

# An Archaeological Exploration on Religious Change in Liwa, West Lampung

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## Abstract

Mountains, hills, and highlands have long been venerated in ancient beliefs as the dwelling places of deities. West Lampung, with its sacred sites, is a prime example of such places. These sites, evidenced by numerous archaeological findings, have recorded the evolution of religious significance over time. This study aims to explore the transformation of these sacred sites and their contemporary interpretations. The main objective of this research is to explore the progression of religious shift in Liwa, West Lampung. By examining archaeological records from 2011 to 2018, this study constructs chronological narrative of the region's early religious history. The findings reveal four prevalent patterns that encapsulate the religious transformations from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These patterns, derived from archaeological data and supplemented by contextual and historical analysis, indicate a shift in religious practices in this region. This shift aligns with Lewis Rambo's model of religious change in a macro context, characterized by encounter, interaction, communication and subsequent consequences. This study, therefore, provides valuable insights into the dynamic nature of religious practices and beliefs in Liwa over centuries.

**Keywords:** Highland of Liwa, West Lampung, archaeology, megalith, Islamic tomb

### ***Abstrak***

*Kepercayaan kuno menghormati gunung, bukit, dan dataran tinggi sebagai tempat para dewa dan dewi yang disembah dari generasi ke generasi. Dataran tinggi Liwa di Lampung Barat adalah salah satu tempat yang disembah di mana beberapa situs arkeologi mencatat bukti artefak sakralnya yang berubah dari waktu ke waktu dan berlanjut hingga sekarang. Bagaimana artefak-artefak sakral ini berubah seiring waktu dan bagaimana masyarakat mengartikannya sekarang adalah masalah yang dibahas dalam tulisan ini. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menarik perkembangan perubahan agama berdasarkan artefak arkeologi, pengumpulan data sekunder, dan analisis dari tahun 2011 hingga 2018 untuk memberikan sejarah kronologis kapan kepercayaan (religi) mulai muncul di Liwa dan bagaimana dinamikanya. Hasilnya menunjukkan ada empat pola dan diskusi mengenai perubahan agama (kepercayaan) dari abad ke-10 hingga ke-19. Berdasarkan pola pada data arkeologis dan analisis kontekstual serta sejarah, terlihat adanya indikasi perubahan religi yang sesuai dengan model tahapan perubahan religi menurut Lewis Rambo dalam konteks makro, yaitu encounter, interaction, communication, and consequences.*

***Kata Kunci:*** Dataran Tinggi Liwa, Lampung Barat, arkeologi, megalit, makam Islam

## **Introduction**

Sumatera is renowned for the Sriwijaya Kingdom, governed by the Shailendra Dynasty from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. This kingdom, actively engaged in maritime trade routes across Southeast Asia and India, suffered two defeats by the Chola Kingdom from India in the 11th century (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 1993) (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 1993). The power of Sriwijaya waned in the 13<sup>th</sup> century as the Majapahit, a Hindu Kingdom from East Java, extended its influence to the southern part of Sumatera Island.

Lampung, serving as the frontier of Sriwijaya, boasts significant archaeological records. Unlike Palembang and Jambi which are internationally recognized as the capital of Sriwijaya, Lampung has

not garnered equivalent attention in historical writings, despite its rich cultural diversity. This region has experienced influences from the Sundanese Kingdom, the Sultanate of Banten, and Dutch Colonial rule from the 19th to 20th centuries (Bukri et al., 1997).

Geoarchaeological studies conducted in 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2018 charted the dispersal of 14 ancient settlements in the Liwa highland. These sites yielded a wealth of shards and foreign ceramics, discovered both on the surface and through excavations. Some settlements are associated with Sriwijaya inscriptions from the 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Additionally, the sites feature inscriptions, megalithic stones, and Islamic tombs with unique gravestones (Rusyanti et al., 2021) (Rusyanti et al., 2021) offering intriguing subjects for study from various perspectives.

