# Enduring Adherents to Local Religion in Maintaining the Originality of Ancestral Belief: Ethnographic Study of The Lom Belief System of the Mapur Bangka Tribe

Janawi Institut Agama Islam Negeri Syaikh Abdurrahman Siddik Bangka Belitung Pangkalpinang, Indonesia janawi.iainbabel@gmail.com Abstract—The Lom people of the Mapur Bangka tribe of Bangka Belitung Province are unique communities that still hold on firmly to ancestral beliefs. The elements of their trust became their source of the way of life.

This research was an ethnographic study with a religious anthropology approach that refers to ethical theory. Data retrieval was done by observing and in-depth interviews with vital information, such as the Customary Chairperson, customary leaders, and Lom communities. Data collection was carried out in the Lom Mapur residential area such as Air Abik, Mapur, and Pejem in Bangka regency, Bangka Belitung province.

The finding of the study indicated that Lom people continued to survive with the old belief system that they had practiced. Their form of belief showed to be animism and is identical to fetishism (paganism). They used an ambivalent strategy between ownership of formal citizenship identity and trust identity as adherents of local religions in Indonesia. They had the fundamental concepts, namely cosmology. For them, life did not have to adopt a formal religion. Faith does not determine the happiness of life, but a clean heart determines life.

Keywords-survival ability, Lom people, ambiguous strategy, ancestral beliefs

## I.INTRODUCTION

The Lom people of the Bangka Mapur tribe are one of several tribes scattered in Bangka Belitung Province, especially on the Island of Bangka. Lom people identified as adherents of ancestral beliefs that tend to be animism and paganism. The originality of their views reflected their daily activities living, namely as the principles and basis of inherited beliefs, taboo and ban rituals, and sacred and profane ritual beliefs.

In the study of human history, from primitive societies to modern societies, beliefs such as belief in ancestral customs included in religious studies. The tradition has differences in what is believed to be something that has supernatural powers, e.g., God, gods, and spirits. Even religion and ancestral belief was a belief in something that has paranormal and psychic abilities. These effects have implications for the way of individual life, communities, and society in a broader meaning, including in interpreting nature and the phenomenon. The manifestation of the beliefs and procedures for carrying out the ritual experienced a striking difference, including the Lom people of Mapur Bangka.

The research of the religion and anchestral belief have done. Anthropological approach was one of approach which did in this field area. But empirical study was interesting to do for analyzing comprehensively. They has not only done on the history of major world religions, such as: Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, but also examined the local faith (ancestral belief) of primitive communities in various regions. In-depth description the religion can explain the substance of the views of a religion and the trust of a particular society. Generally, beliefs can form social systems and cultural systems of society that bring in ideas, customs, symbols, behavior, and institutions, even revealed in foklore, legends, myths, and magic.

For this reason, religion as a belief in something that has supernatural powers was always interesting to study. But there were some differences between theological and anthropological studies. Theology for theologians was religion that originated from God's creation such as Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. Essentially, according to Bustanuddin Agus, religion was not a product of culture [1]. However, anthropologists study religion not only the beliefs that existed in certain religions but also beliefs such as animism, dynamism, and paganism. Koentjaraningrat placed faith as the sixth cultural universals of cultural elements [2]. Religion became a cultural universal, wherever and whenever because religion was the norms and principles that existed in people's beliefs. Religion was considered supernatural faith, something originating outside of themselves. Religion denoted Whatever people believed and what was believed to have supernatural powers. To reconcile differences of opinion, the framework categorized between official religions recognized by the formal and local religions in the form of ancestral beliefs.

According to Joachim Wach, religion study should conduct for using a research frame, namely:

- 1) a theoretical research of religious theory;
- 2) spiritual practices about religious manifestations;
- 3) the sociological expression of religious experience (sociological interpretation of religious exprience) [3]

Roberston in Joachim Wach explained that in the structure of belief, religion was different from belief systems or other isms, because religious faith was a sacred concept that is distinguished from the worldly profane and supernatural concept which is the opposite of natural laws [3].

Lom people [4] or Mapur people [5] are part of Bangka people, [6] are in the Bangka Malay region. The Mapur Lom people were one of the tribes or clans, besides the Malays and Chinese who settled on Bangka Island.

