

## MALIM RELIGION: A LOCAL RELIGION IN INDONESIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *Malim religion is one of cultural religion in Indonesia that its characteristic is almost same with what is presented by anthropology above in looking at by being begun ritual, then relate to all ritual deed and trust dogma coming from myth. In Malim religion, myth is more of story about genesis of earth construction, and reference in conducting religious ceremony ritual and base in strengthen the belief. Malim religion is not classified agama wahyu (religion of revelation) or written religion, but a religion in the term of anthropology called oral religion. This case is signed by unwritten teaching in the holy book as it is included in religion of revelation such as Islam and Christian. Based on the features, Malim religion is not too different with Buddha, Hindu, and Khong Hu Cu.*

**KEYWORDS:** Malim Religion; Local Religion; Revelation; Anthropology

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### INTRODUCTION

Talking about religion, religious scientists, especially theologian divides religion into two group, they are *agama samawi* and *agama ardhi*. The first group is Jewish, Christian and Islam, while the second group is Zoroaster, Hindu, Buddha, Khong Hu Cu, Sinto and the other religion, but Anthropologist does not agree about this opinion. One of antropologist states that dichotomy between naturan and *agama wahyu* is false (nonsense) and mislead, therefore it is natural to say that all religions is revealed religion. The different view happens because of the different object discussed in the religion itself. Theologian discusses about the trust of Lord existance and conduct various implication of belief to human life, while anthropologist tends to discuss good deed (ceremony) of the religion. Especially about cultural religion, generally it does have relationship to dogma, but to myth. It means that if *agama wahyu* has belief dogma and it is based on holy book teaching, cultural religion come from myth. These myths become reference to formulate the belief, to determine ritual and regulation of life's demand. Nevertheless, these two religious components, trust and ritual, many anthropologies consider that trust is as basic and ritual as the impact of the trust. Each religion both ancient and modern is found the trust in a party and the other party there are some institutions, rituals and behaviour regulations. Usually modern people see a religion by seeing the trust and not by good deeds.

### METHODOLOGY

One of local religions that is still exist in Indonesia is *Malim* religion. It comes from Batak area, North Sumatra on Sisingamangaraja XII and His followers called *parmalim*. The majority of *Malim religion* is Bataknese that has about five thousand people scattered in various regions such as North Sumatra, Riau, Batam, Jakarta, Bandung etc. *Malim* is not too known as a religion, but *parmalim* is as designation of a religious community separated from public attention in Medan, moreover Indonesia. This may be caused because this religion's status has not been clear yet as official religion, and since it's arrival, it has been categorised as instiller

faith. The unclearness of *Malim* has impact that *parmalim* society feels difficult in construction of worship place (*parsantian*) especially in Medan city.

## DISCUSSION

*Marlin* religion is one of cultural religion in Indonesia that its characteristic is almost same with what is presented by anthropology above in looking at by being begun ritual, then relate to all ritual deed and trust dogma coming from myth. In *Malim* religion, myth is more of story about genesis of earth construction, and reference in conducting religious ceremony ritual and base in strengthen the belief. If wording of prayers is pronounced, it is clear that all is translated from the content of the myth. The myth function in this context is a story narrated to decide the certain belief, it has role as the beginning event in a ceremony and ritual or model of moral and religious behaviour.

People considers that *Malim* is not a religion, but it is just spiritul culture. Therefore they say that *Malim* does not have requirement enough to be called as religion because it have general features of a religion as tha is included on religion of revelation such as Islam and Christian, as an example there is no holy book as teaching source, prophet as bearer of religion and universal teaching being able to include all human in the world. This opinion can be understood because they are one of religion of revelation follower that automatically making the religion that they follow is as refference in assessing the other religion, especialy *Malim*.

Moreover, the teaching of *Malim* religion upholds ethnic, nation, tradition of Batak. Tradition is a behaviour, attitude, habit and prevalence based on taught norms. This tradition develops to be law managing the aspect of society life on acient time although it has never collected in writing. Then, the law (especially now) is called as tradition law. Tradition law is understood as nation law to manage state law and social law that has legal consequences but it is not put in lawbook. Generally the understanding of Batak society is only masterpiece of previous generation and different of the understanding of *Malim* follower that believe that tradition is not only Bataknese's work given to present generation, but more than it, the existance of tradition in the society id believed coming from *Lord Debata Mulajadi Nabolon* and given to human tha is choosen by him. The choosen person accepts basic tradition concept from *Debata*, then basic concept is ratified (*disingahon*) to be pillars of tradition and regulation (*patik*) called as law. According to *Malim* religion , tradition is not only social culture result, but also spirit of *Debata Mulajadi Nabolon* to his Batak followers. That is why tradition is called as ghost sanctioned custom. Tradition is requirement and values that has religious meaning, event called as ultimate incarnation of a religion. Tradition is religious, it is obligated to be practiced. In Batak's view, tradition is holy and who is brave ignores the principles of tradition teaching, he will get sanctions of supernatural.