In Lampung, the southern frontier of Sriwijaya, ancient communities left behind religious artifacts that provide insights into their evolving religious practices. The focus of the current study is to determine when these early beliefs were practiced and how the inhabitant's expressed religiosity based on archaeological records. The objective is to trace the dynamics of religious belief changes in the Liwa highland over the past 1,000 years and to discuss the chronological process of this change, influenced by the region's position as a frontier of Sriwijaya's central power.

## **Literature Review**

Religion, often characterized as supernatural, extraordinary, and beyond human comprehension, serves as a form of speculation about elements that transcend science or common sense (Durkheim, 2011) (Durkheim, 2011). Various theories and processes pertain to the

development of religion or belief in specific regions. The early stages of religious development in Indonesia generally align with historical chronology (Yatim, 2003) (Yatim, 2003). This evolution is typically simplified into three stages: the animism and dynamism period, the Hindu-Buddhist period, and the Islamic-colonial period, which includes Confucianism (Respati, 2014) (Respati, 2014).

Beyond these general stages, certain cases necessitate a more in-depth analysis of religious dynamics based on contextual data, which is often scarce in literature. For instance, while the process of Islamization is generally perceived to have occurred peacefully (Azra, 2006; Kersten, 2017) (Azra, 2006; Kersten, 2017), some archaeological and philological data suggest alternative interpretations. The Talaga manuscript indicates that Islamization involved conflict (Tessier, 1989) (Tessier, 1989), and resistance from rulers in Talaga is evidenced by the inverted position of Lingga-Yoni, a Hindu artifact (Widyastuti, 2007) (Widyastuti, 2007). Azra (2006) posits that formulating a generalized theory and chronology for the process of religious change (or Islamization) in Indonesia is nearly impossible due to the country's geographical, social, cultural, economic, and political diversity. As a result, some literature on religious change and Islamization presents more nuanced and diverse discussions, as demonstrated in Hermansyah's exploration of interaction models and strategies in Islamization (Hermansyah, 2014) and Saragih's analysis of the polarization between purist and syncretistic camps (Saragih, 2019) (Saragih, 2019), inspired by Geertz (2014).

Theories of religious change are diversifying. Seminal works such as *The Sociology of Religion* by Max Weber (Weber, 2012) Weber,

2012) and *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* by Durkheim (2011) have provided comprehensive overviews of the history of religions, indirectly contributing to the development of theories of religious change. For example, Robin Horton's theory elucidates religious change in Africa and Nigeria in relation to the micro and macro cosmos. Similarly, Lewis Rambo's theory, widely cited by sociologists and theologians, outlines seven stages in the process of religious change: context (which can occur at the micro or macro level), crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, and consequences (Taylor, 2021) (Taylor, 2021).

Currently, no literature applies Rambo's theory to the analysis of archaeological data related to religious change. Therefore, this study aims to explore the potential of Rambo's approach as a framework for analyzing archaeological artifacts related to religious development in Liwa, West Lampung. Given Lampung's historical background as a contested territory influenced by Malay, Javanese, and Sundanese cultures, Rambo's seven-stage model provides a suitable framework for analyzing the unique dynamics of such territories.

## **Method**

This study aims to explore the evolution of religious change in Liwa, West Lampung by drawing on archaeological records, data collection and analysis conducted from 2011 to 2018. The aim is to construct a chronological narrative of the region's early religious history. The data, collated from previous studies, encompass idiofacts related to beliefs. These include relics of megalithic traditions, Hindu-Buddhist inscriptions, as well as Islamic gravestones and tombs. These data were subsequently

contextualized chronologically, integrating the political, social, economic and cultural facets of the region to create a comprehensive classification. This classification revealed a linear progression of religious change, punctuated by various points of discussion.

The study also examined the applicability of Rambo's seven stages of religious change - context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, and consequences (Taylor, 2021) to the religious transformations in Liwa. This examination identified key areas warranting further investigation, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of religious evolution in the region.

