

Lampong scripts: The Writing tradition that almost disappear

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I. Introduction

Based on the concept of civilization stated by Koentjaraningrat (1974: 15), one of the forms of culture society can be found in idea system, value, norm, or rules. And, a part of the idea usually poured forth in form of writing.

Looking at by its function, writing is more eternal than speaking language, because writing is not bound in time and space. In his book *Early History of the Alphabet*, Naveh (1982:1) said that writing is "the use of graphic signs for the systematic description of spoken language is a mayor achievement in the history of mankind." In the history of mankind, writing holds the important thing; being used in daily life, knowledge, power, politics, and other things as well. Writing also indicates basic difference of a civilization between society which has writing and has not. Here we will see the Lampong scripts and its role to the Lampong society.

Bakr (1984: 19) said that an ethnic group has a great culture if they have their own scripts, because through the scripts, people can pour their opinion, wisdom, and custom in the society eternally. Based on list of the alphabet arranged by Holle (1882) it is known that Lampong is one of the ethnic groups in Indonesia that has scripts.

Based on the division of writing group stated by Holle (1882), Lampong scripts, known by its society as *khad*, *sukhad* or *surat Lampung* including to the group of writing came from India. *Khad* Lampung including into group *Ka-Ga-Nga*² scripts. From all forms of the alphabets that includes in group Rejang, Pasemah, Batak, dan Makasar, *khad Lampung* is more similar to Rejang scripts (Hadikusuma, 1988: 18).

Based on information from various sources, there is only limited writing that specialized in talking about Lampong scripts, one of them is writing of van der Tuuk (1886) called *Les Manuscripts Lampongs*. In this writing, van der Tuuk discuss Lampong scripts used

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² Ka-Ga-Nga is name of writing used by Melayu Tengah, Rejang, Lampung and Kerinci society. Others name of this scripts is *Rencong* script or Ulu script. More explanation see Sarwit Sarwono, *Juarian Beringin: Suntingan Teks dan Tinjauan Bentuk*. Depok. 1993: page 2.

in 10 Lampung manuscripts belongs to Baron Sloet van den Beele.³ On the summary, van der Tuuk said that the form of Lampung scripts used in all ten manuscripts varied because of influence from different era and area. Other than van der Tuuk, Pudjiastuti et al (1997) also have discussed about Lampung scripts. In the writing called *Aksara dan Naskah Kuno Lampung dalam Pandangan Masyarakat Lampung Kini*, said that many varieties of Lampung scripts known by its society, whether that used in old manuscripts or in Lampung society these days.

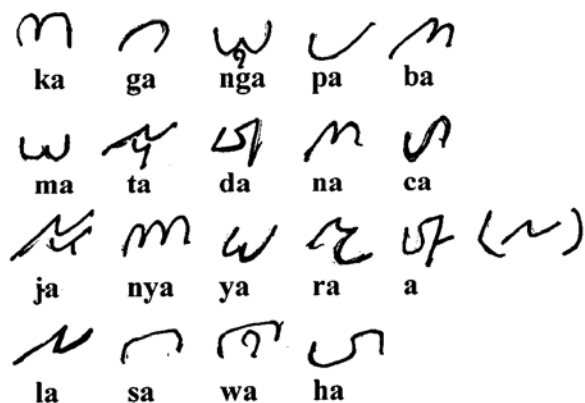
II. Lampung Scripts (*khad Lampung*)

As have mentioned above, Lampung scripts is included in Batak-Rejang writing group. Based on label of character that stated by Holle (1882), scripts (*khad*) Lampung consist of 19 characters. All 19 characters consist of 3 elements, which are, the main character called *induk huruf* or *kelabai surat*, *anak huruf* called *benah surat*, and punctuation mark.

Lampung scripts also called *ka ga nga* scripts, because the beginning of each character sound like that. Lampung scripts include to the syllable character; one sign for one syllable. That is why Lampung people called it as *tulisan basaja*, because every character has a sound of 'a' (Bakr, 1984: 20).

The alphabet of Lampung scripts are:



A. Induk huruf (*kelabai surat*)



³ Baron Sloet van den Beele is the 52nd Governor General of Hindia Belanda. He take hold of his duty in 1861 -1866.



