

## The Spirit of *Parakang* in The Bugis Myth of Indonesia: an Islamic Educational Perspective

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### Abstract

This research explores the concept of *parakang* in the Bugis myth of Indonesia, addressing three main questions: How does the phenomenon of *parakang* emerge as part of the mystical beliefs in the Bugis community? What impact does *parakang* have on the Bugis community? What role does Islamic education play in mitigating the effects of *parakang*-related violence? These questions are the focus of the discussion. The research aims to scientifically examine the Bugis people's myth surrounding the existence of *parakang*, a creature believed to be highly disruptive to the community. To analyze its emergence and societal impact, the research applies Durkheim's and Popper's perspectives on metaphysical realism. Additionally, James A. Banks' Theory of Multicultural Education is utilized to explore how cultural diversity in education can address these challenges. This research employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Primary data were gathered through observations and interviews, while secondary data were sourced from texts, e-books, journals, video documentaries, *parakang*-related films, and the internet. The findings are as follows: Several factors contribute to the emergence of *parakang*, including *pesugihan* (seeking wealth through mystical means), supernatural orders, heredity, the transmission of the *sakratul maut* (the agony of death), and frequent visits to shamans. *Parakang* victims often experience severe illness and, in some cases, death. Islamic education provides a critical perspective, highlighting that the concept of *parakang* contradicts Islamic teachings. As a result, it is essential to equip the younger Muslim generation with a robust Islamic education to prevent them from being influenced by *parakang*-related beliefs.

**Keywords:** *Parakang*; Myth; Islamic Education



### الملخص

يتناول هذا البحث الباراكاف في أساطير شعب البوجيس بإندونيسيا. ويوضح البحث أن ظاهرة الباراكاف ظهرت كجزء من المعتقدات الصوفية لمجتمع البوجيس، وتأثير الباراكاف على مجتمع البوجيس، ودور التربية الإسلامية في التقليل من تأثير عنف الباراكاف. سيتم مناقشة هذه المشكلة بشكل علمي لكشف أسطورة مجتمع البوجيس حول وجود الباراكاف، والذي يشكل وجوده إزعاجًا كبيرًا للمجتمع. لتحليل ظهور الباراكاف وتأثيره الاجتماعي، يستخدم هذا البحث نظرية الواقعية الميتافيزيقية لدوركهيم وبوبر. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تُستخدم نظرية التعليم متعدد الثقافات لجيمس أ. بانكس لاستكشاف التنوع الثقافي في التعليم كوسيلة للتغلب على هذه التحديات. يستخدم هذا البحث النوعي مع النهج الظاهري. تم الحصول على البيانات الأولية من خلال الملاحظة والمقابلات تم الحصول على البيانات الثانوية من نصوص الكتب الإلكترونية والمجلات وأفلام الفيديو الوثائقية وأفلام باراكاف والإنترنت. وكانت النتائج التي تم التوصل إليها أن هناك عدة أسباب لظهور الباراكاف، بما في ذلك: بيسوجيهان، والأوامر السحرية، والعوامل الوراثية، وانتقال مقدس الموت، والزيارات المتكررة للشامان يمكن أن يتسبب ضحايا باراكاف في مرض خطير وحتى الموت. عند مراجعة التعليم الإسلامي، فإن الباراكاف يتعارض مع التعاليم الإسلامية. ولذلك، يجب تزويد جيل الشباب من المسلمين بتربية إسلامية جيدة حتى لا يصبحوا فريسة للباراكاف.

الكلمات المفتاحية: باراكاف، الأسطورة، التربية الإسلامي

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas tentang *parakang* dalam mitos masyarakat Bugis, Indonesia. Penelitian menjelaskan fenomena *parakang* muncul sebagai bagian dari kepercayaan mistik masyarakat Bugis, dampak *parakang* terhadap masyarakat Bugis dan peran pendidikan Islam dalam meminimalisasi dampak keganasan *parakang*. Permasalahan tersebut akan dibahas secara ilmiah untuk mengungkap mitos masyarakat Bugis terkait eksistensi *parakang* yang keberadaannya cukup meresahkan masyarakat. Untuk menganalisis kemunculan dan dampak sosial *parakang*, penelitian ini menggunakan teori Durkheim dan Popper tentang realisme metafisik. Selain itu, teori pendidikan

multikultural James A. Banks digunakan untuk mengeksplorasi keragaman budaya dalam pendidikan sebagai cara untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan jenis penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologis. Data primer diperoleh melalui observasi dan wawancara. Data sekunder diperoleh dari teks *e-book*, jurnal, video dokumenter, film *parakang*, dan internet. Hasil yang ditemukan adalah adanya beberapa penyebab munculnya *parakang*, di antaranya: pesugihan, perintah kesaktian, faktor keturunan, penularan sakratul kematian, dan seringnya kunjungan ke dukun. Korban *parakang* dapat menyebabkan penyakit parah bahkan kematian. Dalam tinjauan pendidikan Islam, *parakang* bertentangan dengan ajaran Islam. Oleh karena itu, generasi muda Islam harus dibekali dengan pendidikan Islam yang baik agar tidak menjadi mangsa *parakang*.

