

Multicentric Cosmology of Transcendental Agency: Ritual Language, Islamization, and Agency Reconfiguration in Javanese Mantras

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Abstract. This study investigates how transcendental agency is constructed, distributed, and activated within Javanese mantras associated with the Islamization tradition attributed to Sunan Kalijaga. While previous studies have primarily examined Javanese mantras as expressions of cultural heritage, religious syncretism, or local wisdom, limited attention has been devoted to the mechanisms through which ritual efficacy is generated through language and agency. Employing a qualitative interpretive design, the study analyzes a corpus of Javanese mantra texts using a three-stage coding procedure consisting of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The analysis identifies four interconnected domains of agency – divine, prophetic, mythological, and cosmological – which collectively form a Layered Transcendental Agency Architecture. The findings further reveal processes of Mythological Agency Reconfiguration and Hierarchical Syncretic Integration, through which indigenous cosmological entities are preserved while being repositioned within an Islamic framework of sacred legitimacy. In addition, language functions as a Performative Technology of Transcendental Activation, enabling the invocation, coordination, and authorization of multiple transcendental actors. Building upon these findings, the study proposes the concept of Multicentric Cosmology of Transcendental Agency, a theoretical model explaining how ritual efficacy emerges from the interaction of divine authority, prophetic mediation, mythological intervention, cosmological participation, linguistic activation, and human ritual practice. The study contributes to scholarship on ritual language, agency, religious transformation, and Islamic vernacularization by offering a new framework for understanding the relationship between language, belief, and cosmology in Javanese Islamic textual traditions.

Keywords: transcendental agency; Javanese mantras; ritual language; Islamization; religious syncretism; performativity; linguistic anthropology



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1. Introduction

Ritual language occupies a distinctive position within human societies because it is not merely used to communicate meanings but to enact realities. Across diverse religious traditions, ritual utterances are believed to invoke sacred presences, transform social conditions, establish spiritual protection, and mediate relationships between human and nonhuman entities (Austin, 1962; Tambiah, 1968, 1985; Searle, 1969; Bell, 1992; Duranti, 2004; Tavárez, 2014). The performative dimension of ritual

discourse has therefore become a central concern in linguistic anthropology, religious studies, and semiotics because it reveals how language functions not only as representation but also as social and cosmological action (Silverstein, 1976, 2003; Hanks, 1996; Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Keane, 2007). Recent scholarship further demonstrates that ritual texts frequently operate as mechanisms through which communities negotiate religious authority, cultural memory, and symbolic legitimacy within changing historical contexts (Mittermaier, 2011; Meyer, 2021; Marshall, 2022; Kapferer, 2023). Within this broader perspective, mantras represent a particularly important form of ritual language because their efficacy is commonly understood to derive from the interaction between speech, belief, sacred authority, and cosmological knowledge.

In the Javanese context, mantras constitute one of the oldest and most enduring forms of ritual discourse. They have historically functioned as verbal technologies employed for protection, healing, prosperity, agricultural fertility, spiritual defense, and communication with invisible realms (Geertz, 1960; Woodward, 1989; Beatty, 1999; Ricklefs, 2006; Florida, 2019). Unlike ordinary language, Javanese mantras are embedded within a cosmological framework that recognizes the active participation of divine beings, prophetic figures, ancestral spirits, mythical entities, and natural forces in shaping human existence (Woodward, 1989; Magnis-Suseno, 1997; Hefner, 2011; Florida, 2019). Consequently, the study of mantras offers a valuable opportunity to examine how language mediates relationships among multiple domains of agency that transcend the boundaries of the human world. Recent studies on Javanese Islamic texts, ritual traditions, and vernacular religious practices have highlighted the persistence of local cosmological structures despite centuries of Islamization (Akhtabi, 2022; Zuhri, 2022; Pamungkas, 2023; Kurniawan, 2024; Puspita, 2024; Rohmadi et al., 2025). Nevertheless, these studies have predominantly focused on historical transmission, cultural preservation, symbolism, or religious acculturation, leaving the internal mechanisms through which ritual efficacy is produced relatively underexplored.

