

Representing Dayak Mysticism As Cultural Identity In Achmad Benbela's Parang Maya

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Abstract: This study aims to describe Dayak mysticism practices represented in Achmad's novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat* (*Parang Maya: The War of Black Magic in Sacred Land*) using Niels Mulder's (2013) perspective on mysticism. This study is a qualitative study using literary anthropology theory. The data source for this study is the novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat* by Achmad Benbela. The research data consists of verbal data in the form of words, phrases, sentences, dialogues, monologues, text excerpts, and paragraphs that describe Dayak mysticism in the data source. The data collection techniques used in this study include reading, note-taking, and library techniques. The data analysis technique used is descriptive interpretive. The results show that Dayak mysticism in the novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat* is represented through a layered structure that refers to Niels Mulder's stages of mysticism, namely *sarengat* and *tarekat*. The practice of Dayak mysticism at the *sarengat* stage is evidenced by acts of obedience to customary institutions without involving inner rituals, such as respect for ancestors, belief in heirlooms, interpretation of sacred spaces, and belief in supernatural figures of authority. Meanwhile, Dayak mysticism practices at the *tarekat* stage are represented through structured rituals involving the use of mantras and sacred media as well as inner consciousness as a means of interacting with supernatural powers.

Keywords: Literary anthropology, *Parang Maya* novel, Dayak mysticism.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the local language, the word Kalimantan comes from the word *kali*, which means 'river', and *mantan*, which means 'many', so Kalimantan is nicknamed the island of a thousand rivers (Saputra, 2021: 2). One of the dominant tribes on the island is the Dayak tribe, which consists of several groups and hundreds of sub-ethnicities with very diverse religious systems and beliefs. The four religions generally embraced by the majority of the Dayak tribe are Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, and Kaharingan. Kaharingan is a local Dayak belief that can be classified as a monotheistic form of dynamism. This belief worships one God, Ranying Hatalla Langit, as the creator of all things in the universe. In addition, they also believe in Sangiang and supernatural beings that inhabit certain objects and places (Dyson & Asarini, 1980: 13-14). The Kaharingan belief system not only functions as a religious system, but also forms the basis of Dayak culture, which is reflected in various arts, social life, and rituals that contain a mystical dimension that transcends human rationality. Mysticism is a spiritual journey to achieve unity with the divine or the transcendent and is closely related to various cultural or religious elements, such as myths, magic, rituals, and others (Merkur (2025; Rahman, 2019; Akhmar et al., 2023; Suma et al., 2024). Representations of this kind of mysticism can be found in literary works.

In many cases, literary works often reflect the social and cultural life of the community that is part of the author's life experience. Therefore, literary works can be a medium for cross-cultural understanding because they are able to document the social and cultural life of the community that is the context in which the work was created. Novels are a form of literary work that can represent the

various dynamics of human social and cultural life through the power of their deep narratives, especially in developing detailed characters, plots, and settings. This can be found in the novels written by Achmad Benbela. Achmad Benbela, commonly known as Beben, is a native son of Kalimantan who was born in the upper reaches of the Barito River. Before becoming a writer, Achmad Benbela was a former honorary teacher. Since childhood, Achmad Benbela has been familiar with various mystical stories in his homeland. This experience became an important background that influenced Benbela's tendency in his work, especially in presenting narratives that are rich with the life of the community, traditions, and beliefs that are alive in his homeland.

Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat (*Parang Maya: The War of Black Magic in Sacred Land*) is a horror novel written by Achmad Benbela that incorporates elements of Dayak culture. Set in the 2000s, the novel depicts the lives of the Dayak people living in the interior of Kalimantan. Beginning with life in a remote village upstream of the Barito River, where most of the inhabitants adhere to the Kaharingan belief system, readers are invited to follow and immerse themselves in a story of inner tension, wonder, sadness, crime, and so on. This novel is told from the perspectives of two main characters, Karno and Salundik. Karno is a Javanese transmigrant who works as a teacher, while Salundik is the principal of the school where Karno teaches. In addition, Salundik is a chosen person of Sangiang who has the ability to heal illnesses, including disturbances caused by supernatural beings. This novel tells the story of a conflict between residents involving black magic to seek revenge. Karno, who initially only accompanied Salundik to the village of Sei Bahandang, was accidentally dragged into this terrible event.

The novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat* (*Parang Maya: The War of Black Magic in Sacred Land*) not only presents elements of horror for sensation, but also provides an in-depth description of Dayak mysticism, such as the implementation of traditional rituals and the practice of supernatural knowledge, which makes it interesting to read. Another reason for choosing this novel as a source of research data is as a form of appreciation for the novelist, who is known for his popularity through the novel *Kuyang: Sekutu Iblis yang Selalu Mengintai* (*Kuyang: The Devil's Ally Who Always Stalks*), which was adapted into a film in 2024. However, this form of representation poses its own challenges. The depiction of mystical practices in Achmad Benbela's novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat* has the potential to reinforce the stigma among outside readers who often view Dayak culture narrowly as a backward traditional heritage because it is associated with irrational mystical practices. This stigma arises from the dominance of Western modernity, which judges cultural progress by material measures. In reality, Dayak culture is different and unique because it has a value system and spiritual wisdom that presents a unique perspective on the relationship between humans and nature as well as the supernatural world. Therefore, mysticism in this novel needs to be understood not only as a form of exoticism or irrational belief, but as part of Dayak cultural cosmology, which is rich in specific value systems and social functions.

In order to ensure that the reading of the local wisdom of the Dayak people remains in the proper context, this study uses literary anthropology theory. Unlike literary sociology, which focuses on complex societies, literary anthropology tends to focus on humans as cultural agents, kinship systems, religious systems, myths, and other customs (Ratna, 2011: 353). The theory of literary anthropology was chosen because it allows researchers to examine the relationship between literary texts and the cultural background of the community represented in them. Thus, the novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat* by Achmad Benbela is not only understood as a work of fiction but also as a space for representing the social and cultural experiences of the Dayak community presented through narrative, particularly those related to mystical practices. The mystical practices represented in Achmad Benbela's novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat* will be analyzed using Niels Mulder's (2013) approach to mysticism. Although rooted in the Javanese cultural context, this approach is considered relevant for examining the mystical experiences of the characters in Achmad Benbela's novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat*, as it provides a structured perspective for understanding spiritual dynamics, both in terms of the inner relationship

between humans and ancestral spirits, as well as other supernatural forces.

Research related to the topic of mysticism in literary works has received widespread attention in various previous studies. For example, Puspa & Saputri (2024) wrote a paper titled “Mystical Forms in the Novel *Sumirat Ing Mpripat* by Irul S. Budianto (Literary Anthropology).” The results of this study show that in the novel *Sumirat Ing Mpripat*, there are mystical beliefs in the form of supernatural beings and occult knowledge, consisting of both protective and destructive occult knowledge. Similarly, Karuniawan & Tengsoe (2023) wrote a paper titled “Mysticism in the Novel *Janur Ireng* by Simpleman: A Study of Javanese Mysticism by Niels Mulder”. The results of this study show that: (1) in the novel *Janur Ireng*, there are two motifs of mysticism, namely positive and egocentric motifs; (2) the practice of mysticism in the novel *Janur Ireng* consists of *sarengat*, *tarekat*, *hakekat*, and *makripat*; and (3) the existence of mysticism in the novel *Janur Ireng* covers material, spiritual, and moral aspects. Based on these two relevant studies and even up to the time this study was conducted, the researcher has not found any specific study discussing the representation of Dayak mysticism in the novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat* by Achmad Benbela. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap in literary studies, which still lack discussion of the representation of local cultures outside of Javanese society. Thus, this study raises the following research questions: 1 How are Dayak mysticism practices represented in Achmad Benbela's novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat*?