**Kata Kunci:** *Parakang*; Mitos; Pendidikan Islam

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## A. Introduction

*Parakang* refers to a terrifying creature believed to possess supernatural powers capable of harming or killing others. The term originates from the Bugis language and, while it may be considered a myth, it has been firmly believed to exist by this ethnic group for centuries. A person who becomes a *parakang* is thought to have formed an alliance with Satan. In some cases, the individual may not even realize that they have become a *parakang*.

Among the Malay ethnic group in Indonesia, *parakang* is also known as *kuyang*. This terrifying creature is also recognized in Malaysia. In Thailand, a similar spirit exists, known as *kra-seu*. In Thai folklore, this creature is depicted as the floating head of a young woman, attached to internal organs such as the heart, stomach, and intestines.

The Thai film *Kra-seu*, or *Inhuman Kiss*, explores the story of a girl who unknowingly becomes a *parakang* or *kra-seu*, causing fear and disruption in her community. In the film, this condition is transmitted through bloodlines or saliva. The protagonist's transformation begins when she is kissed by her boyfriend, who subsequently also turns into a *kra-seu* due to saliva transmission.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Documentary Film, *Krasue: Inhuman Kiss*, 13 Juni 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibpQ1objm0>. Director Sitisiri Mongkolsiri. Produced by Meo Boontamcharoen.

The portrayal of *parakang* in the film *Kra-seu* bears a striking resemblance to the myth of the Bugis community. According to Bugis mythology, there are two types of *parakang*. The first is a woman who, on certain nights, detaches her head and flies away. The second type remains on land, lurking around sewer areas and causing a strong, unpleasant odor. The first type of *parakang* closely resembles the creature depicted in the film *Inhuman Kiss*. This type is known as *poppo* in Bugis mythology, named for the sound it makes while flying—*po, po, po*, and so on.

The second type of *parakang* is known as the land *parakang* or sewer *parakang*, as it frequents the sewers of its target victim's house or its own home. The primary targets of this *parakang* are unborn or newborn babies, toddlers, and adults. In some cases, a person afflicted with *parakang* may be unaware of their condition, but those around them might recognize it through various unsettling experiences. Unlike the first type, this *parakang* does not detach its head. Instead, its body remains at home while its soul, having merged with Satan, leaves the house in search of victims.

The theory employed in this paper is metaphysical realism, with Karl Raimund Popper, a rationalist philosopher, as its central figure. Popper asserted that objective truth exists at an esoteric level and is often conveyed through untestable statements.<sup>2</sup> Metaphysical realism, as a philosophical stance, holds that reality exists independently of human perception, beliefs, or constructs. When applied to mystical phenomena such as *parakang*, which is deeply rooted in the traditions of South Sulawesi, this perspective prompts questions about the independent existence of such entities, beyond cultural narratives or individual experiences. By using metaphysical realism, this paper explores whether supernatural entities—such as angels, devils, jinn, or *parakang*—can be understood as objective realities, distinct from subjective beliefs or interpretations.

The research also incorporates Naquib al-Attas' theory of Islamic education, which emphasizes correcting misconceptions in belief systems and promoting monotheistic principles to avoid *shirk* (associating partners with Allah). Al-Attas considers Islamic education a means to cultivate ethical behavior, reinforce *tawhid* (the oneness of God), and eliminate practices contrary to Islamic teachings, such as black magic, which is often linked to *parakang*.<sup>3</sup>

Through *tawhid*-centered education, sharia-based principles, and moral instruction, Islamic pedagogy provides a comprehensive framework for counteracting the negative influences of *parakang* within the Bugis community.

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<sup>2</sup> Claudia Riberio, Karl Popper's Conception of Metaphysics and Its Problem, *Principia: An International Journal of Epistemology*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2014, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad Haris Hidayatulloh, et.al. Muhammad Naquib Al Attas's Concept of Islamic Education in Developing Islamic Business Ethics, *International Journal of Economics and Management Research*, Vol. 1 No.3 Desember2022, p. 159

These two theories together address the main issues discussed in this article, offering a scientific contribution to the understanding of spiritual phenomena and helping the public comprehend the existence and impact of *parakang* in the Bugis community of South Sulawesi.

These two theories provide a framework for addressing the main issues discussed in this article, contributing to the scientific understanding of spiritual phenomena and helping the public better comprehend the existence of *parakang* in the Bugis community of South Sulawesi.

## ***B. Literature Review***

### ***1. Parakang***

Although there have been *parakang*-themed films and other related media, there is a noticeable lack of scientific literature specifically addressing *parakang* in Bugis society, whether in academic journals or textbooks. Existing writings, such as Trance, only briefly mention *parakang*.