A growing body of scholarship has examined the Islamization of Java as a process of accommodation, vernacularization, localization, and symbolic negotiation (Geertz, 1960, 1973; Woodward, 1989; Bowen, 1993; Beatty, 1999; Ricklefs, 2006; Hefner, 2011). More recent studies have likewise demonstrated that Islamic teachings were often disseminated through the adaptation of existing cultural forms rather than through their outright replacement (Akhtabi, 2022; Pamungkas, 2023; Kurniawan, 2024; Anam et al., 2025). While such perspectives successfully explain why indigenous symbols continue to appear in Islamic ritual texts, they provide limited insight into how different categories of sacred actors are organized within ritual discourse. Existing studies rarely address how divine authority, prophetic mediation, mythological figures, cosmological forces, ritual language, and human practitioners interact to generate efficacy within a single ritual system. As a result, the question of agency remains insufficiently theorized in studies of Javanese mantras. This limitation is particularly significant because agency has become one of the most influential concepts in contemporary linguistic anthropology, sociology, and religious studies (Ahearn, 2001; Duranti, 2004; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Ortner, 2006; Keane, 2007).

This study argues that Javanese mantras should be understood not simply as repositories of cultural symbolism but as complex systems of distributed agency in which sacred power emerges through the interaction of multiple human and nonhuman actors. By examining mantras attributed to the Islamization tradition associated with Sunan Kalijaga, this study investigates how divine, prophetic, mythological, cosmological, linguistic, and human agencies are configured within ritual discourse and how these configurations contribute to the production of ritual efficacy. Drawing on theories of performativity (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969; Tambiah, 1985), agency (Ahearn, 2001; Duranti, 2004), ritual language (Silverstein, 2003; Tavárez, 2014), and religious transformation (Asad, 1993; Keane, 2007), the study proposes the concept of Multicentric Cosmology of Transcendental Agency as a new framework for understanding the relationship between language, belief, and religious change in Javanese Islamic textual traditions. By doing so, it contributes to ongoing debates concerning ritual efficacy, religious syncretism, Islamic vernacularization, and the role of language in mediating cosmological worlds.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative interpretive design grounded in linguistic anthropology and ritual discourse analysis to investigate the construction of transcendental agency in Javanese mantras. The research was designed to examine how agency, religious authority, mythological figures, cosmological entities, and ritual language are configured within mantra texts and how these configurations contribute to the production of ritual efficacy. Given the study's focus on meaning-making processes, symbolic structures, and religious transformation, a qualitative approach was considered the most appropriate for capturing the complex relationships among language, belief, and cosmology embedded in the texts.

The analytical framework combines perspectives from ritual language studies, linguistic anthropology, and agency theory. Ritual language was approached as a performative system through which social and cosmological realities are enacted rather than merely represented (Austin, 1962; Tambiah, 1985; Tavárez, 2014). Agency was understood as a culturally mediated capacity for action distributed across human and nonhuman entities (Ahearn, 2001; Duranti, 2004). This theoretical integration enabled the study to move beyond descriptive interpretations of mantras toward an examination of how multiple forms of transcendental agency are organized and activated within ritual discourse.

2.2. Data Source

The primary data consisted of Javanese mantra texts attributed to the Islamization tradition associated with Sunan Kalijaga. The corpus comprises ritual utterances containing references to divine entities, prophetic figures, mythological agents, cosmological forces, and performative linguistic formulas. These texts were selected because they represent a significant site of interaction between indigenous Javanese cosmology and Islamic theological discourse, making them particularly relevant for examining processes of religious transformation and symbolic reconfiguration.

The unit of analysis was not the mantra as a whole but individual meaning units embedded within the texts. These units included lexical items, phrases, clauses, invocations, naming practices, references to sacred figures, descriptions of supernatural action, and performative expressions. Treating these elements as analytical units allowed the study to identify recurring patterns of agency and ritual function across the corpus.

2.3. Data Collection

Data were collected through intensive document analysis. The mantra corpus was first transcribed and organized into a digital textual database. Each text was then read repeatedly to identify references to actors, sources of authority, ritual functions, cosmological entities, and performative expressions. During this stage, preliminary annotations were made to capture emerging themes related to transcendental agency, religious legitimacy, ritual action, and symbolic transformation.

To enhance analytical rigor, data collection followed an iterative process in which textual examination and conceptual categorization developed simultaneously. New categories were continuously compared with previously identified categories to ensure conceptual consistency and theoretical saturation. Data collection was concluded when no substantially new categories emerged from the corpus and recurring patterns became analytically stable.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using a three-stage coding procedure adapted from grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2014). The coding process was employed not to generate a substantive grounded theory but to systematically identify, organize, and conceptualize patterns of transcendental agency embedded within the mantra corpus.