## **Result and Discussion**

The Liwa highland, a secluded area historically viewed as a hinterland, is considered the cradle of Lampung culture. Despite its relative obscurity, the highland is notably fertile, although its groundwater is deep due to thick tuff layers. The region is characterized by an altitude of 600—1000 meters above sea level, temperatures between 19—23°C, and frequent foggy and drizzly mornings. The western boundary of the highland adjoins the Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park (TNBBS), while the main highland is predominantly covered by vegetable plantations, including cabbage, eggplant, chayote, carrots, tile, and cassava, primarily cultivated by Javanese immigrants. These immigrants began arriving in the 1905s during the Dutch resettlement program (Elmhirst, 2018) (Elmhirst, 2018), while coffee and pepper plantations are mostly maintained by locals (Rusyanti et al., 2021) (Rusyanti et al., 2021). The Liwa highland is home to the *Pepadun* (inland dwellers) and *Peminggir/Sai Batin* (coastal dwellers) clans. As of 1999, these Lampungese groups constituted only 16% of the population, or 1.25

million people, with the remainder being immigrants from outside Lampung (Wiryanan et al., 1999) (Wiryanan et al., 1999).

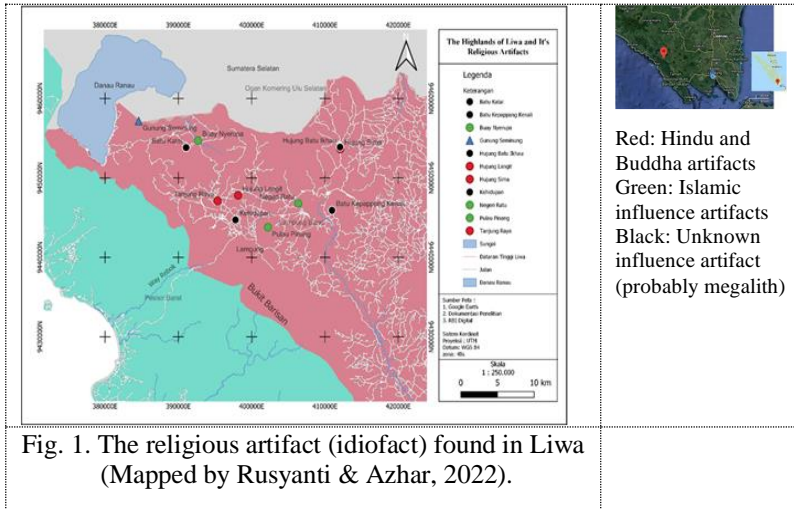
Historically, Lampung has been associated with the Liang Dynasty since the 5th century (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 1993). However, inscriptions suggest that Lampung has been influenced by other powers throughout history, including Sriwijaya and Malay in the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Utomo, 2007), Javanese from the 10th to 15th centuries (Satari, 1998; Tobing, 2004), and Sundanese in the 14th century (Djafar, 1995).

The historical roots of Liwa can be traced back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century, as evidenced by inscriptions such as Hujung Langit and Batin Katung (Utomo, 2007; Satari, 1998; Tobing, 2004; Djafar, 1995) (Utomo, 2007; Satari, 1998; Tobing, 2004; Djafar, 1995; Satari, 1998; Tobing, 2004; Djafar, 1995). While absolute dating of archaeological evidence in the Liwa highland has not been extensively conducted, thermoluminescence dating from shards found at Hujung Langit, conducted by Oxford Authentication, indicates a relatively recent age (100 years ago) (Rusyanti et al., 2021) (Rusyanti et al., 2021). Megalithic artifacts, often associated with Islamic gravestones, date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century or more recent times. The chronological context discussed in this paper is based on a *relative chronology*, spanning from the oldest inscriptions in Liwa (10<sup>th</sup> century) to data gathered in recent years, facilitating a more flexible analysis of religious change over time.

### **The Early Religious Patterns and Change**

Based on archaeological evidence (idifacts) and historical background, the emergence of religious belief in the highland of

Liwa can be classified into three patterns: early Hindu—Buddha influence (red), Islamic influence (green), and the unknown influence (black) (Fig. 1).



### *Hindu and Buddhist Era: At the Beginning*

Hominids have not been discovered in Lampung, but neolithic artifacts have been found in Tangkil (Yondri, 2014)(Yondri, 2014), necessitating further investigation. Discussions of archaic religions are excluded in this context due to the absence of hominid discoveries.