For instance, Asmi *et al.* discussed infant mortality in Bone, concluding that many people strongly believe that spirits called *parakang* are responsible for these deaths.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, Amriani's thesis entitled *Mistisisme Parakang: Studi terhadap Pandangan Masyarakat Desa Rappoala Kecamatan Tompobulu Kabupaten Gowa*, explores community perspectives on *parakang*. Her findings reveal that belief in *parakang* originates from ancestral narratives and is reinforced by mystical events within the community.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, Uniawati's article, *Pembunuh Parakang: Kajian Sosiologi Sastra*, examines *parakang* as a cultural artifact, highlighting its enduring significance in the modern era and demonstrating how traditional myths remain relevant in contemporary society.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A. Syamsinar Asmi *et.al.* Sociocultural Transformation in Efforts to Reduce Mortality of Infants in Bone Regency, Indonesia, *Systematic Reviews in Pharmacy*, Vol 11, Issue 10, Oct-Nov 2020, p. 764.

<sup>5</sup> Ririn Amriani, *Mistisisme Parakang: Studi terhadap Pandangan Masyarakat Desa Rappoala Kecamatan Tompobulu Kabupaten Gowa*. *Skripsi Jurusan Sosiologi Agama Fakultas Ushuluddin Filsafat UIN Alauddin Makassar*, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Uniawati, *Warna Lokal dan Representasi Budaya Bugis-Makassar dalam Cerpen "Pembunuh Parakang"*: Kajian Sosiologi Sastra. *Jurnal Kandai*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2016, pp. 102-115.

## 2. Islamic Education

Literature reviews explicitly linking Islamic education to mystical aspects are relatively rare. However, some relevant works provide context for understanding this theme, such as the following:

An article titled *Pendidikan Islam Multi, Inter, dan Transdisiplin: Tinjauan Sejarah* by Ali Akbar and Mahyuddin Bani explores how integrating various academic perspectives—such as sociology, psychology, and local culture—into Islamic education can enhance the understanding of mystical beliefs within a cultural framework.<sup>7</sup>

Fatah, Suparman, and Subando, in their article "Prophetic Intelligence Discourse in Islamic Religious Education," emphasize prophetic intelligence as a key aspect of Islamic education. They argue that it bridges spiritual, moral, and ethical teachings, helping to address the underlying spiritual roots of mystical practices.<sup>8</sup>

Another research by Ahdar and Musyarif, titled "*Challenges of Islamic Education in Indonesia in the Era of Globalization*," discusses critical issues in Islamic education amid modernization and globalization. The research explores how religious traditions can adapt to global influences while maintaining their local essence. In the context of mystical practices, this includes examining how local traditions, such as *parakang*, can be incorporated into or transformed within educational curricula.<sup>9</sup>

None of the studies mentioned above specifically address the myth of *parakang* within the Bugis community in relation to Islamic education. This gap underscores the need for further research that explores the intersection of local mystical beliefs and Islamic principles.

### C. Research Method

This type of research is qualitative, focusing on areas within the humanities, social sciences, and philosophy through ethnographic, phenomenological, grounded, feminist, historical,<sup>10</sup> and Islamic science approaches. This research utilizes both phenomenological and *irfani* approaches. The *irfani* approach is used to interpret social

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<sup>7</sup> Ali Akbar dan Mahyuddin Bani, *Pendidikan Islam Multi, Inter, Dan Transdisiplin (Tinjauan Sejarah)*: Tarbiyah Islamiyah: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Agama Islam, Vol. 1, No. 12, 2022, p. 15-28

<sup>8</sup> Fatah, Suparman, Joko Subando, "Prophetic Intelligence Discourse in Islamic Religious Education", *Journal of Proceedings Series No. 1 (2023). The 1st International Conference of Islamic Education*, Institut Islam Mamba'ul 'Ulum Surakarta, Kota Surakarta, Indonesia June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023, pp. 142-154.

<sup>9</sup> Ahdar, Musyarif, *Tantangan Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia Pada Era Globalisasi*, *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* Vol. 17 | No.1, 2019, pp. 13-27.

<sup>10</sup> M. Puvnesvary, *Qualitative Research: Data Collection and Data Analysis Teqhnique*, (Sintok: University Utara Malaysia Press, 2011), p. 1.

phenomena that are mystical or spiritual.<sup>11</sup> Muhsil Labib defines *irfani* as a field of knowledge related to the spirit, heart, and soul.<sup>12</sup> Primary data were collected through observations in Bugis areas, which have mythical stories about *parakang*. Secondary data were obtained from textbooks and e-books, national and international journals, conference proceedings, documentary films, films about *parakang*, and the internet.