The first stage involved *open coding*, during which textual segments were examined line by line to identify references to sacred actors, ritual functions, cosmological entities, and performative linguistic structures. This process generated an initial set of descriptive codes, including references to Allah, prophetic figures, mythological agents, protection formulas, healing expressions, sacred naming practices, and cosmological symbols.

The second stage consisted of *axial coding*, in which conceptually related codes were grouped into broader analytical categories. Through constant comparison, the initial codes were organized into several higher-order categories, including divine agency, prophetic agency, mythological agency, cosmological agency, performative activation, symbolic legitimation, and ritual efficacy. Relationships among categories were then examined to identify patterns of authority, mediation, activation, and intervention.

The final stage involved *selective coding*, through which all categories were integrated into a unified explanatory framework. This stage resulted in the development of five major conceptual findings: Layered Transcendental Agency Architecture, Mythological Agency Reconfiguration, Hierarchical Syncretic Integration, Performative Technology of Transcendental Activation, and Multicentric Cosmology of Transcendental Agency. These concepts emerged through the synthesis of recurring relationships observed across the corpus and formed the basis for the theoretical model proposed in this study.

2.5. Trustworthiness

To ensure analytical credibility, the study employed prolonged engagement with the data, iterative coding, constant comparison, and theoretical triangulation. Interpretations were continuously evaluated against the textual evidence and cross-checked through relevant theories of agency, ritual language, performativity, and religious transformation. Rather than seeking statistical generalization, the study aimed for analytical generalization by developing conceptual explanations capable of illuminating broader processes of ritual agency and religious change in Javanese Islamic textual traditions.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Architecture of Transcendental Agency in Javanese Mantras

Analysis of the entire mantra corpus reveals that meaning construction does not rely on a single source of power but is instead organized through a layered and interconnected network of transcendental agencies. Through a systematic process of *open coding*, *axial coding*, and *selective coding*, four core categories were identified as consistently structuring the spiritual power system embedded within the mantras: divine agency, prophetic agency, mythical agency, and cosmological agency. These categories not only demonstrate the diversity of supernatural actors represented in the texts but also reveal a patterned distribution of authority, function, and operational domains through which ritual efficacy is produced. The coding structure and interrelationships among these categories are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Coding Structure of the Transcendental Agency Architecture

Core Category	Axial Category	Open Codes	Agency Function
Divine Agency	Absolute Authority	Allah, Gusti Allah, Pangeran	Ultimate source of legitimacy
Prophetic Agency	Sacred Mediation	Prophet Muhammad, Prophet Adam, Adam Makdum	Mediation of divine power
Mythical Agency	Operational Intervention	Ki Hartati, Sri Sadana, Rara Subaningsih	Protection, healing, prosperity
Cosmological Agency	Environmental Spirituality	Mountains, unseen realms, cardinal directions, angels	Distribution and transmission of spiritual force

As shown in Table 1, divine agency occupies the highest position within the spiritual hierarchy, functioning as the ultimate source of legitimacy that sustains the entire ritual system. Beneath this level, prophetic agency serves as a mediating mechanism through which divine authority is transmitted into the realm of ritual practice. Mythical agency, in contrast, performs operational functions directly associated with pragmatic human concerns, including protection, healing, safety, and well-being. Meanwhile, cosmological agency demonstrates that nonhuman entities – such as mountains, unseen realms, cardinal directions, and angels – are not constructed as passive settings but as active participants endowed with the capacity to contribute to the production of spiritual efficacy. These findings suggest that Javanese mantras embody a hierarchical yet relational system of agency in which each

entity derives its meaning, authority, and effectiveness through its embeddedness within a broader transcendental network.

More importantly, this structure reveals a significant shift from a human-centered understanding of agency toward a multicentric configuration in which the capacity to act is distributed across multiple spiritual and cosmological entities. Throughout the corpus, humans are not represented as the primary holders of power; rather, they function as ritual operators who activate connections among God, prophets, mythical figures, cosmological forces, and the mantra itself. Consequently, the efficacy of the mantra does not reside solely in the intrinsic properties of language but in its capacity to mobilize and coordinate a culturally organized network of transcendental agencies. This finding leads to the formulation of what may be termed the Layered Transcendental Agency Architecture, a ritual cosmological model in which agency is distributed across divine, prophetic, mythical, and cosmological layers, collectively constituting the fundamental mechanism through which Javanese mantras achieve their performative power.