The ancient beliefs in the Liwa are based on information provided by the local people, who often reference Buddhist era when discussing the early religious presence in Liwa. Buddhist era is frequently associated with Hindu era, with locals viewing these terms as interchangeable. Interestingly, local literature, including a novel inspired by regional history (refer to inserted pages 495—500 in the novel for additional information), showed that Hindu-Animism was practiced in 12<sup>th</sup> century as the first religion of Tumi



Clan (Suku Tumi) from Sekala Bgha Kingdom (Sekla Brak) in Liwa before Islamic influence. The novel refers to Batu Kepampang in Kenali as the site for sacrificing the gorgeous and beautiful during this era (Ramdoni, 2011)(Ramdoni, 2011).

In contrast to the books and local's stories, the existence of Hinduism in archaeological data remains unrecognized. The presence of Sekala Bgha Kingdom is still unknown, as there are no Sumatran inscriptions as reference. The understanding of religious ideas in the highland of Liwa was mainly based on the inscriptions of Hujung Langit and Tanjung Raya in Sukau, which had significant influences from Buddhism.

The Dutch topographer discovered Hujung Langit (10<sup>th</sup> century) and Tanjung Raya I and II (10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century) inscriptions in 1912 and 1954, respectively. Furthermore, L.C.H Damais and colleagues started translating these inscriptions (Damais, 1995; Tobing, 2004) (Damais, 1995; Tobing, 2004). Tanjung Raya inscription (Table 1) comprises two stones, namely upright and flat stones, resembling naturally formed menhir and dolmen. The flat (*dolmen*) shows obvious scratches, while the upright (menhir) bears the inscription "Batu Pahat" written in ancient Malay language using Java Kuno (ancient Java letter).

Hujung Langit inscription describes *sima* ceremonies conducted to exempt land from taxation due to the function as a vihara. It mentions Punku Haji Yuwaraja Sri Haridewa as the king who ordered the inscription. The title of *Sri* worn by rulers may have Javanese origins, as it was customary for Javanese Kingdom to use such titles(Saptono, 2005) (Saptono, 2005). However, L.C.H Damais (1995) stated that the influence of Dharmawangsa Tguh

from Mataram (Java) might have been present in Liwa in 10<sup>th</sup> century.

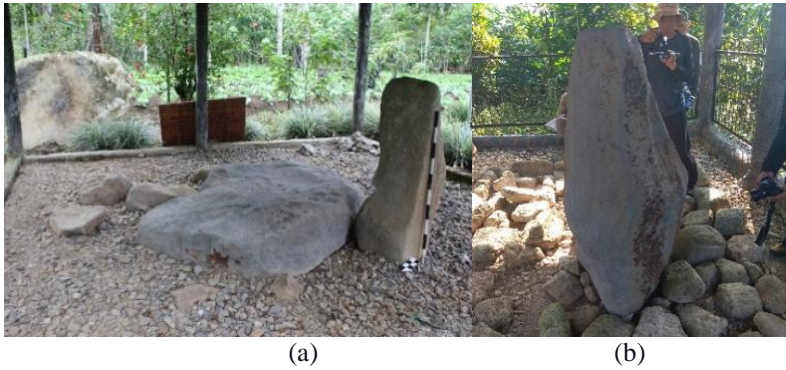


Figure 1. The Hindu and Buddhist influence as depicted in: (a) Tanjung Raya inscription, (b) Hujung langit inscription (Rusyanti, 2012; Rusyanti et al., 2014, 2018) (Rusyanti, 2012; Rusyanti et al., 2014, 2018).

From 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, religious beliefs in Liwa highlands remain subjects of debate and discussion. As Sriwijaya influence waned in the 11<sup>th</sup> century following Chola invasions and coastal decline, the influence of Javanese Majapahit became more prominent in the lowlands of Lampung. This is evidenced by the presence of Hindu iconographical *Vajrayana* (tantric) statues in Pugung Raharjdo and the toponyms of Bhukit Tulang Lemah (in Kemiling), thought as Tathagatapura in Nagarakretagama manuscript (Saptono, 2005; Satari, 1998).