Interviews were conducted with academics, spiritual practitioners who typically treat *parakang* disorders, and supernatural spiritual teachers. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive analysis. Hossein Nassaji defines descriptive analysis as the process of describing phenomena and their characteristics through a deep understanding of individuals or society in interaction with their environment.<sup>13</sup>

#### **D. Findings and Discussion**

##### **1. The Way *Parakang* Appear**

There are three main causes for the emergence of *parakang*, including *pesugihan* (a form of spiritual wealth-seeking), heredity, the transmission of the *sacratul* death, and frequent visits to shamans. The theory of transmission via saliva seems to be inaccurate, as not every family member is affected, despite sometimes consuming drinks from containers that may have been in contact with saliva. When I was a teenager, my mother often advised me to be careful not to drink leftover water at the house of a friend whose grandmother was suspected of being a *parakang*.

###### **a. *Pesugihan* and *Pelaris***

*Pesugihan*, a popular term in Indonesian society, refers to someone who aspires to become rich instantly without hard work or a job by collaborating with shamans and devils. In contrast, *penglaris* involves working with shamans and demons to boost sales. *Pesugihan* places can be found in almost every region of Bugis land. The most famous and prominent place is Mount Kawi, Java. However, every area in Indonesia has *pesugihan*. According to Abdul Sani, *pesugihan* in Banjarmasin is identified as the left way to get rich by using genies, spirits (*tuyul*), stealth swine (*babi ngepet*), and kuyang oil.<sup>14</sup>

*Pesugihan* in Bugis society is known as *mattiro deceng* (opening the door to sustenance). In South Sulawesi, there are several places associated with this term, including Soppeng. Locals, however, refer to it as *panther*, not *mattiro deceng* or

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<sup>11</sup> Amin Abdullah et.al., *Multidisiplin, Interdisiplin, dan Transdisiplin: Metode Studi Agama di Era Kontemporer*, (Yogyakarta: Litera Cahaya Bangsa, 2020), p. 25

<sup>12</sup> Muhsin Labib, *Mengurai Tasawuf Irfan dan Kebatinan*, (Jakarta: Lentera, 2004), p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> Hossein Nassaji, *Qualitative and Descriptive Research: Data Type versus Data Analysis. Language Teachin Research*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2015, p. 129.

<sup>14</sup> Abdul, Sani *Pasugihan Orang Banjar: Studi Identifikasi Prilaku dan Amaliah Pasugihan Orang Banjar Di Kalsel*, *Studia Insania*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2014, p. 89

*pesugihan*. The term "Panther" is derived from the name of a car that was commonly used for public transportation in the 1990s and early 2000s, known for its speed. The *Panther* philosophy suggests that individuals within the *Panther* group will quickly amass wealth, much like the swift movement of the Panther car. The phrase associated with this belief is: "*Get rich quick, go fast as a Panther.*"<sup>15</sup> People involved in *pesugihan* must follow the rituals required by the shaman in exchange for the wealth granted by a satanic or supernatural being.

One of the most demanding rituals involves sacrificing a young child, often one's own or the children of relatives or neighbors. Additionally, practitioners of *pesugihan* typically sacrifice cows annually, especially during Eid, when many go home to offer their sacrifices. A more extreme form of *pesugihan* is called *babi ngepet* (stealth swine or pig ngepet), where the practitioner transforms into a pig to visit a wealthy person who is already asleep. Another type of *pesugihan* involves the use of a *tuyul*, a small human-like creature or dwarf. After completing its task, the *tuyul* vomits into its master's wife to be breastfed, as though it were an infant.

People who perform *pesugihan* or *penglaris* involving shamans, devils, and sacrifices will automatically become *parakang*. When he becomes a *parakang*, his main target is small children who are also used as sacrifices to the devil.

#### b. Heredity Factors

Heredity is one of the causes of *parakang* infection. A *parakang* will struggle to die unless one of their descendants inherits their knowledge. It may be that none of their descendants want to accept this burden, but the children cannot bear to see their parents suffer the torment of death. If no one accepts the knowledge, the *parakang* will experience death for weeks, even months. As a dutiful child, the son is often forced to receive the *parakang* knowledge from his parents, who are suffering from the threat of death. Syahrir Karim, an academic, said:

*"What I know is that a parakang cannot die if there is no successor. When dying, people with parakang knowledge will ask, 'Nuallemi?' If no one answers, 'Yes, kuallemi,' then they won't die. That's why usually, someone will accept the parakang knowledge—it's their child or someone close to them, because they feel pity for their grandmother or parents who are dying and suffering. Adi was forced to say, 'Iye Kuallemi.'"*<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Dimas Ryandi, Investigasi Praktek Pesugihan Tanah Karaeng, Bikin Merinding, Jawapos.com 24 Juli 2017. <https://www.jawapos.com/features/01167078/investigasi-praktik-pesugihan-di-tanah-karaeng-bikin-merinding>. (Accesed 6 May, 2024).