Theoretically, this study was conducted to expand the application of an existing approach, namely Niels Mulder's approach to Javanese mysticism in the context of Dayak mysticism as depicted in Achmad Benbela's novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat*. Practically, this research is expected to foster appreciation and provide readers with a deeper understanding of Dayak tribal culture, particularly in relation to the religious system in the form of mystical beliefs represented through literary works.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Literary Anthropology

Literary anthropology is a relatively new interdisciplinary field of study. It first emerged in 1977 at the ‘Folklore and Literary Anthropology’ congress held in Calcutta. Literary anthropology is an analytical study to understand literary works that contain cultural elements (Ratna, 2011: 152). Based on their relationship, literary works occupy a dominant position, while cultural elements occupy a complementary position. Therefore, literary studies in the context of anthropology are limited to cultural elements reflected in literary texts, given the broad scope of anthropology itself. Thus, to facilitate research, culture will be broken down into specific elements. Koentjaraningrat (2015: 257) divides cultural elements into seven elements, including: (1) language, (2) knowledge systems, (3) social organization systems, (4) tools and technology systems, (5) livelihood systems, (6) religious systems, and (7) arts. However, these seven elements of culture are actually a development of existing theories. The elements of universal culture were first developed by B. Malinowski, G. P. Murdock (1940), and C. Kluckhohn (1944).

In this study, literary anthropology, which serves as a theoretical perspective, refers to the literary reflection approach proposed by Endraswara (2013: 19). The path of literary reflection is a method of analysis in which researchers can detach themselves from literary structures while still paying attention to cultural reflections in part. In this regard, the researcher places the novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat* (Parang Maya: The War of Black Magic in Sacred Land) by Achmad Benbela in this study as a source of cultural information from the Dayak community, particularly the religious system. Religious systems are related to beliefs or convictions that are considered broader than religion. Satinem (2019: 238) argues that religion encompasses beliefs that generally apply in limited groups, while religion refers only to formal religions or those that are legally recognized.

A religious system in a culture has several elements, namely (1) religious emotion, which is a spiritual vibration that causes humans to perform religious acts; (2) a belief system or human perceptions of the world, the supernatural, life, death, and so on; (3) a system of religious ceremonies that aims to establish a connection with the supernatural world based on the belief system; (4) religious tools and equipment; and (5) religious groups or units that conceptualize and activate religion and its system of religious ceremonies (Pujileksono, 2015: 91-92). Furthermore, Pujileksono (2015: 99-109) divides religion into various forms, namely fetishism, animism, animatism, pre-animism, totemism, polytheism, monotheism, and mysticism.

B. Mysticism

As explained in the previous discussion, mysticism is one form of religion. Mysticism can be found in all religions, both theistic (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) and non-theistic (Hinduism and Buddhism). Based on its sources, Wardhani et al. (2021: 96) argue that mysticism comes from two different sources, namely mysticism that originates from God and mysticism that originates from forces outside of humans but not God. First, mysticism that originates from God exists in every religion but differs in its religious activities. This mysticism requires humans to renounce all worldly desires in order to obtain positive energy. Second, mysticism that originates from forces outside of humans but not God. This mysticism developed from the history of animism and dynamism, which believe that there are supernatural forces above human power. These supernatural forces are believed to bring both positive and negative energy. In contemporary anthropology, the concept of religious forms is no longer considered important, but as a basis for understanding religious forms that once existed or still exist, understanding this concept is not wrong. In fact, there are some communities that do not adhere to any one religious form. For example, some traditional Javanese Muslims have a tradition of throwing flowers at intersections on Friday (legi) or Thursday (kliwon) nights.

According to Mulder (2013: 2), mysticism is closely related to secrecy and is viewed as a personal matter because it touches on personal beliefs and religiosity. Niels Mulder is an anthropologist from the Netherlands who observed Javanese mysticism with great empathy. Mulder arrived in Yogyakarta to observe the lives of the Javanese people, most of whom adhere to the Kejawen tradition. Mulder concluded that Kejawen is an inner understanding that encompasses mysticism in Javanese society. In his book entitled *Javanese Mysticism: Ideology in Indonesia*, Mulder classifies the stages of mysticism practice into four categories, namely sarengat (sharia), tarekat, hakekat, and makripat. Mysticism practice is an individual effort as a form of a person's singular search to achieve a certain goal (Mulder, 2013: 66).