During the reign of Dharmawangsa Tguh and the subsequent rise of Majapahit around the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the king of Kertanegara from Singhasari invaded Malay territories, including Lampung. These three periods of Javanese presence in Lampung history illustrate the westward expansion of Java, reaching as far as Liwa. Lampung may have served as the far western frontier of Java's influence. In the

Liwa highland, Javanese influence is evident through the use of terms such as *Bhumi Jawa* by the Lampungese people from Sukau, Liwa (Abrianto, Octaviadi, Nanang Saptono, 2012; Saptono, 2012). (Abrianto, Octaviadi, Nanang Saptono, 2012; Saptono, 2012).

Based on these influences, the evolution of religious beliefs in the Liwa highland is significant. Initially, from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, Buddhism was dominant, spreading from Sriwijaya to the frontier land in Lampung (Liwa). After the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the influence of Hinduism from Java began to emerge in Liwa, although archaeological evidence of this presence remains unclear. Despite the lack of new information, local perspectives suggest that Hinduism might have been adopted in Liwa before Islam. As the Sriwijaya Kingdom weakened after the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the religious landscape shifted again, with Hinduism gaining prominence up to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, Hinduism persisted in Lampung until the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as evidenced by the *Sumber Hadi* inscription from Melinting in central Lampung. This inscription mentions *Guru Tuha* as *Panca Rsi*, a prominent figure in Sunda Hinduism, detailed in the *Carita Parahyangan* manuscript (16<sup>th</sup> century) (Atja & Danasasmita, 1981; Djafar, 1995) (Atja & Danasasmita, 1981; Djafar, 1995).

In Java, religious transformation alternated between Hinduism and Buddhism. This pattern reflects a persistent phenomenon in Southeast Asia during the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, when Hinduism and Buddhism replaced earlier Vedic beliefs due to political and economic expansion and motivation. Hindu and Buddhist faiths gained prominence, establishing their kingships across the region (Izza, 2020) (Izza, 2020). One of the renowned dynasties exemplifying this phenomenon is the Shailendra Dynasty. George

Coedoes referred to Shailendra as “The King of the mountain,” attributing to it the birth of rulers of Sriwijaya and Java (Zakharov, 2009)(Zakharov, 2009), or “the conqueror of the mountains,” depicted by their temples as the sacred place of god and goddesses (Vlekke, 2018) (Vlekke, 2018). R.M. Ng Poerbatjaraka relates Sankhara and Sojomerto inscriptions (8<sup>th</sup> C) with the Carita Parahyangan (16<sup>th</sup> C), showing that the Syailendras initially adhered to Shivaism before converting to Buddhism under Rakai Panangaran, and reverting to Shivaism under Rakai Pikatan (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 1993; Zakharof, 2012)(Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 1993; Zakharof, 2012).

The highland of Liwa seems to reflect similar pattern, where it initially embraced Buddhism and then shifted to Hinduism. This conversion is due to the global political trends in Southeast Asia from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries and in the highland of Liwa from 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### ***Hinduism and Buddhism Meeting Megalith Tradition***

The Liwa highland, situated adjacent to the Bukit Barisan Selatan range or Taman Nasional Bukit Barisan Selatan (TNBBS), is near the renowned megalith site of Pasemah in Palembang. Basemah, located near Cave Harimau, is considered the cradle of the OKU (Ogan Komering Ulu) civilization, spanning from the Neolithic to the Paleometallic period (approximately 15000 years ago) (Fauzi & Simanjuntak, 2016) (Fauzi & Simanjuntak, 2016). Pasemah, also known as Basemah (3<sup>rd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> Centuries) (Prasetyo, 2015, 2016) (Prasetyo, 2015, 2016), is believed to be the origin of the megalithic tradition in Lampung (Bukri et al. 1997).