3.2. Reconfiguration of Mythological Figures within the Javanese Islamic Cosmology

Analysis of the mantra corpus reveals that one of the most persistent features of the texts is the continued presence of local mythological figures despite the profound religious transformation brought about by Islamization. Rather than disappearing from the ritual landscape, these figures remain actively embedded within the symbolic structure of the mantras. Through *open coding*, 68 references to local supernatural entities were identified and subsequently grouped into four dominant figures: Ki Hartati, Sri Sadana, Rara Subaningsih, and Adam Makdum. The coding process indicates that these entities no longer perform their original cosmological roles but undergo systematic reinterpretation within an Islamic framework. As presented in Table 2, the transformation does not involve the removal of indigenous agents but rather the reallocation of their authority, function, and spiritual legitimacy within a newly established theological order.

Table 2. Coding Structure of Mythological Agency Reconfiguration

Mythological Figure	Indigenous Function	Cosmological Reconfigured Function	Islamic Mode Transformation
Ki Hartati	Local supernatural being	Guardian of bodily safety and protection	Functional Islamization
Sri Sadana	Agrarian prosperity deity	Mediator of blessing and abundance	Symbolic Relegitimation
Rara Subaningsih	Local spiritual entity	Protective spiritual agent	Hierarchical Integration
Adam Makdum	Hybrid sacred figure	Healing mediator and sacred intermediary	Prophetic Localization

The data demonstrate that the Islamization of Javanese mantras was not achieved through the eradication of pre-Islamic symbolic structures. Instead, local mythological figures were subjected to a process of ontological reconfiguration whereby their spiritual efficacy was preserved while their source of authority was

fundamentally transformed. Ki Hartati, for instance, continues to function as a protector against illness and supernatural disturbance, yet this efficacy is no longer grounded in autonomous mystical power. Rather, the figure derives legitimacy from a higher divine order centered on Allah. Similar patterns are evident in the representations of Sri Sadana and Rara Subaningsih. Although these figures retain recognizable elements of their indigenous identities, their ritual authority is subordinated to an Islamic cosmological hierarchy. Consequently, the mantras construct a layered spiritual system in which local agents remain operative but no longer occupy the apex of sacred power.

More significantly, the findings reveal that Islamization functioned as a process of symbolic reorganization rather than symbolic replacement. The preservation of indigenous figures suggests a cultural strategy aimed at maintaining continuity with existing cosmological knowledge while simultaneously redirecting its theological orientation. Through this mechanism, local mythological agents were transformed into intermediaries operating within an Islamic sacred universe, allowing traditional symbolic capital to remain socially meaningful without challenging divine sovereignty. This process may be conceptualized as Mythological Agency Reconfiguration, a form of religious adaptation in which pre-existing spiritual entities are neither rejected nor fully assimilated but repositioned within a newly established hierarchy of transcendental authority. The result is a distinctly Javanese Islamic cosmology that preserves cultural memory while redefining the locus of sacred legitimacy.

3.3. Mechanisms of Religious Syncretism in Javanese Mantras

Analysis of the mantra corpus further reveals that the coexistence of Islamic and indigenous elements is neither incidental nor merely decorative. Rather, the texts exhibit a systematic mechanism through which different religious traditions are integrated into a coherent cosmological structure. Through iterative coding, 91 textual segments were identified as containing simultaneous references to Islamic and pre-Islamic symbolic resources. Subsequent axial coding generated four recurring mechanisms—symbolic integration, hierarchical subordination, theological legitimation, and semantic reinterpretation—which collectively explain how syncretic meanings are produced within the mantras. As shown in Table 3, these mechanisms operate not as isolated processes but as interconnected strategies that enable the accommodation of indigenous cosmologies within an Islamic theological framework.

Table 3. Coding Structure of Syncretic Mechanisms in Javanese Mantras

Core Process	Axial Category	Manifestation in the Text	Syncretic Function
Symbolic Integration	Co-presence traditions	of Islamic and Javanese entities appear together	Cultural continuity
Hierarchical Subordination	Unequal structure	authority Local agents operate under divine authority	Theological control
Religious Legitimation	Reallocation of sacred authority	Indigenous symbols derive power from Allah	Spiritual validation
Semantic Reinterpretation	Meaning transformation	Traditional figures acquire Islamic functions	Cosmological adaptation

The findings indicate that syncretism in Javanese mantras is best understood as a structured process of symbolic negotiation rather than a simple blending of religious traditions. Islamic and indigenous elements are consistently represented within the same ritual framework; however, their relationship is not symmetrical. Allah remains the ultimate source of sacred authority, while prophets, mythological figures, and cosmological entities function as subordinate agents whose efficacy depends upon their connection to divine legitimacy. Consequently, indigenous symbols are not abandoned but incorporated into a new hierarchy in which their meanings are redefined without entirely losing their cultural recognizability. This pattern demonstrates that the mantras preserve continuity with earlier Javanese cosmologies while simultaneously establishing a distinctly Islamic sacred order.