Mulder (2013: 67) emphasizes that although the terms used differ according to cultural or religious backgrounds, their meanings are the same. The following are definitions of the four stages of mysticism, starting from the lowest stage. First, the sarengat (sharia) stage is the initial stage in the practice of mysticism, which is intended as obedience to religious institutions and laws. For Muslims, for example, this is done by performing salat, which serves to remind them of God. Syncretic priayi refer to this stage as obedience in carrying out obligations by serving and honoring elders, teachers, and kings in the awareness that this is intended to glorify "God." In addition, the community generally also emphasizes self-respect for ancestors, spirits, gods, and others as sources of power that deserve respect, as well as a form of awareness of respecting the grand order. Second, the tarekat level is the second level after sarengat. At this level, humans realize that worship or rituals are not just movements of the body and recitations of readings or mantras, but are sacred efforts to get closer to "God." According to Karuniawan & Tengsoe (2023: 96), humans at this stage go further in believing in mysticism, marked by an approach to God or gods through prayers or mantras to ask for something. Third, the stage of essence is an encounter with truth. "God" is no longer interpreted as merely a formal ritual, but rather embodies a way of life that is in harmony with the cosmic order. Fourth, the makripat level is the highest stage of mysticism, when humans become one with God, which in Javanese tradition is called *jumbuhing kawula lan Gusti*. At this stage, when the individual soul merges with the universal soul, all of their actions become completely pure, radiating goodness,

and are considered a manifestation of “God” on earth.

Based on these four stages, it can be understood that practicing mysticism is not easy; it requires long sacrifice and is full of obstacles. Humans need to practice controlling their physical aspects by undergoing asceticism or *tapas*. Experienced mystics emphasize that strict discipline is essential, as there will be dangers from “exploring” the supernatural realm if the results of ascetic practices are still not sufficiently controlled, or are only oriented towards magical goals. In addition, researchers need to emphasize that although the terms for the four stages of mystical practice described by Mulder originate from the Javanese-Islamic tradition, in this study they are only used analogically to interpret patterns of Dayak mysticism. In other words, this study in no way intends to equate or Islamize the cultural practices of the Dayak people.

C. Cultural Representation

In a cultural context, representation is very important because it reflects the diversity and complexity of a culture. Every culture in various regions reflects local culture as a representation of the community that holds that culture dear. This is used by the local community as an identity for the community that feels it owns that culture. One form of art that represents artistic and cultural achievements is literary works. Juliawati et al. (2012: 31) argue that local cultural representation is an effort to revive local culture through activities that can illustrate the meaning, concept, or simply evoke memories of that local culture.

The concept of representation is further explained through Hall's (1997: 15) view that representation is the use of language to convey something meaningful to others or in language. Representation is an important part of the process of meaning being produced and exchanged among members of a culture. This is done by using language, signs, and images that represent something. In the process of meaning formation in culture, representation involves two interrelated systems (Hall, 1997: 17-18). First, a system in which all kinds of things such as people, objects, events, and others are correlated with a series of concepts in the mind (conceptual map). This system is called mental representation. Second, language is a representation system involved in the entire process of meaning formation. This system depends on the formation of a series of correspondences between the conceptual map (mind) and a series of signs (images or words, both written and spoken) arranged in the form of language so that they can be understood by others.

In addition, Hall (1997: 15) divides the representation approach into three categories, namely the reflective approach, the intentional approach, and the constructionist approach. First, the reflective approach assumes that meaning lies in objects in the real world, so that language only functions as a mirror to accurately reflect the meaning that already exists in the world. Second, the intentional approach assumes that meaning is part of the writer (author). In other words, the meaning of a sign is determined by the author's intention to convey a specific meaning through language. Third, the constructionist approach assumes that meaning is constructed in and through language. Meaning is not only obtained through the author's intention but also through the representation system (Nuria & Diva, 2025: 48-49).