The connection between Basemah and the Highland of Liwa is currently under investigation. Megalith's study about the dispersal of this tradition has been ongoing for a considerable period, with varied and challenging dating methods. For instance, *carbon* sampling excavations in the highland of Liwa are scarce due to the predominance of tuff soil. Recent theories on the dispersal of megalith tradition in Indonesia are based on dating mostly ranging from the protohistoric era since 2000 before present (BP) to 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries (Simanjuntak, 2010) (Simanjuntak, 2010).

Pasemah dates back from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Prasetyo, 2016)(Prasetyo, 2016). Recent data related to megalith dating in Lampung can be traced from the inscriptions of Hujung Langit and Tanjung Raya, with basic forms resembling menhirs and dolmens from 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The timeframe corresponds with the periods observed in Basemah. This tentative conclusion is further supported by the contextualization of the sites, where other components of megalith tradition, such as flat and scratched stone, upright stone, and stone figurines, have also been discovered (Rusyanti, 2013; Rusyanti et al., 2012)(Rusyanti, 2013; Rusyanti et al., 2012).

The intertwining of megalith traditions with Hindu and Buddhist artifacts is significant. Steimer & Besse (Steimer-Herbert & Besse, 2016).(Steimer-Herbert & Besse, 2016). However, this assertion has not been thoroughly confirmed. According to van der Hoop, the megalithic tradition in Besemah did not seem to adopt this assumption, as no Hindu or Buddhist iconographical attributes were found (Prasetyo, 2015) (Prasetyo, 2015). However, in Liwa, the assumption from Steimer & Besse (2016) can still be considered. The

people of Liwa are believed to be aware of Buddhism, Hinduism, as well as the megalithic tradition. These three influences are intertwined in the basic form of the inscriptions of Hujung Langit and Tanjung Raya, showing the upright stone (menhir) and dolmen, as well as figurines of men and women near the inscriptions (Figure 2).



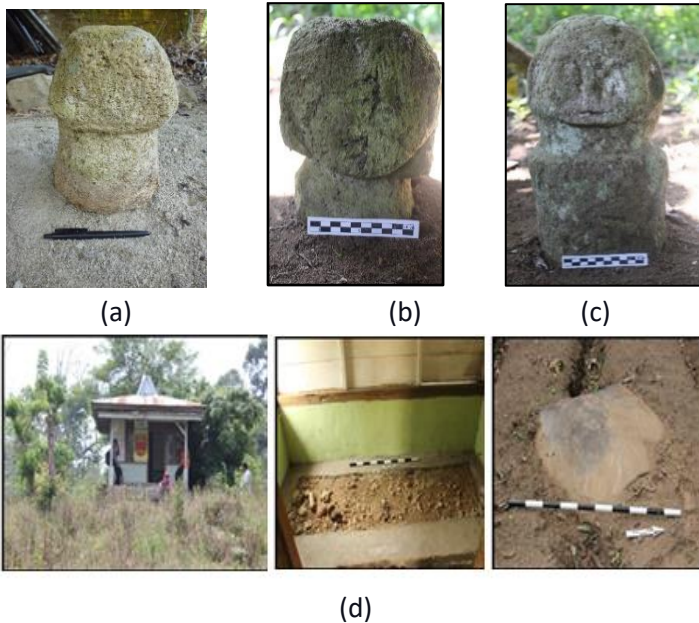
Figure 2 The figurines found near Hindu-Buddha inscription from 16<sup>th</sup> century (Rusyanti et al. 2013; 2012)

### ***Megalith Meets Islam***

The presence of Islam in the Liwa highland was strongly influenced by the northern part of Lampung and surroundings such as Palembang and Bengkulu. Subsequently, the influence of Sultanate of Banten in 16<sup>th</sup> century further facilitated the spread of Islam and the trade of coffee and pepper plantations (Bukri et al., 1997). Archaeological evidence in the form of the local stone tombs at Keramat Buay Nyerupa, Keramat Batin Sakuan, and Keramat Negeri Ratu Sukarami shows the carvings of the gravestone and scratched stones in Islamic scripture.