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Syahrir Karim on 11 May, 2024



### c. Transmission of the Sacred Death

The transmission of *sacratul* death refers to the transfer of *parakang* knowledge to non-descendants, not to their direct heirs. This incident often occurs in hospitals when patients are nearing death. The *parakang* experiencing this death ritual endures great agony and would not die unless someone accepts the transmission of the knowledge.

Victims of *parakang* transmission in hospitals are often nurses on duty. The *parakang*, in the throes of death, will repeatedly say the Bugis term *lemba* (move). If the nurse responds by repeating the same word, *lemba*, then the *parakang* knowledge will be transferred to the nurse. However, *parakang* knowledge cannot be transferred to someone with strong faith, who is diligent in prayer, and regularly performs *dhikr* (remembrance of God). People who become victims of this type of transmission are typically not descendants of the *parakang*.

### d. Often Visiting a Black Shaman

Shamans in the Bugis language are known as *Sanro*. The Bugis community recognizes two categories of shamans: white and black. A white shaman is someone who has the spiritual ability to heal others through the recitation of the holy Qur'an or with the assistance of Muslim genies. On the other hand, a black shaman is someone who possesses spiritual abilities or magic that harm others through specific rituals, relying on the power of Satan, pagan genies, or wandering spirits - often those who have died in a state of anguish.

If someone experiences heartache and wishes to harm others through supernatural powers, they typically visit a black shaman. For a shaman to perform a ritual, they usually require a sacrifice, such as a black chicken or goat, along with payment for their services. If the shaman's goal is to cause someone to die, they may request a cow to be sacrificed to the pagan genie or spirit that will carry out the act. One cow can kill a target within seven days, while two cows can kill a target within three days. According to Siska Eliana, many people believe that shamans possessing black spiritual knowledge can be a serious threat to others, potentially causing harm, disability, or even death.<sup>17</sup>

Individuals who frequently seek the services of black shamans with the intent to harm or kill others may gradually transform into *parakangs*, often without realizing it. Once someone becomes a *parakang*, they no longer require the assistance of a black shaman to carry out harm. A person who first becomes a *parakang*, also known as a "new *parakang*," typically exhibits vicious behavior and creates disturbances in the local community, especially among families with young children.

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<sup>17</sup> Siska Eliana, Analisis Praktek Dukun Santet: Dugaan Pelanggaran HAM Menurut Prespektif Hukum Positif dan Hukum Islam, *Jurnal Ilmu Hukum Prima*, Vol. 6 No. 2, 2023, p. 221.

#### e. Demanding Magical Knowledge

For some Bugis people, pursuing magical knowledge is a hobby. This knowledge is often sought to help face life's hardships or to prepare for overseas travel. One of the supernatural powers people seek is immunity to sharp weapons, ensuring they are not harmed when stabbed. Many young Bugis are learning magic. However, among those who practice, some may become *parakangs*, especially if they break the rules or fail to overcome the challenges they encounter during their learning process.

The documentary is titled "*Hitam Putih Parakang: Mistisisme dan Tradisi di Kampung Longka Parigi*" (*Black-White Parakang: Mystique and Tradition in Longka Parigi Village*). H. Mannajai, one of the community leaders in the village, explained that *parakang* has a negative side. For instance, their eyes turn red, and they avoid making eye contact with others when speaking. When their hair flows forward, it typically indicates they are using their knowledge.

People who become *parakang* are often influenced by the negative aspects of the supernatural practices they study, such as immunity, weaving, and shamanism. This suggests that the magical knowledge they acquire does not necessarily transform them into a *parakang*. In Haji Mannajai's village, there is a large stone in the middle of the rice fields, known as the "*parakang stone*." Those seeking knowledge perform a ritual by meditating on this stone, which is covered with seven layers of white cloth. One indicator that the knowledge is complete is if the person meditating can see through the stone they are sitting on.

Another ritual involves preparing a chicken, not by slaughtering it with a knife, but by tearing it into pieces with his hands and then discarding the pieces. Immediately after, the chicken pieces disappear.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Andi Mudatsir shared the following account: A great shaman, known for his *parakang* knowledge, was recognized in his village in Bulukumba Regency. He had the ability to detect the whereabouts of a missing person and even summon them home. On one occasion, someone visited his house, asking for help to bring their lost child back. The shaman performed a ritual, tearing the chicken into pieces with his hands and tossing them into his yard, where the pieces vanished. The shaman then fed his pet genie, who had been called upon for the task. Two days later, the child returned home.<sup>19</sup>

Based on the description above, it can be understood that the rituals performed by those with *parakang* knowledge—ranging from seeking knowledge to implementing their understanding—are contrary to Islamic teachings. They meditate on stones, and the act of torturing animals does not align with the teachings of the Qur'an. Allah

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<sup>18</sup> Documentary Film, *Hitam putih Parakang: Mistisisme dan Tradisi di Kampung Longka Parigi*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGV-jdiH-Lo>. Director Ichwal Ahmady. Produced by APZ Family Production.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Andi Mudatsir on 23 May, 2024

commands humanity to always remember and seek help only from Him, not from other supernatural beings. Additionally, in the case of animal abuse, animals are not slaughtered in the name of Allah but are instead offered to non-believing jinn for specific purposes.