More importantly, the data reveal that the success of Islamization was grounded in a strategy of semantic accommodation rather than theological confrontation. Local cosmological concepts were not erased from collective memory; instead, they were reinterpreted through Islamic categories of meaning and authority. Such a process allowed familiar symbolic structures to remain culturally intelligible while gradually shifting the locus of sacred power toward monotheistic theology. The resulting syncretic formation therefore represents neither the survival of pre-Islamic religion nor the complete domination of Islamic doctrine, but a dynamic process of Hierarchical Syncretic Integration, in which indigenous symbolic systems are preserved through their incorporation into a broader Islamic cosmological architecture. This mechanism explains how Javanese mantras became an effective medium for religious transformation while maintaining cultural continuity across different historical periods.

3.4. Language as a Performative Technology of Transcendental Activation

The preceding analyses have demonstrated that Javanese mantras are structured through a complex network of divine, prophetic, mythological, and cosmological agencies. However, the existence of these agencies alone does not explain how ritual efficacy is generated. A further analysis of the corpus reveals that language functions as the primary mechanism through which transcendental agencies are activated, coordinated, and mobilized. Through open coding, 112 linguistic units associated with invocation, command, protection, transformation, and authorization were identified. Axial coding subsequently grouped these units into five recurrent performative functions that consistently organize ritual action across the corpus. As presented in Table 4, the linguistic structure of the mantras demonstrates that language is not merely a vehicle for transmitting meaning but serves as an operative technology through which spiritual power is enacted and realized.

Table 4. Coding Structure of Performative Functions in Javanese Mantras

Core Category	Axial Category	Linguistic Manifestation	Ritual Function
Invocation	Calling Transcendental Entities	Naming divine, prophetic, and spiritual beings	Establishing sacred presence
Activation	Mobilizing Power	Spiritual Formulaic commands and ritual utterances	Triggering agency
Protection	Constructing Boundaries	Sacred Protective verbal formulas	Preventing harm and disturbance

Core Category	Axial Category	Linguistic Manifestation	Ritual Function
Transformation	Reconfiguring Reality	Statements of healing, safety, and change	Producing desired conditions
Authorization	Legitimation of Ritual Action	References to divine authority	Validating efficacy

The findings indicate that language occupies a unique position within the ritual system because it functions simultaneously as a medium and an agent. At the level of ritual practice, utterances do not merely describe supernatural realities; they actively bring such realities into operation. The repeated invocation of Allah, prophetic figures, mythological agents, and cosmological entities establishes a communicative bridge between the visible and invisible domains. Through this process, language performs a constitutive rather than representational role. The spoken formula is understood not as a reflection of sacred power but as the very mechanism through which sacred power becomes present and operational. Consequently, ritual efficacy emerges from the performative capacity of language to activate relationships among multiple transcendental actors within a shared cosmological framework.

More significantly, the corpus reveals that language itself acquires agentive status within the ritual process. The efficacy of the mantra is not attributed solely to the speaker, the divine source, or the invoked entities, but also to the utterance as an autonomous ritual instrument. Repetition, formulaic structures, rhythmic organization, sacred naming, and performative declarations collectively transform language into a mechanism capable of mediating ontological transitions between ordinary and sacred realities. In this sense, the mantra operates as a Performative Technology of Transcendental Activation, a linguistic system through which spiritual agencies are summoned, authorized, coordinated, and enacted. Rather than functioning as a passive communicative tool, language becomes an active participant in the production of ritual reality. This finding extends existing theories of ritual language by demonstrating that performativity in Javanese mantras is not confined to speech acts alone but encompasses the activation of an entire network of transcendental agencies through verbal practice.

3.5. The Multicentric Cosmology of Transcendental Agency

The final stage of analysis sought to identify the overarching cosmological structure emerging from the interaction among agency, syncretism, and performative language. Through selective coding, all previously identified categories were integrated into a single explanatory framework. The findings reveal that Javanese mantras do not operate according to a centralized model of sacred power. Instead, they construct a multicentric cosmology in which the capacity to act is distributed across multiple interconnected entities, including God, prophets, mythological figures, cosmological forces, ritual language, and human practitioners. As summarized in Table 5, each entity occupies a distinct yet complementary position within the ritual system, collectively contributing to the production of spiritual efficacy.