*Malim* as religion has also religious structure consisting of belief system, ritual, and teaching managing the relationship of Lord and human, human relationship and relationship with natural environment. All teaching is compiled in the terms of *patik*, *poda* and *uhum* (law) and believed sourced from *Debata Mulajadi Nabolon*.

### The Belief System of *Malin* Religion

The belief of *Malim* religion is various and layered. In one side, the belief may be said monotheism, because the content is to beleive in one Lord creating *Debata Mulajadi Nabolon*,

but the other side, he has plurality of small Lords as the maid of *Debata Mulajadi Nabolon*, this belief is actually nearer to the belief of monolatry and polytheism. Its feature is to believe the existence of *Debata* the One Almighty Lord as universe creator, while believe the existence of small Lord (*Debata's* maid), although from prayer and religious deed, it refers to the One Almighty Lord mention deliberately "small Lord" because *Malim* religion does not know the term of deity.

*Malim* religion has trust number. First, believing supernatural consists of *Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon* (The one almighty Lord), *Debata Na Tolu* (the three Lords), *Si Boru Deak Parujar* (deity of earth creator), *Nagapadohaniaji* (deity of earth keeper), and *Si Boru Saniangnaga* (water deity), they are called *malim* kingdom owner in the sky (*banua ginjang*). In the invisible world, small Lords (*Debata Natolu*, *Deakparujar*, *Nagapadohaniaji* and *Saniangnaga*) functions as *Debata's* maid and is not as universe creator and the owner of power that can determine something to human and natural. They are creation of *Debata Mulajadi Nabolon* that has different level with Him. It is why in *Malim* belief, their name does not use name "deity", but they use name "*na poso*" (being young), the meaning is subordinates who accompany him. Although their position is not called as peity, essentially they can be equalized with deity concept on the other cultural religion. If they are called through prayers (*tonggo-tunggo*) in ritual ceremony, their names are called directly one by one without mentioning deity. From prayers, their characteristic and position are known as *Debata Mulajadi Nabolon's* maid. They have power in certain field, but their power is given by *Debata Mulajadi*. Because of having power in field respectively, that is why they are included in *partohp harajaon malim* (the owner of *malim* kingdom) in Banua Ginjang.

Second, *Malim* religion has also belief to *Debata's* maid or *Malim Debata*. They are King Utu, Simarimbulubosi, King Naopatpuluhopat, King Sisingamangaraja, and king Nasiakbagi. They are human beings, but they have surplus of the other human. They are believed as bearer of *Malim* teaching especially in Batak region. All that comes out of their mouth is the word. The words are not just their desire, but it is considered as Lord's voice because they are Lord's representative in conveying religious teaching. All regulations (*patik*) attached in Batak region are believed is *Debata's* present. That is why they accept mandate as leader and teach the human about divinity and religion, and they are called as *partohap harajaon malim* (the owner of *malim* kingdom) in Banua Tonga (Earth). They are king in guiding human and leader in leading religious ceremony. The definition of king in this context is not in general definition having duty as nation leader, but priest king. Although Indonesian government recognizes Sisingamangraja XII as king in politic meaning or leader in Batak region in religious meaning, actually for *Malim* followers, they more believe Sisingamangaraja as *malim debata* (like prophet) than a king has the power.

Besides believing to the power of supernatural and *malim debata*, *Malim* religion is also believed of *sahala* that is able on human. *Sahala* is soul who dwell in a person. If *sahala* dwells in a person, the person will be looked more charisma. If a leader is obtained by *sahala*, s/he will show the different behaviour and attitude. Every attitude and behaviour is led by *sahala*. On his face is bright, so people respect and feel amazed to Him. This person is called in *Malim* religion as leader having religious charisma.

### **Ritual of *Malim* Religion**

One of the important thing of all religious structure is the existence of ritual (religious ceremony). This ritual functions as to live, to reinforce and to affirm the belief of a religion. In

the term of anthropology, ritual is called as religion in action. *Malim* religion also has a number of religious ceremony classified into seasonal and non seasonal ceremony. All rituals are believed as the way to meet supernatural they are *Debata Mulajadi Nabolon* and the other small Lords. Some ceremonies are scheduled and not scheduled. The scheduled ceremony consists of first, weekly ceremony called *mararisabtu* runs on every Saturday. Second, annual ceremony consists of three types of ceremony; *mangan na paet* ( eating bitter thing), *sipaha sada* (ceremony of Simarimbulubosi's birth), *sipaha lima* (great offering). Unscheduled classes is rites of passage consisting of three ceremony, they are *martutuaek* (birth), *mamasumasu* (marriage), and *pasahat tondi* (death). This ceremony , Beattie mentions it as transition ritual, while most of people understand it as life-crisis ritual. There is unscheduled ceremony, but it does not include in transtition ritual. The ceremony is *mangangsir* (sanctification) and *mardebata* (worshipping *debata*), both ceremony is not always exist in every year, but it is exist if something happens of someone. First religious conversion happens. Second, there is one's vows.