According to Koentjaraningrat, Orang Lom, in addition to the Land Man - Belitong people on Belitung Island – was one of the ethnic groups within the Malay Customary Law Environment of Bangka Belitung [2].

The study of Lom people is interesting to study. one hand they are unique. Lom people are still very bound by elements of mystical, magical, and ancestral beliefs. This characteristic is fundamental of primitive societies. In the theory of evolution, Tylor illustrated that the views of ignorant people will evolve from polytheism to monotheism. However, Orang Lom still maintained ancestral beliefs as their way of life. Some changes in their faith were inevitable. The variations of views were more a change in formal identity as followers of legal religion. This change was influenced by their interaction with technology and information, and direct contact with followers of legitimate religion, especially Islam as a majority that has occurred for a long time. However, interactions with religious adherents did not eliminate the identity of ancestral beliefs can be noted through secure attachment to adat as a source of norms in daily life, the use of native language Mapur, patrilineal system, and revitalization of customs as protection for changing beliefs. They considered that adat was parallel to religion. They even thought that adat was as a religion, and adat has a higher position than religion. So adat became a source of data to organize human life.

## II. METHODOLOGY

#### 1. The Location of Research

Administratively, this study was conducted on the indigenous people or the Lom people of the Bangka Mapur tribe (northern Bangka) scattered in the Air Abik hamlet of Gunung Muda village and Pejem hamlet of Gunung Pelawan village of Belinyu District. Geographically, Pejem sub-village is located on the edge of the coast which spreads from Pesaren beach (Bintet Village, Belinyu District) extending to Tuing beach (Tuing village, Riau Silip District). In addition to the seashore, the Lom Pejem also settled in the hills of Benak, bordering the border with Air Abik, which numbered dozens of people. While the Air Abik hamlet is a land area, approximately 26 km from the coast. Air Abik has been known as the portrait of the most extreme-strict Orang Lom community holding the Karal Lintang custom.

The academic reasons for Air Abik and Pejem were the research locations, because the Lom people in the area were still original and the authenticity system of their trust. Whereas in other areas, for example Mapur, Puntik, Melintang or Karal Lintang geographical unity, have morphed embraced the formal religion of the State. Islam was as the majority choice, in addition to Christianity and Confucianism as a minority.

## B. The Population of Lom People in Persentage

The Mapor Lom people are one of the ethnic of Bangka Island residents. Every ethnic respected another ethnic. In terms of ethnicity, Bangka Island (especially Bangka Regency) consists of:

- 1) ethnic Malays were the dominant ethnic range of 78%.
- 2) ethnic Chinese ranges from 18%.
- 3) Javanese ethnicity around 2%.
- 4) mixed racial consisting of Bugis, Madurese, Batak, Lom, and others around 2%.

Meanwhile, when viewed from religious adherents, 80% were Muslim and the rest consists of Christians (Catholics and Protestants), Confucians, Buddhists, Hindus, and Lom followers.



Fig. 1. Geographic Map of the Research Location [7]

## C. Theory in Research

Therefore, this research included ethnographic studies, which focused on field research with a religiousanthropological approach. The ethnographic description related to the Lom belief system and structure, the symbol system, the ritual system, the meaning system, the value system, and the Orang Lom ceremony, and builds the social and cultural structure of a society "[8].

To get a full description, the theory in this study used religious methods that was called Daniel L. Pals as seven theories of religion [9]. This theory conducted to watch the phenomenon practice Lom belief. In addition, this study also used the a method of structural functionalism of Talcott Parsons (1955). This theory was used to analyze the influence of Islamic contact on the system and structure of belief and social culture of the Lom people. This theory could represent as the fundamental theory. Function was defined as all activities directed to meet the needs and requirements of a system. There were four absolute requirements that should exist for a community to denote the function of AGIL, namely adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency-pattern maintenance [10]. Adaptation process was the interaction between people and the natural world or the operation of adjustment. Achieving goal attainments included adjusting resources to achieve goals. Integration was centered on alignment in the entire social system. Latency included interactions with society and the inner metaphysical environment, and centers on stabilizing the central values held by individuals into patterns of social benefits. Latency tends to maintain and maintain existing habits.