III. METHODS

This research is qualitative research using literary anthropology theory to analyze individual literary works. Qualitative research is research that does not rely on numerical data (statistics), but rather descriptive data in the form of words, images, or behavior. The characteristics of qualitative research in literary studies are (1) as a cultural study that pays attention to the meaning of literary works; (2) direct interaction between the subject and object of research; (3) open-ended research; and (4) natural in nature in accordance with the socio-cultural development of society (Hudhana & Mulasih, 2019: 75). The data source in this study is a novel by Achmad Benbela, namely *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat* (Parang Maya: The War of Black Magic in Sacred Land). The novel was published by GagasMedia in 2022 with 214 pages. The research data is verbal data in the

form of words, phrases, sentences, dialogues, monologues, text excerpts, and paragraphs found in the data source. Data types are divided into two categories: primary data and secondary data. The primary data in this study is the content of the novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat* (Parang Maya: The War of Black Magic in Sacred Land) by Achmad Benbela, both in the form of narration and dialogue that contains Dayak cultural values. The secondary data in this study was obtained from various sources, such as books, theories relevant to the study, journals, and articles from websites that could support the research process.

According to Hudhana & Mulasih (2019: 81), data collection techniques in literary research consist of reading techniques, listening techniques, note-taking techniques, and library techniques. The data collection techniques used in this study include: (a) reading techniques, which is the process of collecting data through careful and repeated reading of the novel text to obtain the desired data; (b) note-taking technique by recording phrases, sentences, dialogues, or narratives that contain information about Dayak cultural values reflected in the novel; and (c) library technique by tracking printed or non-printed (via the internet) documents in the form of books, journals, and various sources relevant to the research.

The data analysis technique used in this study is descriptive interpretive data analysis. Descriptive interpretive means explaining, describing, or narrating the opinions or views contained in the research object (Wahyudiyanto, 2021: 74). The following are the analysis steps carried out in this study. First, identifying quotations in the novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat* by Achmad Benbela that are relevant to the research questions. Second, describing the context of these quotations, both in terms of the plot, conflict, and the social situation and beliefs of the Dayak people depicted in the story. Third, classifying and interpreting the data based on theories relevant to the research. Fourth, concluding the results of the research conducted.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section analyzes Dayak mysticism practices represented in Achmad Benbela's novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat* (Parang Maya: The War of Black Magic in Sacred Land) based on Mulder's levels of mysticism. Data analysis focuses on two levels of mysticism practices that appear in the novel, namely *sarengat* and *tarekat*, which contain various patterns of belief, customary actions, and ritual practices imbued with supernatural powers. In addition, this analysis shows how the novel presents the relationship between humans, nature, and the supernatural world in the context of the Dayak cultural system through its narrative.

A. Dayak Mysticism Practices at the Sarengat Level

The *sarengat* stage is the basic level in Dayak mysticism practices and is physical in nature, focusing on a series of actions of obedience to cultural norms without involving deep inner experiences. In this novel, the *sarengat* stage includes the community's belief patterns in figures who possess supernatural knowledge, sacred places, and respect for ancestors and sacred objects, the details of which are contained in the following data.

Data 1

[...] Pak Gerson bahkan pernah membawa putrinya berobat sampai ke rumah sakit Banjarmasin, tapi tidak ada hasil. Dan Pak Salundik adalah orang pintar ketiga yang diminta untuk menyembuhkan anaknya. Memang, Pak Salundik dikenal sebagai orang yang mengerti perihal gaib, kendati menolak disebut dukun. (Benbela, 2022: 9)

The data above shows that the Dayak people still believe in the figure of the 'smart person' as an alternative treatment solution when medical treatment fails. This practice is included in the *sarengat* stage, because there is no direct interaction with supernatural powers through structured special rituals, but through the community's recognition of figures with supernatural authority.

Through the use of the phrase “understands supernatural matters,” Pak Salundik is described in the text as a figure who has an understanding of supernatural powers. In addition, the text positions Pak Salundik as an authority who is able to restore hope and provide solutions to medical failures. Thus, the text presents the interpretation that local knowledge and spiritual abilities in Dayak culture are still recognized and valid as solutions to problems that cannot be reached by modern rationality. Apart from belief in the figure of the ‘smart person’, Dayak mysticism is also evident in the way the community treats ancestral spirits and objects that are considered sacred.