Table 5. Coding Structure of the Multicentric Cosmology of Transcendental Agency

Domain of Agency	Primary Function	Position within Ritual System
Divine Agency	Ultimate legitimacy	Source of authority
Prophetic Agency	Sacred mediation	Transmission of divine power
Mythological Agency	Operational intervention	Practical ritual assistance
Cosmological Agency	Environmental participation	Spiritual distribution
Linguistic Agency	Performative activation	Mobilization of power
Human Agency	Ritual enactment	Operational execution

The findings demonstrate that no single entity monopolizes spiritual power within the mantra tradition. Although Allah remains the ultimate source of legitimacy, ritual efficacy emerges only through the interaction of multiple agencies operating across different ontological levels. Prophets mediate divine authority, mythological figures perform protective and healing functions, cosmological entities participate in the circulation of spiritual force, and language activates the entire network through performative utterance. Humans, meanwhile, do not function as autonomous controllers of sacred power but as ritual operators whose actions depend upon the successful coordination of these interconnected agencies. This configuration reveals a fundamentally relational ontology in which efficacy is produced not by isolated actors but by the dynamic interaction among diverse human and nonhuman participants.

More importantly, the data suggest that Javanese mantras embody a distinctive cosmological logic that differs substantially from both modern secular notions of individual agency and classical theological models of unilateral divine action. Rather than locating power exclusively in God or exclusively in human intention, the mantras distribute agency across a network of mutually reinforcing entities. Such a configuration enables the preservation of indigenous cosmological knowledge, the incorporation of Islamic theological authority, and the operationalization of ritual language within a single coherent framework. This study conceptualizes this configuration as a Multicentric Cosmology of Transcendental Agency, a cosmological model in which spiritual efficacy emerges through the coordinated interaction of multiple centers of agency linked by performative language. The model provides a comprehensive explanation of how Javanese mantras maintain cultural continuity while simultaneously accommodating religious transformation and theological reorientation.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Javanese mantras should not be reduced to magical formulas, residual folklore, or merely syncretic religious expressions. Rather, they constitute a sophisticated ritual semiotic system in which agency, language, cosmology, and theological authority are structurally intertwined. The proposed model of the Multicentric Cosmology of Transcendental Agency extends earlier theories of language and agency by showing that ritual efficacy in Javanese mantras emerges not from a single locus of sacred power but from the

coordinated interaction of divine, prophetic, mythological, cosmological, linguistic, and human agencies. This finding develops Ahearn's (2001) conception of agency as a socioculturally mediated capacity to act, while also extending Duranti's (2004) account of agency in language by demonstrating that ritual language does not merely encode agency but actively distributes, activates, and legitimizes it. In this regard, the mantra becomes a site where Austin's (1962) theory of performative utterance, Searle's (1969) speech act theory, Tambiah's (1968, 1985) analysis of ritual efficacy, and Silverstein's (1976, 2003) metapragmatic theory converge within a specifically Javanese Islamic cosmology.

These findings also refine the conventional understanding of syncretism in Javanese religious studies. Earlier scholarship has often framed Javanese Islam through categories such as syncretism, accommodation, vernacularization, or cultural Islamization (Geertz, 1960, 1973; Woodward, 1989; Ricklefs, 2006; Beatty, 1999; Hefner, 2011; Zuhri, 2022). The present study suggests that such categories remain useful but insufficient if they do not account for the internal mechanics of ritual agency. The mantras examined here do not simply combine Islamic and pre-Islamic symbols; they reorganize the authority of those symbols through a hierarchical yet relational structure. Allah functions as the ultimate source of legitimacy, prophetic figures mediate divine authority, mythological figures retain practical ritual functions, cosmological entities participate in the circulation of spiritual force, and language activates the entire system. This pattern supports recent studies showing that Javanese Islamic texts preserve local symbolic memory while reorienting it toward Islamic theological authority (Pamungkas, 2023; Kurniawan, 2024; Puspita, 2024; Rohmadi et al., 2025; Anam et al., 2025).

