortune and seek protection. This mantra contains physical elements in the form of a simple textual structure without punctuation, religious diction reflecting Islamic influence, and linguistic acculturation between Sundanese and Javanese languages that demonstrates cultural diversity. In addition, the

inner elements of the mantra include themes of seeking permission and honoring ancestors, feelings of solemnity and sincerity, a sacred and obedient tone, and a moral message emphasizing the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships among humans, nature, and ancestors.

The use of imagery, symbolism, rhyme, and rhythm in the mantra strengthens the sacred atmosphere while simultaneously enhancing its aesthetic value as a form of oral literature. Therefore, the mantra in the Berokan Tradition functions not only as a ritual prayer but also as a cultural heritage that embodies religious, moral, and social values worthy of preservation.

The recommendations of this study emphasize the importance of preserving the Berokan Tradition and the mantras contained within it. The community of Tambi Village is encouraged to continue maintaining and documenting this tradition to prevent its extinction. Readers are expected to develop greater curiosity and awareness of local culture, while future researchers are advised to conduct comparative studies across regions and to develop digital learning media based on oral traditions, so that this cultural heritage remains relevant in the context of contemporary developments.

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