#### III. THE FINDING OF THIS STUDY

#### A. Lom People Concept

According to Toha, Sukri, and Ahen, the term Orang Lom in everyday language is often mentioned with different editors. In addition to Orang Lom, other conditions such as Urang Lum, Mapor, Mapur or Mapor / Urang Mapur, and Indigenous People. The word person or urang was often used in the everyday language of Bangka people. Orang Lom has been written in two versions, namely: people and urang (Bangkanees dialect) who;

- 1) means a person who is not yet a religion
- 2) means a person who has not embraced faith as a person who adheres to a belief.
- *3) means* a person who has not converted to Islam. The intended religions are the formal religions recognized by the government.

Lom term appeared since 18050an, when colonial officials, Bogaart visited Bangka. He wrote that the inhabitants of Bangka Island consisted of four groups, namely Chinese (including various ethnic groups from the Archipelago), Malays, hill people, hereinafter referred to as hill people or people, and sea dwellers. Generally, Bangka documents related to the history of tin mining[11]. However, Lom tribe term has been written by J.A. Van Der Chijs with particular title De Orang Lom of Belom of Het Eiland Banka [12]. Besides some documents, researcher did study. Even thought the prilimanary research has done, but the concept of Lom Tribe needed to do research comprehensively. Zelle did the first research relating to Lom tribe in Mapor with term Mapor. He observed in March 13 to 31, 1891 [13]. Social anthropology study was conducted by Olaf. H Smedal [4]. He concluded that the Lom people still adhered to animism or as the state of savages. Then Decky did research relating early Islamization on the island of Bangka in the Korpus Mapur Karel Lintang region. He also used the terms Lom and Lom tribe [14].

Judging from the spread of Lom people, they still existed in northern Bangka, namely in Air Abik (Riau Silip subdistrict) and Pejem (Belinyu sub-district). The authenticity of the Lom people can always be directly observed in these two places. In addition, Mapur, Melintang, and other Karel Lintang regions have experienced a change of trust. Although changes in belief have taken place including in Air Abik and Pejem, they still hold fast to ancestral culture.

#### *B. The concept of the beliefs of Lom people*

The Lom belief system and cosmology are based on the cultural system. Symbols, systems of meaning, and systems of meaning as revealed by Geertz that a symbol system functioned to strengthen feelings (moods) and motivations in a strong, comprehensive, and long-lasting in humans, by formulating conceptions of a law (order). A symbol system was generally accepted with respect to a particular feeling that reflected reality, so the emotions and motivations seem to be unique (unique) there is real God [15]. In addition, the interpretation of the Lom belief system and cosmology was strengthened through other theories as a primary reference for their studies. Tylor and Frazer's theories are used for "animism and magic," Freud's theory was used to explain "religion and personality", Durkheim's theory was used explained "the sacredness of society", Mircea Eliade's theory explained "the nature of the sacred", and the AGIL (Parson) theory for taught about the touch of Islam with the Lom people [16].

The religious system (belief) of Lom people is described in:

- 1) the concept of Almighty (Allah Taala).
- 2) the concepts of angels, prophets, and quase people.
- 3) The Concept of Vengeance and Heaven.
- *4) The idea of paragraph.*
- 5) Bubung Tujuh.

The concept of "God" was very rarely expressed in everyday language and everyday speech. The word God was almost unheard of their speaking. They used several words that have the same meaning as Maha Kuase (Almighty), Penguase Jagat Raye (Ruler of the Universe), and Allah Taala. Almighty or Allah the Exalted is the ruler of the universe. Allah the Exalted who turns on and kills humans, provides fortune to humans, and heals the illnesses suffered by humans. In their beliefs and beliefs, Almighty is believed to have supernatural powers, which cannot be matched by humans. The energy that humans have, including Orang Kuase, comes from Almighty. This trust gave significant meaning in daily life of Lom.