B. Secondary character (*benah surat*) or sound mark. Based on its place, these characters divided by three, which are:



1. Above the character:

ulan for I sound  example  mi



bicek for e sound  example  me



datas for n sound  example  man

rejenjung for r sound  example  mar



teklubang for ng sound  example  mang



2. Below the character;

Bitan for u sound  example  mu

Teklungu for w sound  example  maw

3. On the back (parallel) of the character

Teklungu for ai sound  example  mai


Kelengivah for h sound  example  mah


C. Punctuation Mark

The place of punctuation mark at the back of a character on parallel level with the writing.

There are three kinds of punctuation mark:

Nengen as vowel of 

Beradu as dot 

Ngemulu as begin of the text 

According to Said Arifin, a cultural observer, *punyimbang* Lampong who has title of ‘Raja Perbasa’ (Pudjiastuti dkk, 1967: 66) in Lampong society writing tradition, there are six types of writing. Those six types of writings are:

1. Khad Lampung Ho
2. Khad Lampung Jebi
3. Khad Lampung Tumbai
4. Khad Lampung Ampai
5. Khad Lampung Angka
6. Khad Lampung Ganta

Every form of the character of *Khad* Lampung above have specialty of their own. The specialty formed because of the era that affected it, such as, *Khad Lampung Tumbai*, some of its character looks like Arabian character, because form of this scripts founded since Islam came to Lampong. Same thing with *khad Lampung Angka*, some of the characters look likes Arabian number in Roman alphabet letters, because this form of the scripts founded since Lampong people knew Roman alphabet letters.

Form of scripts *khad Lampung Ho* to *khad Lampung Angka* known by Lampong people as *khad* Old Lampong. The form of its scripts can be seen in old Lampong manuscripts. *Khad Lampung Ganta* is better known by the Lampong people as new *khad* Lampong. Now, the form of the scripts can be seen in elementary school books, as part of cultural preservation lesson or more known as local knowledge (*muatan local*).

III. The Role of Lampong scripts for Lampong society

In Lampong writing tradition, Lampong script has been long used by its society for various needs. This can be seen from the content of Lampong manuscript text that using old Lampong scripts. Divided by its usage, Pudjiastuti, dkk (1997) put Lampong scripts into three eras, which are:

A. The Past

Based on information Hadikusuma (1989) and Said Arifin, on the past until around 1940s, all original Lampong people⁴ were still able to read and write *khad* Lampong. Because of that, if there were any people who said that they were Lampong people, but couldn't read or write *khad* Lampong, then she/ he would feel ashamed. In other words, until before the world war II, *khad* Lampong has been used to write all kind of needs, such as:

1. Writing Literatures

Most of Lampong manuscripts were about literature, kept in local and foreign libraries and museums, and also kept by local people. Some of the literatures called: *cerita Radin Jambat*, *Ramayana* (Lampong version), among other things.

2. Writing Customary Law

Lampung scripts also used to write Lampong customary law, one of them called *Kuntara Raja Niti*.

3. Writing Medical Text

Lampung scripts also used by the traditional medical practitioner (shaman) to write medical texts.

4. Writing Magical Charm, *Memang*, Advise, Prohibition, and *Khajah*.

Other than medical text, the shaman also wrote *memang text*,⁵ advice, prohibition, and *khajah*.⁶

5. Writing Important Letters

Lampung scripts also used to write important letters such as buyer agreement letter (land, house, etc) and agreement among local Lampong people.

6. Communication Tools

In the past, Lampong scripts were used by local who lived in the hinterland or villages to communicate with each other.

7. Tools to Socialize for young girls and boys

⁴ Lampong that mentioned here, is originally from Lampong, and not outsider or mixed ethnic from original and outsider.

⁵ *Memang* or prayer in Lampong language are divided into a few form, some of them are *memang* for single man and woman to love each other, *memang* to steal something, *memang* to cure sick people, *memang* for *anak calang* (children who cry a lot), and *memang* for babies to be healthy and pretty or handsome.

⁶ *Khajah* or *rajah*, is in the shape of abstract pictures with magical connotation because *khajah* is used as talisman. There are various types of *Khajah*; *khajah haban bakhah*, or *rajah* to take care of health from disease, *khajah segugul* (*rajah* female sickness), *khajah* for people to hate, *khajah* to prevent bad magic, *khajah* for poison antidote, etc.

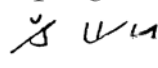
In the past, the young boys and girls were not free to socialize. Their meeting was arranged by the traditional customs called *manjau muli*. During the *manjau muli* the young people used *Lampung* scripts as communication tools; giving and receiving letters while testing each other on how good their partner can read and write Lampung scripts. This customs also called *miyah damau*, *jaga damar* atau *nyuwah damar* (Pudjiastuti, dkk: 1997: 73).