Data 2

Makanya jaga sopan santun di depan sandung. Bersikaplah hormat pada orang yang sudah meninggal. Di sini banyak arwah leluhur. Biasakan belom bahadat.” (Benbela, 2022: 51)

The above data describes a commemorative event to maintain decorum in front of the sandung as a form of respect for ancestors. This practice is categorized as a sarengat stage characterized by adherence to customary norms without any deep inner rituals. The use of moralistic diction such as “belom bahadat” (living according to tradition) shows that the sandung is not only a physical object, but also a sacred space that contains the spiritual relationship between humans and their ancestors. In addition, the text presents an opposition between adherence to customs and disrespect to show that customary norms are a means of spiritual control recognized by the community. Thus, the text shows that respect for ancestors is the main foundation of social order and a basic requirement for the Dayak community to live in harmony with the supernatural forces that inhabit sacred spaces.



Figure 1. Ngabe Soekah cultural heritage site (Susanty, 2023)

For the Dayak people who adhere to the Kaharingan belief system, the sandung is treated as a sacred space that stores the bones of deceased humans. The practice at the sarengat stage is also reflected in the following data.

Data 3

Ia lalu berlutut memberi hormat dengan kedua tangan bertangkup di dahi. Ia lantas berdiri dan memejamkan mata. [...] Pak Salundik kemudian mencabut senjata pusaka itu dengan sangat gugup. Penuh hormat, bilahnya ia tempelkan di dahi lalu ia gigit. Mandau Mantikei kemudian ia timang-timang di tangan dengan penuh rasa kagum. (Benbela, 2022: 65)

The above data shows that Mr. Salundik's respect for the mandau mantikei is reflected through symbolic gestures. Mr. Salundik's attitude of honoring this heirloom is categorized as a practice of sarengat mysticism, because it involves symbolic obedience to tradition without involving inner rituals or direct interaction with supernatural powers. The text describes the mandau mantikei as a sacred object that has spiritual value, which clearly distinguishes it from ordinary objects through the

use of emotional diction, descriptions of body movements, and special physical treatment. Thus, the text presents the meaning that heirlooms are not only viewed as material objects, but as sacred objects that shape the way humans behave and treat them in everyday life, so that the relationship between humans and objects is built on the basis of respect and spiritual meaning that lives within the Dayak community's belief system. In addition to respect for sacred objects, Dayak mysticism practices are also evident through places that are considered sacred.

Data 4

Telaga ini adalah tempat orang membuat jimat. Kau tahu apa isinya jimat? Mahluk halus. Ada jin, setan, hantu, dan siluman. Sebutkan saja, semua mahluk halus penunggu jimat ada di sini. Terkurung dan mencari kesempatan untuk lepas. Kau tahu siapa yang memakai jimat?" (Benbela, 2022: 84)

The data above shows that Telaga Jimat is believed to be inhabited by various supernatural beings. The events in the excerpt are part of the sarengat stage of mysticism, which is manifested through a belief in haunted places that contain supernatural powers without involving specific mystical rituals, such as summoning supernatural beings. The text describes Telaga Jimat as a dangerous sacred space imbued with supernatural powers through the use of scary-sounding words such as "jinn," "demons," "ghosts," and 'monsters' as well as the phrase "looking for an opportunity to escape" to describe the existence of supernatural beings. Thus, the text presents the interpretation that in Dayak culture, certain spaces not only have physical functions that are seen as water and land, but also as cosmological spaces imbued with supernatural powers, thereby shaping people's views of the boundaries of certain areas or places that are considered sacred or dangerous.

B. Dayak Mysticism Practices at the Tarekat Stage

The second stage in Dayak mysticism practices is tarekat. At this stage, rituals are no longer simply following customary rules, but are carried out with deep inner awareness as an effort to establish a direct connection with supernatural powers. This stage involves specific ritual media and mantras or sacred prayers as a means of communication or supplication to ancestral spirits, guardian spirits, or other supernatural forces. This can be seen in the following data.