The purpose of the unique tombstones remains unknown but may be related to remembering, commemorating, and paying respect to loved ones. Megalith traditions, rooted in beliefs of honoring ancestors through monumental stone or wood structures (Prasetyo, 2015), show a similar approach to commemorating loved ones

through material culture (tombstone). The exact timing of these activities in the highland of Liwa remains uncertain. However, considering the onset of Islamic beliefs in Liwa and contextualizing archaeological results in Islamic settings, these practices have been ongoing since the dawn of Javanese influence and became more pronounced after the occupation of Lampung by Bantenese around 16<sup>th</sup> century or thereafter (Figure 3).



*Figure 3.* Islamic gravestone depicted as women/men and the sacred tomb near the scratched stone (16th-19th and recent). In the picture above, the gravestone of Keramat Batin Sakuan (Pulau Pinang) (a), *head form* female and male in Buay Nyerupa Islamic gravestone (b, c), and Keramat Negeri Ratu, Sukarami (d). (Rusyanti et al., 2014, 2018) (Rusyanti et al., 2014, 2018)

### ***Megalith and the Local Narration***

One intriguing aspect currently under examination is the presence of a megalithic tradition associated with various forms of stones, which may be linked to past sacrificial practices. Monolithic stones such as

Batu Ikhau in Kehidupan Sites, Batu Katai in Tapak Siring, Batu Kepampang in Kenali, and Batu Irau (Ikhau) in Hujung are composed of andesite, porous tuff, and sandstone. These stones are naturally occurring and unshaped, with some exhibiting unique characteristics such as curves, benches, and imprinted traces on their surfaces. For instance, the branch-like form of Batu Kepampang is often associated with the cutting edge for sacrificial practices, while the imprints on Batu Katai resemble a buffalo print, and others are large, bulging stones with no discernible marks.

The precise beliefs associated with these stones remain elusive. While Batu Kepampang is often linked with Hindu-animism as mentioned in the novel, the significance of these stones, whether related to the practice of yajna (religious offerings) in Hindu beliefs (Tantric) or to human sacrifice observed among the Tenggerese people in Mount Tengger, remains unresolved. Efforts to elucidate these beliefs through local accounts and folklore have yielded inconclusive results, making it challenging to situate this exceptional case within the broader context of religious change. Furthermore, the correlation of these beliefs with tantrism is unclear. Currently, local communities regard these stones as sacred, with some being preserved within border-lined fences while others have been left unattended and forgotten over time (Rusyanti et al., 2014) (Figure 3 4).



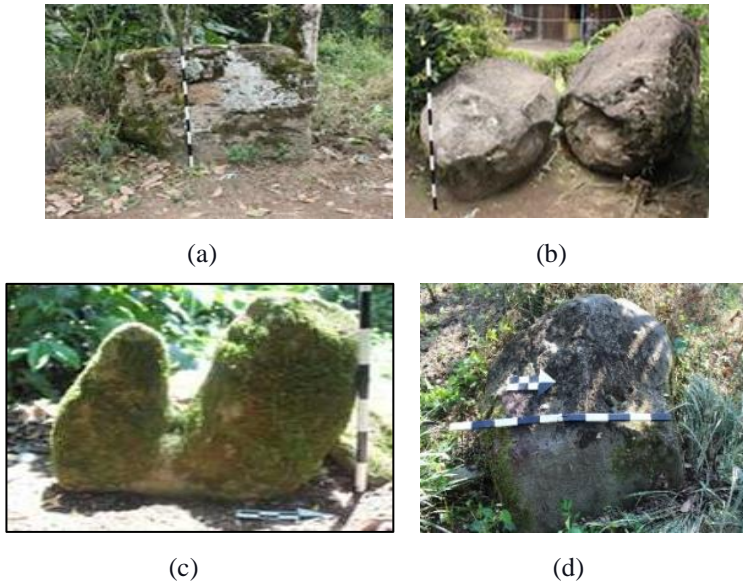


Figure 4. Big monoliths with unknown dating. (a) Batu Ikhau Kehidupan, (b) Batu Ikhau Hujung, (c) Batu Kepampang Kenali and (d) Batu Katai Tapak Siring. (Laili, 2011; Rusyanti et al., 2014, 2018)(Laili, 2011; Rusyanti et al., 2014, 2018)