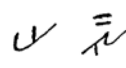
There were 7 types of the way to write Lampung scripts that have to be mastered by the young people of Lampung during *miyah damau*, which are:

- a. *The form of osokh-osokh*, which is to write letter with Lampung scripts it was written in circle like spiral without the beginning or ending of statement. Letters that writted in the form of *osokh-osohk* can be read from either the inner circle to the outside or one way around.

begin and end of sentence

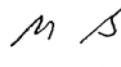
- b. *The form of lompat kijing*, which is to write letter with Lampung scripts that every single word were arranged alternately (jumping around). Every syllable from a word was put away in the form of a square. How to read is from the far left syllable, then go right, down, left again, up, and so on. For example:

1 5

 di mah

2 6

 ma an

4

 ru

3 7

 na da

- c. *The form of Cina*, which is the way to write a letter with Lampong scripts that arranged like Chinese scripts, which is from up to down, for example:

si 𑌒 𑌒 di
ya 𑌒 𑌒 ma
pa 𑌒 𑌒 na
na 𑌒 𑌒 kam
ma 𑌒 𑌒 pung
an 𑌒 𑌒 nya
da 𑌒

- d. *The form of Arab*, which is the way to write letter with *khad* Lampong like writing Arabic scripts, which is from right to left, for example:

𑌒 𑌒 𑌒 𑌒 𑌒 𑌒
ni a ya sa ma na

- e. *The form of lapak sekhom* (walking ant), which is a way of writing letter with Lampong scripts where all letters written together, all syllables were written together, not stand alone.

𑌒 𑌒 𑌒 𑌒 𑌒
rumah raya dekat

- f. *The form of way cambai*, which is a way of writing a letter with Lampong scripts written in a paper using betel vine sap. The letter that written in the paper can be red if paper gets soaked on paper carefully and slowly, because when paper soaked as a whole, then the writing will be gone.

- g. *The form of balik*, which is a way of writing with Lampong scripts backwards way. To read this writing, light form a lamp is needed. The way to read it is paper is put under the light and witing can be red from the back of the paper with the help of light, or to read it through mirror.

B. Colonial Era

During the colonialism era, Lampong scripts other than used as writing materials for its society, also used to write governmental documents, such as:

1. Head of Village Appointment Letter
2. Birth or Death certificate
3. Official letter
4. Stamp

C. Present Time

During present times, Lampong scripts can be said as almost extinct, not many Lampong people know about it. Because of that, local government of Lampong make a policy to preserve Lampong scripts so that Lampong people, especially the young people, can still know about Lampong scripts. Below are the movements from the local Lampong government to preserve Lampong scripts:

1. To write name of the street
2. To write invitation letter for cultural party
3. Building decoration
4. Lampong writing school books
5. House number

IV. Closing

Based on discussion above, we can see that since long time ago Lampong society is open to foreign element that comes to Lampong. However, the foreign element was not accepted easily, but processed and adapted with local tradition so that they can re-process and make new tradition that is a mixture from local and foreign tradition.

Lampong scripts since long time ago, is very important to its society. Old manuscripts and Lampong letters manuscript that are kept in local and foreign libraries and museums and also kept by society became a solid prove of the function and role of the Lampong scripts.