Data 5

Aku melongo melihat Pak Salundik mengenakan pakaian adat dan menari mengelilingi tempat Sarunai dan Agau terbaring. Sembari menari, ia melantunkan mantra-mantra kuno. [...] "Jangan risau, dia sedang memanggil Sangiang untuk mengobati mereka," ungkap Pambakal yang kini duduk di samping. (Benbela, 2022: 121)

The data above shows that Pak Salundik is performing a ritual to summon Sangiang to help heal his two children. The excerpt shows a mystical practice of the tarekat stage, because of the ritual that shows inner awareness that is clearly seen from the use of ancient mantras as a means of communication with Sangiang. Through the description of symbolic elements such as traditional clothing, dance, and mantras, as well as the use of transcendental diction such as "chanting" and "calling Sangiang," the text establishes these actions as sacred rituals that describe healing as an effort to establish a connection with Sangiang as a source of supernatural power. Thus, the text presents the meaning that for the Dayak people, health is understood as a harmonious balance between humans, ancestral spirits, and nature, not merely a physical condition, so that this ritual serves to maintain the collective view that solving life's problems requires the involvement of the supernatural world. In addition, this novel also presents other mystical practices carried out through rituals and inner awareness.

Data 6

Di bawah terpal, Pak Salundik telah memulai ritual dengan duduk bersila di depan sesaji. Pak Salundik mengenakan pakaian adat serta topi rotan berhiaskan tiga helai bulu ekor burung tingang. Sesaji berupa beberapa ekor ayam ingkung, ketan, kue dan lain-lain disajikan dalam nyiru terpisah. Suasana sakral langsung terasa sewaktu lantunan doa keluar dari mulut Pak Salundik. Semerbak wangi kayu gaharu yang dibakar di tungku parapen membuat semua orang ikut khidmat dalam ritual siang itu. (Benbela, 2022: 149)

The data above shows that Pak Salundik is performing the Manajah Antang ritual to seek guidance from ancestral spirits through sacred acts such as chanting prayers, sejaji, and traditional attributes. This ritual practice is at the tarekat stage, because it has gone beyond compliance with outward rules, focusing instead on inner awareness to connect with ancestral spirits. The text describes the ritual as a sacred act that is separate from everyday activities through the use of sacred diction, the characterization of Mr. Salundik as a spiritual figure, and the arrangement of the ritual space. Thus, the text presents the meaning that the Dayak people rely on the guidance of their ancestors to determine or make important decisions, so that the Manajah Antang ritual is not just a spiritual practice, but a cultural mechanism that maintains social and cosmological balance. In addition to rituals to ask for guidance, this novel also shows other ritual practices as a means of expelling supernatural beings.

Data 7

Sore itu, Pak Salundik sedang marabun—mengasapi tubuh Sarunai dan Agau menggunakan kayu gaharu yang dibakar di sebuah tungku kecil. Sembari melantunan doa-doa, Pak Salundik memukul-mukul tubuh kedua anaknya bergantian menggunakan daun sawang. (Benbela, 2022: 179)

The data above shows that Pak Salundik is performing Marabun, a ritual to expel spirits through chanting prayers and using various ritual tools. This practice is at the tarekat stage, as it demonstrates inner awareness through the use of mantras (prayers) to overcome disturbances from spirits. The text describes the Marabun ritual as a sacred act through its description of ritualistic activities such as smoking the body, chanting prayers, and striking with sawang leaves, which clearly distinguishes it from physical medical treatment. Thus, the text presents the meaning that for the Dayak people, health not only encompasses the physical dimension, but is also closely related to the existence of supernatural forces that require treatment through culturally recognized spiritual practices. In addition to Marabun, this novel also shows similar forms of practice in healing efforts through ritual interactions, which can be observed in the data below.

Data 8

Gelang dadas di lengan Pak Salundik berbunyi, pertanda bagi para penabuh untuk melaksanakan tugasnya. Pak Salundik lalu menganjan, menari pelan mengelilingi Sarunai, Agau, dan Bawi. Lantunan demi lantunan doa dari mulutnya semakin menyatu dengan irama garantung, kangkanung, dan katambung. Kami mendadak tegang takkala Bawi menjerit kencang. Pukulan demi pukulan bunga mayang di tubuhnya, membuat gadis kecil itu merintih kesakitan. [...] Sembari terus menari, Pak Salundik kini mulai memukul-mukul tubuh Sarunai dan Agau bergantian. Sarunai melotot, Agau membeliak. (Benbela, 2022: 192-193)