## 2. The Impact of Parakang Violence

### a. Characteristics of *Parakang* and *Parakang* Victims

It can be challenging to discern whether someone is a *parakang*, as they often interact with society in their daily lives. Even the *parakang* themselves may not always be aware of their status. *Parakangs* can be identified by those knowledgeable in Sufism or *Ladunni*. However, such individuals typically do not wish to expose others' faults, as they maintain a good relationship with both Allah and fellow human beings.

So, how can the public identify a *parakang*? *Parakangs* often commit acts of terror during their activities, which typically affect one or more victims, often small children. If the child does not recover through medical treatment, the parents may turn to alternative therapies. During the treatment process, those possessed may sometimes point to someone as the cause. In some cases, the perpetrators reveal that the mastermind behind the act is a *parakang* living near their home. Events like these can be prevented by separating *irfani* from the Islamic studies method.

Although *parakang* can be identified through the *irfani* or Islamic mysticism approach, it can also be determined using a phenomenological approach. Common characteristics observed in *parakang*, particularly those suspected by the public, include red eyes, a tendency to avoid direct eye contact, and an overly clean appearance. Rekiyanti shared that her family had experienced victimization and suspected a neighbor, who is wealthy and operates a workshop. She noted that the neighbor's eyes are red, and she avoids eye contact when speaking. Additionally, the neighbor constantly sweeps the yard, even though it is already spotless, and continues watering the yard even when it is raining.<sup>20</sup>

Saiful said his aunt, who the local community claimed was a *parakang*, looked after him. However, he doubted people's assumptions because there were no spiritual or physical characteristics to support these claims.<sup>21</sup> Based on the description above, *parakang* can be identified by those who are familiar with Sufism, in addition to the specific physical characteristics typically found in individuals who possess *parakang* knowledge.

### b. Impact of *Parakang* Victims

The victims of *parakang* violence face a multitude of challenges. In 2017, a film, "*Parakang dan Warisan Berdarah (Parakang and the Bloody Legacy)*," was

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Reskiyanti on 10 April, 2024

<sup>21</sup> Interview with M. Saiful on 11 April, 2024

shown at Makassar Cinemas (see figure 1). The film involved national and local artists. The film tells the story of the *parakang's* ferocity. Which often disturbs the community.

**Figure 1. Movie poster of Parakang dan Warisan Berdarah. Source from YouTube.<sup>22</sup>**



The main targets of a *parakang* are babies, both those still in the womb and those who have already been born. The Bugis people take precautions when expecting babies to protect them from the ferocity of *parakang*. Babies disturbed by *parakang* are often consumed until they die. There have been numerous cases where a pregnant mother, after several months, suddenly experiences the mysterious disappearance of her baby. Such occurrences are believed to be caused by *parakang* interference. Signs of *parakang* activity include a strong, lingering odor around the house, often from the sewer, as well as babies crying mysteriously for extended periods.

My friend's neighbor had an experience, her baby would cry incessantly. The mother, distressed, retreated to her family's house for two weeks. Upon returning home, the baby resumed crying all day. In an attempt to help, he gave her a red onion and a safety pin to attach to the baby's clothes. Miraculously, the crying ceased.

<sup>22</sup> Documentary Film, Parakang: Warisan Berdarah, 24 Agustus 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuWOt9RZfXg&t=4040s>. Director Ibnu Agha, Produced by Qia Film.

Syahrir Karim shared a similar experience regarding his pregnant wife. Whenever she returned to her village in *Sinjai*, her mother-in-law took special care to ensure that the pregnancy wasn't disturbed by the *parakang*. This caution was rooted in the frequent incidents where children, both unborn and newly born, were often targeted or harassed by *parakang*.<sup>23</sup>

In 2020, the residents of Majalling Village, Sidrap Regency, South Sulawesi were shaken by reports of a *parakang* sighting. One night, an adult man entered the bathroom, and while inside, he felt a sudden embrace from behind. The figure seemed to be unclothed and had a slippery body. When he searched for the person, they vanished without a trace. He came to the conclusion that the being he had encountered was a *parakang*.