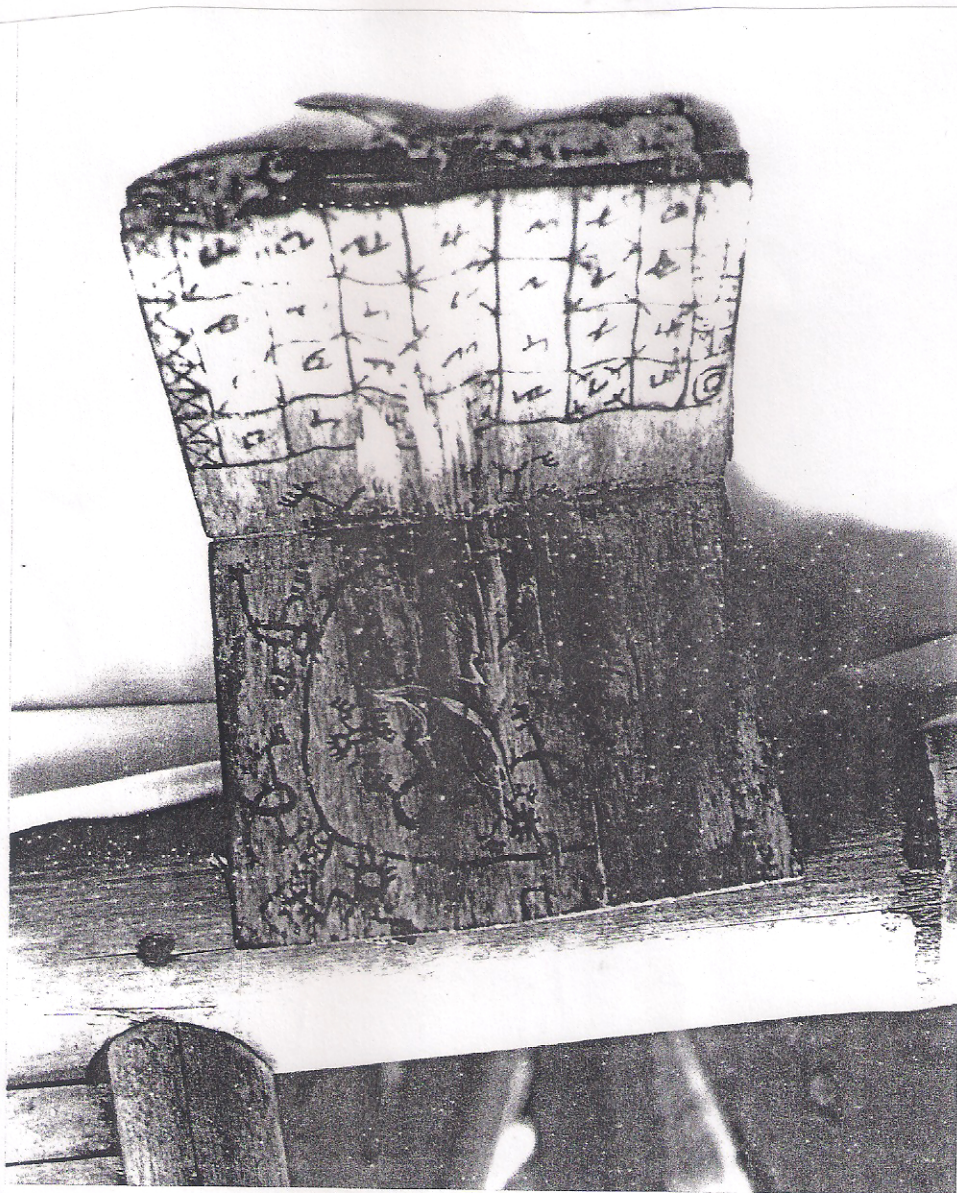
Talking about the tradition of *manjau muli* these days is not known anymore, because since Roman alphabet letters is spreading, Lampong people do not use Lampong writing on daily life anymore. However, to preserve the great heritage from their ancestor the local government of Lampong these days is socializing the Lampong writing through many ways, such as to write street names, decorate of buildings, invitation letter for cultural party, and Lampong letter school books for elementary and middle school students. The goal is to

preserve the Lampong scripts in order to the owner of the scripts, especially younger generations can still know and familiar with it.

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1. Manuscripts Lampung: *khajah* (mantra), Razi Arifin collection, Tanjung Karang,



2. Stamp and street name

CONTOH PEMAKAIAN

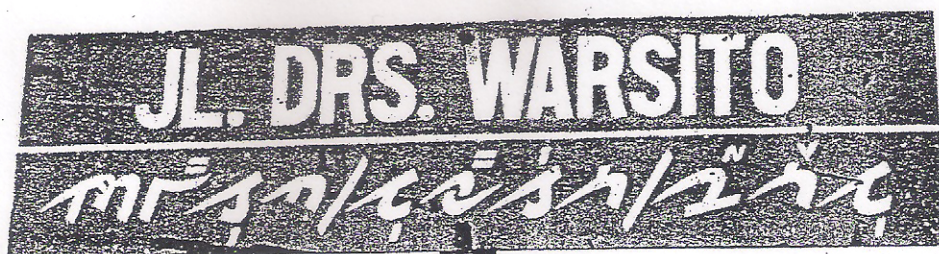
AKSARA LAMPUNG

Dalam Stempel.



B A N D A R

L I M A U



3. Home Number



4. House decoration