The data above shows that Pak Salundik is performing a Balian ritual as a healing effort through chanting prayers, special movements, and sacred objects. This practice is at the tarekat stage, because it features a structured ritual that requires inner awareness to interact with supernatural powers that are believed to be able to cure diseases. The text describes the Balian ritual as a sacred act

that differs from everyday physical activities through its depiction of ritualistic elements and intense bodily reactions, thus marking the opposition between medical healing, which focuses only on the physical, and spiritual healing, which is believed to be able to overcome supernatural disturbances. Thus, the text presents the interpretation that among the Dayak people, the healing process does not only depend on conventional medical knowledge, but also relies on culturally legitimized spiritual practices to restore balance from supernatural disturbances. Still in the tarekat stage, the novel also presents other mystical practices carried out through rituals and inner awareness, which can be observed in the following data.

Data 9

[...] Kami lantas tercekat, sewaktu Pak Salundik mulai membakar sebuah mandau di atas tungku penuh bara arang yang menyala. [...] Mandau berdesis bagai ular, ketika darah dari dalam garantung ditetaskan Pak Salundik tujuh kali. Setiap tetesan, Pak Salundik mengucapkan mantra dengan lantang seolah sedang berdialog dengan seseorang yang tidak terlihat. Mandau bergetar di atas tungku, seolah ada yang menggerakkan. "Parang maya..." desahku lirih. (Benbela, 2022: 192)

The data above shows that Pak Salundik is performing the Parang Maya activation ritual by burning a mandau, dripping blood, and reciting mantras. This practice is at the tarekat stage, because it displays a structured ritual that requires inner awareness to activate supernatural powers through the use of mantras and other ritual media. The text describes the transformation of the mandau from an inanimate object into a supernatural object through the use of simile, a combination of ritualistic elements, and the opposition between physical logic, which considers the weapon to be passive, and spiritual logic, which believes that the mandau can be moved by supernatural powers. Thus, the text presents the meaning that in Dayak culture, certain rituals can activate supernatural powers that transform weapons from physical objects into entities with the power to perform magical actions in the face of conflict without physically touching the target. This practice is understood as a representation of mysticism in literary narratives, not as a normative description of all cultural practices of the Dayak people.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis conducted in this study, Dayak mysticism in Achmad Benbela's novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di Tanah Keramat* (*Parang Maya: The War of Black Magic in Sacred Land*) is represented through a layered structure that is conceptually in line with Niels Mulder's model of mysticism stages, namely sarengat and tarekat. At the sarengat stage, Dayak mysticism focuses on acts of obedience to customary institutions, which are manifested in the form of respect for ancestors, belief in heirlooms, interpretation of sacred spaces, and belief in figures with supernatural authority without the involvement of inner rituals. Practices at this stage confirm that supernatural beliefs are deeply rooted in Dayak society, as reflected in the function of heirlooms, sacred spaces, and supernatural authority figures who act as markers of legitimacy for unseen forces in the social order.

At the tarekat stage, Dayak mysticism is represented through structured rituals involving the use of mantras (prayers) and sacred media, including objects, activities, or sounds, as well as inner awareness as a means of interacting with supernatural powers. Rituals such as Manajah Antang, the summoning of Sangiang, Balian, Marabun, and the activation of Parang Maya show that these sacred acts are not merely expressions of belief, but functional means such as summoning ancestors, healing, and invoking supernatural powers for specific purposes. This stage emphasizes the transition from mere beliefs that influence the community's view of the supernatural world to structured spiritual practices that serve as a link between the real world and the supernatural world in Dayak social life. Thus, the representation of mysticism in Achmad Benbela's novel *Parang Maya: Perang Santet di*

Tanah Keramat (Parang Maya: The War of Black Magic in Sacred Land) displays a gradual pattern. It begins with beliefs that are deeply rooted in collective consciousness and institutionalized in customs (sarengat), leading to structured spiritual practices manifested through rituals (tarekat). This pattern confirms that Dayak mysticism is not only part of belief, but also a functional social structure that regulates actions, determines decisions, and maintains cosmic balance between humans and the supernatural world recognized in Dayak culture.

Financing

The authors did not receive financing for the development of this research.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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