Lom people's beliefs have consequences that must be obeyed, carried out, and must crystallize in the heart. Confidence was also a realization that Almighty has unlimited power. Something will happen and something will not happen by the will of the Almighty. Everything that happens was based on the will of Allah Taala. Allah Taala or Almighty is generally expressed when the Lom people lament (complain, ask for mercy, and ask for help from Allah Taala), read Petunjuk jalen, and provide a stubble for treatment and self-protection from the interference of Orang Halus (spirits, such as: pedare, ghosts, and evil-blies). The expression of wailing arose when they have a disaster, the desire to do something, other than as an expression of gratitude to Allah the Exalted.

The concepts of angels, prophets, scales, verses, hell surges, and vengeance were understood in the text of the petunjuk jalen (road instruction) read on the grave at the Nambek kubur (grave nambek). The text of the petunjuk jalen was considered to be a paragraph concept. This event was considered one of the most crucial ritual parts of the Lom people. This ritual was carried out on the tomb (grave) in the second year after the person died. The ritual reading of the petunjuk jalen was read by the Chief Adat and witnessed by Lom's family, Lom community, and all people who intrested watching it. In addition, the concept of the Lom people 's beliefs was believing in the seven lids and the carrying out of the seven straw rituals. Bubung Tujuh me "seven houses" which are home to ancestors who are perceived as grandparents. The Seven Beams are full of mystery, myth and mysticism. Bubung Tujuh in the past should not be said, because saying it was included taboo custom. Even if it was disclosed it cannot be loudly expressed with a signal. Accurately, Bubung Tujuh was described with several images as mystery villages, places of mist, real as myths, and time considerations.

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In addition, the concept of the Lom people 's beliefs is believing in the Bubung Tujuh and the carrying out of the seven straw rituals. Bubung Tujuh indicated "seven houses" which are home to ancestors who are perceived as grandparents. The Bubung Tujuh are full of mystery, myth and mysticism. Bubung Tujuh in the past should not be said, because saying it is included taboo custom. Even if it is disclosed it cannot be loudly expressed with a signal. Accurately, Bubung Tujuh is described with several images as mystery villages, places of mist, real as myths, and time considerations.

Another ritual that is the basis of Lom's beliefs is the carrying out of the Nujuh Jerami rituals. Nujuh Jerami denotes seven and straw means rice stalk which has been planted or harvested). The Nujuh Jerami ritual was - in Geertz's theory considered a communal feast of the Lom people. Nujuh Jerami contained two important meanings, namely;

the annual thanksgiving of the Lom people's community after the rice harvest was finished. They were grateful to Maha Kuase that they had been given a fortune in the form of rice harvest;
feeding Mese (spirits) because they do not disturb rice and themselves.

The Nujuh Jerami ritual has been performed at a specific time according to the Chinese calendar calculations. The Nujuh Jerami ritual in Air Abik was held on the 13th and 17th of the third month of the Chinese calendar calculation.

In addition to beliefs that are essential rituals, other traditional rituals are also carried out such as the relationship with child birth, marriage, divorce, infidelity, and the process of arranging a corpse. All are carried out by the community and are under the responsibility of the customary leader / traditional leader.

## *C. The concept of the ability to survive Lom people*

As adherents of the old custom belief system, the Lom people still persisted with the old belief system. This attitude can be observed through the concepts of belief, belief practices, and rituals of faith that were always carried out until now. As adherents of ancestral beliefs, they did not feel "inferior" in the midst of formal religious societies such as Islam, Christianity, and Confucianism. They expressly call themselves Indigenous.

Sociologically, society aspect was continually changing at all levels of its internal complexity. At the micro level there were changes in the economy, politics, and culture. At the mezo level group changes, interactions and individual behavior were occured. Changes due to time processing. But anthropologically, time will describe some differences in culture, beliefs, and customs, even if they are evolutionary. According to Shils in Piötr Sztompka, tradition, for example means everything that is channeled or passed down from the past to the present [17]. For this reason, adat in the beliefs of Lom was identical to the tradition of the ancestors. Traditions were inherited from the ancestors of the past. But custom in the views of the Lom people, in addition to daily customs that are non-sacred, there are customs that are sacred. The sacred elements in adat become the basic principle or spirit of the Lom people who still survive.

The concept of survival Orang Lom cannot be separated from the the idea of tradition. James Birx mentions that The idea of "tradition" as something close to static and unchanging became a pivotal marker distinguishing these cultures as they were before colonial "discovery" and after. However, one has to question this notion of "tradition" and examine more closely what it implies in the context of cultural survival [17].