### The Rambo's Seven Stages of Religious Change in Liwa

According to Taylor (2021), understanding Rambo's seven stages of conversion—*context* (micro or macro), *crisis*, *quest*, *encounter*, *interaction*, *commitment*, and *consequences*—requires a comprehensive approach. The *context*, which can manifest in micro and macro forms, encompasses influences from personal relationships to broader societal factors. The *crisis* stage represents a pivotal moment that prompts a fundamental reorientation to life, potentially triggered by mystical or near-death experiences, or illness. The *quest* stage involves the presence of agents who were engaged prior to the conversion. The *encounter* stage signifies engagement with advocates who employ strategies to intensify conversion by communicating cognitive systems of meaning, affective techniques for living, leadership, and power. *Interaction*

fosters emotional bonds through ritual, rhetoric, and assigned roles. *Commitment* denotes a state of dedication post-conversion. *Consequences* refer to the acceptance or surrender to the effects of conversion, which may manifest socioculturally, psychologically, or theologically.

In the context of Liwa, discussions on religious conversion primarily occur at the regional level. Initially, inhabitants of the Liwa highlands adhered to animism and dynamism. The spread of Hinduism and Buddhism in Southeast Asia, particularly the shift in power on the Sumatran mainland involving Sriwijaya, indirectly influenced Liwa, as evidenced by Buddhist artifacts. However, this change appears to be more politically driven than motivated by any *crisis* or *quest*. While the rivalry between Sriwijaya and Majapahit constituted a *crisis*, it had minimal direct impact on religious conversion in Liwa. Similarly, the presence of agents who intensify the conversion process, known as the *quest*, is scarcely documented at the regional level. Monks, priests, or religious leaders may have played a role in this capacity, but their influence is confined to smaller or non-regional contexts, lacking support from idiofactual data.

In the subsequent *encounter* stage, relevant data were obtained from inscriptions, serving as an indirect medium for conveying religious cognition through power. The mention of Sima and Vihara in the Hujung Langit inscriptions serves as an *encounter*, demonstrating advocacy from the king and indirectly introducing Buddhism. *Interaction*, *commitment* and *consequences* become apparent when encountering Islam. The construction of Islamic gravestones depicting males and females, a deviation from traditional Islamic

beliefs, illustrates this interaction. Early conversions were primarily influenced by allegiance to the Buddhist kingdom of Sriwijaya, intertwining commitment with the retention of megalithic traditions, evident in their idiofact. Similar patterns were observed during the conversion to Islam. These contextual factors can be viewed as sociocultural and psychological consequences, reflecting Indonesian cultural and religious pluralism.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Liwa highland served as a frontier for both Sriwijaya and Java, with influences from Sunda permeating from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Situated between these significant cultural entities, Liwa's secluded hinterland presented a complex narrative of religious transformation in interpenetrated and intertwined manners. The religious evolution in Liwa can be interpreted as a dialogue between religion and culture within a regional context. This dialogue encapsulates the interplay between pre-existing and emerging beliefs, often intertwining or corresponding with each other. The persistent presence of megalithic beliefs, as evidenced in Liwa's idiofact, underscores this continuity.

This study demonstrates that the seven stages of Rambo's model of religious change in Liwa's macro context have been condensed to five. The context of this conversion operates at a macro level (regional), facilitated by inscriptions serving as a ritual and cognitive medium during the encounter phase. Moreover, interactions and commitment, manifested through loyalty to ancestral honor, are intertwined with Islamic gravestones. The consequences of the intertwining between megalithic and Islamic influences resulted in a "combined idiofact," showcasing the unique process of religious

### **Heritage of Nusantara:**

change in Liwa. Notably, there were no crises or quests due to the absence of agitation, conflict, rejection, or improper actions towards historical and archaeological records (idiofact). This absence further highlights the peaceful coexistence and evolution of religious practices in Liwa.

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