According to Ardan, as cited by Hasnul Nawir, *parakang* are particularly known for harassing vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, small children, and even adults suffering from diarrhea. In extreme cases, their interference can result in death, a phenomenon referred to as *nanrei parakang*, which means "eaten by *parakang*."<sup>24</sup>

Muh. Fajar, an academician and practitioner of Sufism, said:

*I have treated small children in my village, Bone, three times, all of whom have the same disease, namely pello [hemorrhoids]. There is a one-stanza popular song in the village called "poppo - parakang, pangngiso pello" [air or ground parakang sucks hemorrhoids until the parakang victim's child has hemorrhoids come out]. Strangely, the children were not cured by a doctor; they only recovered after I recited the holy Al-Qur'an.*<sup>25</sup>

Muh. Maklum, a religious teacher, shares a chilling account of a *parakang* in his village who transitioned from engaging in *pesugihan* to becoming a *parakang*. He describes the disturbing impact this individual had on the community, with many children dying and people suffering from various ailments such as hardened stomachs, toothaches, and hemorrhoids. For years, the villagers were unaware of the source of their suffering. It was only when an *ustadz* (Islamic scholar) from Makassar, skilled in Islamic medicine, arrived that the true nature of the disturbances became clear. The *ustadz* gathered the family, which consisted of around forty members, and led them in *dzikr* (remembrance of Allah). During this spiritual practice, about twenty-five people began vomiting blood, hair, and even "black crab rice" (a term potentially referring to something symbolic or mystical in the context). Through these experiences, it was revealed that the perpetrator of these miseries was a female neighbor, a family member

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Syahrir Karim on 11 April, 2024

<sup>24</sup> Husnul Nawit, Mengenal Parakang: Mahluk jadi-jadian yang membuat resah warga Sidrap, (Detik News, 23 Januari 2020). <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-4871078/mengenal-parakang-mahluk-jadi-jadian-yang-buat-resah-warga-sidrap>. (Accessed 6 May, 2024).

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Muh. Fajar on 21 April, 2024

with knowledge of *parakang*. Afterward, the family focused on reading Surah Yasin together, and as a result, the *parakang*'s power diminished, and the individual reportedly grew ill.<sup>26</sup>

*Parakang* disorders are distinct from other magical afflictions in several ways, particularly in their impact on a person's mental and physical state. According to A. S. J. van der Watt and other scholars, these disorders often manifest as trances or altered states of consciousness, leading to disturbances in the individual's mental health. The afflicted person may experience disorientation, erratic behavior, or feelings of being possessed, which can severely affect their daily functioning and relationships. What sets *parakang* disorders apart from other magical illnesses is their specific connection to the supernatural practices associated with *parakang*. Unlike other magical disorders that may stem from general curses or malevolent spells, *parakang* disorders are tied to the specific mystical knowledge of *parakang*, often involving rituals, spirit interactions, and a history of harmful intentions or practices.

Van der Watt and others suggest that traditional or alternative healing methods are often the only effective treatment for *parakang* disorders. This could involve spiritual interventions, such as *dzikr*, prayers, or consultations with religious healers who understand the supernatural aspects of the affliction. These treatments aim to cleanse the individual of the negative supernatural influence and restore balance to their mental and spiritual state. Van der Watt and others suggest that traditional or alternative healing methods are often the only effective treatment for *parakang* disorders. This could involve spiritual interventions, such as *dzikr*, prayers, or consultations with religious healers who understand the supernatural aspects of the affliction. These treatments aim to cleanse the individual of the negative supernatural influence and restore balance to their mental and spiritual state.<sup>27</sup>

### 3. *Parakang* in a Review of Islamic Education

Islam commands its followers to educate their children to become individuals who are beneficial to humanity, the universe, religion, and the country. The primary purpose of human creation is to serve Allah (SWT). In Surah Az-Zariyat, verse 56 of the Al-Qur'an, Allah says:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

Translation:

"And I did not create jinn and humans except so that they would serve Me."

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Muh. Maklum on 22 April 2024

<sup>27</sup> A. S. J. van der Watt *et.al*, The Perceived Effectiveness Traditional and Faith Healing in the Treatment of Mental Illness: A Systematic Review of Qualitative Studies. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, Vol. 55, 2018, p. 566

Fundamentally, Islamic education has two main objectives: 1) The vertical aim, as mentioned in the verse above, is to serve Allah. 2) To carry out the duties of caliphate (al-Baqarah 30) in managing and prospering the universe, rather than destroying nature and harming people, as is done by *Parakang*.

Therefore, the young generation of Muslims must be equipped with good Islamic education to achieve this goal and avoid being trapped or becoming victims of *parakang*. Islamic education is generally divided into three parts: *tawhid* education, sharia-based education, and *akhlak* (moral character) education.

#### a. *Tawhid* Education

*Tawhid* is the core teaching of Islam. At the beginning of his preaching in Mecca, the Prophet prioritized *tawhid* education. Therefore, the verses of the Qur'an that were revealed in Mecca are called Makiyah verses, which emphasize aspects of monotheism. The essence of *tawhid* is mentioned in Surah al-Ikhlās:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

Translation:

"Say [Muhammad], "He is Allah, the Almighty."