The concept of tradition tends to be static. This concept is used as a concept of continuations in cultural traditions. James Dirx mentions that the survival of a culture may be threatened by the imposition of other cultural forms that significantly alter existing structures and belief systems. Religious conversion is an example that is readily found in many cases of threatened cultural survival. Loss of language poses a further threat to a culture's survival, given the unique ways in which culture is expressed and transmitted through communication. Further, the inability to pursue one's livelihood may have a detrimental effect on cultural survival [18].

As James Dirx said, the forms of culture conducted human life. In the fact, Lom people had the kinds of fundamental culture that the system connected their belief. So, the survival of Lom culture was inseparable from the forms of learning that existed in the belief system. The structure of the belief system of the Lom people, customs which contain spiritual meanings are the spirit, Orang Kuase, magical, and Maha Kuase. Everything becomes the basis of a permanent belief system. Therefore, Lom People can still be watched through:

- Stay true to traditional ancestral belief systems and myths
- The forms of culture are outline in customary practices and rituals
- Maintain language use even in a local context.
- Hold customs and traditions as everyday moral frameworks
- Form an indigenous community

Lom people have a strategy to persevere in carrying out ancestral beliefs. This strategy has been carried out and passed down for generations. In fact, the approach constructed a system of trust protection from incounters, and contiguity in the AGIL theory (acculturation, goal attainment, integration, and latency. The touch of Islam with the Lom people gave rising to the process of acculturation, assimilation, adaptation, and interaction not only on belief systems, but also it touches on the cultural system.

Lom's survival strategy was to be ambivalent (in Freud's theory and Parsons's structural functional theory). Ambivalence showed the psychological difference between rejecting and accepting. As an effort to survive (still survive) from the significant cultural clash, the Lom people chose ambivalent. They received the influence of the high culture (formal state religion) to show the political identity of citizenship and act firmly as indigenous people, adherents of ancestral beliefs, when they determined the status of their faith.

As an impact to continue to survive, they were divided in determining the identity of citizenship and status of belief. To reinforce political identity, they seemed to use the theory of "amoeba", the theory of splitting or multiple personality on one side of dual nature is formulated as a formal identity choice for citizenship politics. On the other hand, numerous characters became one of the strategies to survive. With multiple personalities, identity as a citizen was owned and nature of belief in ancestral belief (local religion) can be maintained continuously. The Lom People's reality was conceptualized by self-concept, ethnic concept, concept of citizenship, and the concept of self-identity.

#### D. Discussion the implementation of Lom Belief

Lom people of the tribal Mapur Bangka was an unique community that still upholds the old belief system or ancestral customary belief. On the one hand, ancestral ideas, as the theory of the origin of Tylor's religion, are categorized as animist belief systems, as an initial form of trust in primitive societies. Ancestral belief was passed down through oral traditions from generation to generation. On the other hand, the understanding of the Lom people has evolved as a result of the contact of the Lom people with formal religions recognized by the State, especially Islam. They stated that the anchestral belief was still functional. Lom people was not a description of primitive society as in the story of Tylor's theory of evolution. The evolution of their ideas has bee happened that was caused by more due to external elements such as marriage.

The term of Lom people emerged since the Dutch colonial conducted a survey of the inhabitants of Bangka Island in the early 19th century. The mention was a stereotypical justification of outsiders as a community that had not embraced formal religion at that time while the people around Lom people had embraced Islam. A labelling name, in subsequent developments the Lom people called themselves indigenous people, people who still held fast to ancestral beliefs or ancestral customs. The Lom people conceptualized the hereditary belief system through; (1) the concept of the Almighty (God Exalted) as a god, (2) the idea of Angels and Prophets, (3) and Heaven, (4) the verse, (5) Bubung Tujuh; (6) Nujuh Jerami ritual, (7) Nambek grave ritual, (8) Maras mount as a spiritual cosmic center; (9) ancestral heritage objects deemed necessary in their beliefs, such as Aki Anta's former palm, Aki Anta's drum, Pari Aki Anta, Cenanom, and reed yearns.