This study therefore proposes that the Islamization of Javanese mantras should be understood as hierarchical reconfiguration, not merely as cultural blending. The persistence of figures such as Ki Hartati, Sri Sadana, Rara Subaningsih, and Adam Makdum indicates that local cosmological agents are not eliminated from the ritual field. Instead, they are reassigned new positions within an Islamic hierarchy of transcendental legitimacy. This finding resonates with studies of religious transformation that emphasize continuity through reinterpretation rather than rupture (Asad, 1993; Bowen, 1993; Keane, 1997, 2007; Bell, 1992; Bourdieu, 1977, 1991). However, the present analysis adds a more specific contribution: it shows that symbolic continuity is sustained through the redistribution of agency. Local figures remain ritually meaningful because their functions are preserved, while their authority is redirected toward a divine source. Thus, Islamization operates not by erasing the pre-Islamic symbolic order but by subordinating and reauthorizing it.

The concept map in Figure 1 summarizes the theoretical synthesis emerging from the findings. It shows that ritual efficacy is not produced by one agent alone but by the movement of authority and action across several interconnected domains. Divine agency legitimizes the system; prophetic agency mediates sacred power; mythological agency operationalizes protection, healing, and prosperity; cosmological agency distributes spiritual force through space and environment; linguistic agency activates the network through performative utterance; and human agency enacts the ritual procedure. This model clarifies why Javanese mantras can

remain culturally intelligible, theologically adaptive, and pragmatically effective at the same time.

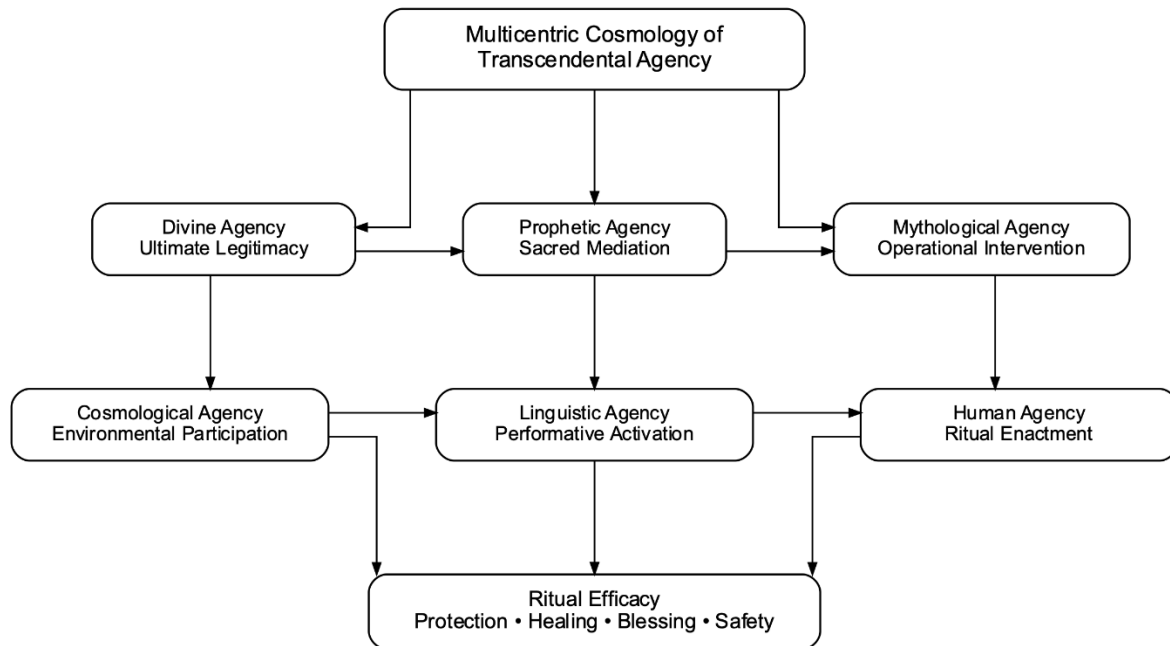


Figure 1. Conceptual map of the Multicentric Cosmology of Transcendental Agency in Javanese mantras

The model also contributes to the anthropology of ritual language. Tambiah (1968) argued that magical language operates through analogy, metaphor, metonymy, and performative action, while Austin (1962) demonstrated that certain utterances do not merely describe reality but enact it. The present study expands these arguments by showing that in Javanese mantras, performativity is not limited to illocutionary force. It involves a broader cosmological activation in which language summons, coordinates, authorizes, and mobilizes multiple transcendental agencies. This finding is consistent with studies of ritual language that emphasize repetition, parallelism, metapragmatic framing, and the creation of sacred presence (Jakobson, 1960; Fox, 1988; Hanks, 1990, 1996; Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Irvine & Gal, 2000; Tavárez, 2014). Yet the Javanese case shows that ritual performativity is inseparable from theological hierarchy and cultural memory. The mantra works because language is positioned as a technology of activation within a pre-existing network of sacred relations.