A person who has the principle of monotheism ingrained within themselves will worship and seek help only from Allah. Through *tawhid* education, there are six foundations of monotheism, known as the six pillars of faith. These six pillars are faith in Allah, faith in the angels, faith in the prophets and messengers, faith in the holy books, faith in the Last Day, and faith in *qada* and *qadar*.<sup>28</sup> The practice of magic and the pursuit of supernatural knowledge, which leads to the manifestation of *parakang* creatures, is contrary to Islamic teachings. Through *tawhid* education, a person will avoid accidentally becoming a *parakang* and will also be protected from harassment by *parakangs*.

#### b. Sharia-Based on Education

*Tawhid* education serves as the cornerstone of the Islamic structure, while sharia constitutes the structure's walls and contents. Sharia-based education includes Islamic law, muamalah, Islamic economics and politics, the environment, *ijtihad*, and other elements. According to Scott Edgar, based on the al-Qur'an, there are five pillars of Islam: reciting the shahada, performing zakat, fasting during the month of Ramadan, paying zakat, and completing the Hajj for those who are able.<sup>29</sup> By practicing these five pillars of Islam, Muslims will perfect their Islam by Allah as stated in Surah al-Maidah.

<sup>28</sup> Ira Suryani, et. al., Rukun Iman dalam Pembelajaran Aqidah Akhlak, *Islam and Contemporary Issues*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2023, p. 45

<sup>29</sup> Scott Edger, The Five Pillars of Islam in Hadith, *Studia Antiqua*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2002, p. 73.

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِثْمٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

The translation:

"On this day I have perfected your religion for you, I have completed My blessings for you, and I have approved Islam as your religion. So, whoever is forced because he is hungry, not because he wants to sin, surely Allah is Forgiving, Most Merciful."

Through this Sharia-based education, Muslims will avoid the influence of *parakang*. Saying the shahada is a testimony to the sovereignty and omnipotence of Allah and recognizing the Prophet Muhammad as His apostle. Consequently, good Muslims will not seek any other power besides Allah Swt. Demanding supernatural powers, let alone engaging in *pesugihan*, which leads to *parakang*, is not in accordance with Islamic teachings.

#### c. *Akhlaq* Education.

An Islamic building will be perfect if it is complete, starting with tawhid, followed by sharia, and ending with *akhlaq*, or morals. Moral education must be implemented to achieve the perfection of Islamic teachings. Morals reflect a person's noble behavior as guided by the Al-Qur'an and hadith. Mohd. Zailani and Rosnaani stated that the substance of Islamic morals or ethics is that the purpose of human life is to gain the pleasure of Allah SWT.<sup>30</sup> The Messenger of Allah was sent to the earth to improve the morals of humanity, as stated in the hadith of Prophet Muhammad SAW, narrated by Al-Baihaqi:

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ

It means:

"In fact, I was sent only to perfect noble morals." [HR. Al-Baihaqi]

In essence, *akhlaq* education in Islam seeks to shape and nurture individual attitudes toward moral perfection, encouraging believers to lead lives that are open to goodness, virtue, and righteousness while remaining firmly closed to all forms of evil, corruption, and wrongdoing. This process plays a crucial role in enhancing human morality and guiding individuals toward ethical behavior that aligns with divine principles. Becoming a *parakang*, a mythical creature associated with malicious practices, is a logical consequence of indulging in various forms of evil and transgressions that stand in direct opposition to Islamic teachings. Such practices,

<sup>30</sup> Mohd Zailani bin Mohd Yusoff dan Rosnaani binti Hamid, *Dinamika Sains Pemikiran dan Etika*. (Jitra, Kedah Darul Aman: Bitara Media, 2012), h. 56



rooted in superstition and harmful beliefs, violate the core values of Islam. By fostering a robust moral education, rooted in the teachings of Islam, Muslims can avoid falling into the vicious cycle that gives rise to beliefs in such creatures, ultimately steering them away from practices that contradict the faith and encouraging a more righteous, spiritually grounded life.

### **E. Conclusion**

The existence of *parakang* in Bugis society is a myth that has been passed down from generation to generation. A person may become a *parakang* due to various factors, including involvement in, pursuing supernatural knowledge without aligning it with divine principles (not for Allah's sake), hereditary transmission, the influence of sacrificial rituals at the time of death, or frequent visits to shamans for malicious purposes. The primary targets of a *parakang* are infants, both unborn and newborn, followed by teenagers and young adults. The consequences of these attacks can be severe, leading to fatalities or serious health conditions, such as chronic hemorrhoids or other debilitating illnesses. Islamic education provides an effective countermeasure to mitigate the negative effects of *parakang*. Key approaches include tawhid education, sharia-based education, and moral education. While *parakang* remains a pervasive myth within the Bugis community, its belief system can be addressed through educational interventions that emphasize the teachings of Islam. By fostering critical thinking, ethical conduct, and a deeper understanding of monotheism, Islamic education serves as an effective tool for challenging mystical beliefs and practices that contradict Islamic values.

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