Especially for the cosmology, Lom people conducted in the position of the body of Lom people in the tomb facing towards Maras hill – Bangka people said that Maras hill as maras mountain. When the chief of customery read the petunjuk jalen text in Nambek important ritual, the soul of Lom people in tomb was instructed walking on Maras hill. Because according Lom people, heaven's direction was in Maras hill. Therefore Maras hill had in the tomb Nambek ritual. The chief of Customery read the text of petunjuk jalen above the grave of Lom people.

According to Geertz's theory, the belief in a society could be understood through a symbol system that binds to the order of meaning and value systems in way of life Lom people. The belief system adopted by the Lom people has a essensial influences in shaping the behavior of daily life. The inherited trust became a source in managing the customs and etiquette of its adherents. Adat (custom) was the basis for the rules of behavior, both towards himself, himself with others, and in arranging nature as a source of life. As a fundamental principle of belief, adat according to them is older than religion.

The implementation of Lom people's beliefs has an impact on oral tradition culture. Understanding Lom people can be done through the symbols used. Symbols, both abstract and concrete, are physical or non-physical, primary or secondary, are sacred or profane, and have direct or indirect meaning. These symbols formed their identity characteristics that are not owned by other people or other tribes. Symbols were depicted in daily rituals and ceremonies. Symbols that are manifested in everyday life were considered as customary practices, which have important significance in adat structures. Usual symbols regarding things that are considered sacred and unsacred.

Universal symbols that were considered sacred as part of the Lom's beliefs which can be traced through moments of birth, marriage, death (grave nambek), vows, restriction and bans, myths, and the cosmological system as cosmic spiritual. The symbols were in the form of petunjuk jalen, pedare, types of demons and ghosts (alos creatures), nujuh jerami, Nambek grave, and others. These symbols can be understood when they communicated and interact with following Lom people and other communities. While unsacred symbols can relate to birth, marriage, death, and prohibitions.

In the development of time, the Lom people's awareness to emphasize the identity of their beliefs was experiencing dynamics. One of the essential things they realized that was being called a Lom people. Dissatisfaction with the label, they provide a label antithesis that was as an indigenous people. In other developments, Lom also cannot avoid different cultural values influencing and religious teachings. They lived together in one area, so cultural values and ethical teaching values that became the norm in communication provide a space of change in their belief systems. One of the many religious teachings that influenced the process of social contact was Islam. The elements of adaptation, goals achieved, integration, and latency, the AGIL Parsons concept, were included in the Lom people's belief system and structure. In other words, the syncretism of the beliefs of the people of Lom occurred and was much influenced by Islam, both through Islamic religious education in schools, homes, recitation Quran, kindergarten / landfill, marriage, and information media.

Based on the results of the study, Tylor's theory of religion and the origin of primitive religious communities can be accepted. The evolution of animistic beliefs experienced a dynamic towards monotheism. But ancestral customary beliefs indicated to the synonymous of animism that their belief systems still functioned. That is, the evolution of religion does not necessarily lead to monotheism. The Lom people are not in the image of primitive society as in the understanding of Tylor, Frazer, and Pritchard.

Lom people has been surviving and holding fast to the beliefs of their ancestral heritage, even though their identities were beginning to be eroded by the structural evolution of socio-cultural change. As citizens, they lived under state law. As adherents of adat, Lom people continued practicing the anchestral beliefs that have been passed down from generation to generation. Even though there were contradiction between the formal identity of citizenship politics and the substantive character of belief/belief is inevitable. The ambivalence of precise identity became an essential strategy for the survival of trust. There for the originality of identity as Lom people was still preserved and survived. The labeling of indigenous peoples confirmed existence and provides a symbol of inclusive citizenship.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The Lom people was a one of unique tribe in Indonesia. Lom tribe still endured their adherents to ancestor belief. They have been practicing their ancestral faith from some centuries ago. To continue their faith, they did with oral instructing. The pure heart became the fundamental belief to their children. Adat or customery lended Lom community. This aspect became the vital elements that they endured to way of their life. However, the Lom people permitted their children studying Islamic religious teaching when they were still the age of the school. But Lom people prohibited their children studying Islamic religious education when the age of their children were entering teenager or adolescence.

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