The findings further challenge human-centered models of agency. In modern social theory, agency is often linked to intentionality, autonomy, resistance, or human action within structure (Giddens, 1984; Ortner, 1984, 2006; Bourdieu, 1977; Sewell, 1992; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). The mantras analyzed here suggest a different ontology. Humans are important, but they are not the sole origin of action. They function as ritual operators whose efficacy depends on proper alignment with divine authority, prophetic mediation, mythological assistance, cosmological participation, and linguistic activation. This configuration approximates what Latour (2005) calls distributed action, but it is not identical to secular actor-network theory because the

network is explicitly theological, ritual, and transcendental. Agency here is neither purely human nor purely divine; it is relational, layered, and ritually mediated.

Finally, this study contributes to scholarship on Javanese Islam by offering a model that connects textual analysis with broader questions of religious transformation. Recent studies on Kidung Rumeksa Ing Wengi, Javanese mantra, Islamic mysticism, and local ritual traditions have shown that Javanese religious texts often function as media of cultural continuity and Islamic pedagogy (Pamungkas, 2023; Azizah, 2021; Akhtabi, 2022; Shofwan, 2020; Kurniawan, 2024; Puspita, 2024; Mahdaniar, 2025; Anam et al., 2025). This study advances that discussion by identifying the internal semiotic mechanism through which such continuity is made possible. The key mechanism is not only syncretism, mysticism, or vernacularization, but the construction of a multicentric agency system. Through this system, Javanese mantras preserve older cosmological memory, absorb Islamic theological authority, and transform language into a performative instrument of ritual efficacy. The theoretical contribution of this article therefore lies in the formulation of Multicentric Cosmology of Transcendental Agency as a conceptual model for understanding how ritual language mediates agency, belief, and religious change in Javanese Islamic textual traditions.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Javanese mantras are not merely magical formulas or residual expressions of pre-Islamic belief, but constitute a sophisticated cosmological system in which ritual efficacy emerges through the interaction of multiple forms of transcendental agency. The findings reveal a Layered Transcendental Agency Architecture that distributes agency across divine, prophetic, mythological, cosmological, linguistic, and human domains. Within this structure, Allah functions as the ultimate source of legitimacy, prophetic figures mediate sacred authority, mythological agents perform operational ritual functions, cosmological entities participate in the circulation of spiritual force, and ritual language activates the entire network through performative utterance. These findings challenge human-centered conceptions of agency by demonstrating that efficacy in Javanese mantras is generated through a relational and multicentric configuration of human and nonhuman actors operating within a shared sacred universe.

The study further shows that the Islamization of Javanese mantras was achieved not through the elimination of indigenous cosmological traditions but through their systematic reconfiguration within an Islamic theological framework. Local mythological figures retained their ritual significance while undergoing a transformation of authority, meaning, and ontological position, resulting in a process of Mythological Agency Reconfiguration and Hierarchical Syncretic Integration. Building on these findings, this article proposes the concept of a Multicentric Cosmology of Transcendental Agency, a theoretical model that explains how ritual language mediates the interaction between cultural memory, religious transformation, and sacred authority. This model contributes to scholarship on ritual language, agency, religious syncretism, and Islamic vernacularization by offering a

new framework for understanding how language, belief, and cosmology are dynamically integrated in Javanese Islamic textual traditions.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization: Eko Suroso and Akhmad Fauzan; **Methodology:** Eko Suroso and Akhmad Fauzan; **Data Collection:** Eko Suroso; **Formal Analysis:** Eko Suroso and Akhmad Fauzan; **Investigation:** Eko Suroso and Akhmad Fauzan; **Writing – Original Draft Preparation:** Eko Suroso; **Writing – Review and Editing:** Akhmad Fauzan; **Supervision:** Akhmad Fauzan. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

Ethical Approval

This study did not involve human participants, animals, clinical trials, or personal data requiring formal ethical approval. The research was conducted through the analysis of textual and documentary sources.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

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AI Use Disclosure

The authors used generative artificial intelligence solely for language refinement and editorial assistance during manuscript preparation. All conceptual development, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and final scholarly judgments remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

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