Based on the history, *marisabtu* ceremony, besides as worship, is obidient symbol to what is practiced by Deakparujar. In the myth, seveth day (Saturday) is the day for taking rest for Deakparujar. Therefore based on *malim Debata*, Saturday becomes worship day to *Debata*. *Mangan napaet* (eating of bitter food) is as annual penance, based on Simarimbulubosi, he is a symbol to remind sacrifice and suffering of *malim Debata* as long as they run the religious duty. One day after *mangan napaet*, *sipaha sada* ceremony is conducted to remember Simarimbulubosi's birth. In this ceremony all event is kept in mind by Simarimbulubosi, his birth is written twice, when he is young he experiences attempted murder, while *sipaha lima* is transformation of ceremony that is called *asean taon* previously. In this ceremony, *parmalim* thanks to *Debata* for blessing him through animal husbandary and agriculture. Thanksful is made by cutting a buffalo as rites sacrificial and offering before it is distributed to *parmalim* family. In ceremony implementation, *Malim* religion always read prayers in presenting offering, in certain present, dance and drum is also used. For *Malim* religion, sound of prayer is considered as praising and thankful to *Debata* and the other supernatural, while the sound of drum and *tor-tor* (dance) are considered as intermediary of heart move and physical move at taking place of the ceremony.

As we know that in every religion, an object is always purified. The holy is something that is respected, glorified and can not be tarnished. Profane is the opposite of the holy that is common, dirty, general and temporary. *Malim* religion knows holy (*kudus*) and profane either in the ceremony itself or not. For example, in every ceremony, all offerings and ritual tools such as plate, bowl etc are considere purified. That is why they are kept in holy place before they are presented in the holy place. As long as ceremony takes place, all participant must be orderly, silent and everything that is not categorized holy is alienated. That is the characteristic of holy.

The outside ceremony, the object is always purified because of bans. One of the examples is women that have given birth where they are not allowed to touch ritual tools because they are considered holy. Moreover holy time and holy place are also known in *Malim* religion. Holy time is time that has been decided, for example Saturday, a day that is not allowed to do something (daily working), except praising *Debata*. If the day is used for working as usual, the person will get sin, while the holy place is all worship place like Pasogit Partonggoan hall.

## The concept of Safety

Almost all religions has teaching about safety. Indeed the safety is different between one religion and the other religion, because it is cause by the different teaching. For example, Islam means safety as the happiness in the world and hereafter and the happiness is obtained if a man has been done what Lord command and avoid all of Lord's ban as that is in Alqur'an and hadith, while christian means safety as penance. Safety is Lord's blessing and not human's effort to obtain safety. *Malim* religion has view about the present world and future world. The present world is life run by human right now, while future is life after human die. Life in the world is temporary and hereafter is permanent.

During living in the world, human face life case, either light or heavy that comes and goes as trial of human faith. So to face the life problem, human must try to manage optimally and believe to *Debata* because everything happens because of His will. *Malim* religion believes that before going to hereafter, human's soul is asked by *Debata*'s maid before getting the place of hell or heaven. The basic reference in believing hereafter that source from prayers is implied that there is life after human died and it is soul life. The prayer is "not alloed to have desire or behaviour that is forbidden by *Debata*'s teaching. Human has a hope of their obedience in practicing *Debata*'s teaching. They will obtain the life happiness of soul in Banua Ginjaung. it is more different than life right now.

Based on the explanation above, *Malim* religion teaches that all of his followers to believe and prepare themselves before the day comes. The self preparation is to do all *Debata*'s command and avoid eveting His ban.

## Source of Law

*Malim* knows what is called *pustaka habonoron* considered as the holy book of *Malim* religion. Based on the content, this book is classified into three group. First, regulation (*patik*), to manage the relationship between human and *Debata*, and human and human. Second, the regulation related to kingdom, especially to punish social member undertaking mistake, included for a leader. Third, the regulation related to environmental management and farm. All regulation contained in *pustaka habonoran* can be mentioned as guide in life style, so human relationship with other and human with Lord, *Debata Mulajadi Nabolon* can be created. Actually the teaching in *pustaka habonoran* has aims, so human being has scare to *Debata*. If human being has scare, they are expected to be able to overcome themselves of everything categorized "breaking the law". The impact of fidelity to law will take to harmony and peacefulness in society.

Although in previous Batak life before *Malim* religion come, the other book such as *pustaka hadatuon* and *pustaka tembaga holing* has been exist, but both *pustaka* are not used as guidance in *Malim* experience. The first *pustaka* is the book containing about a number of regulation relating to *hadatuon* (traditional healer) containing the way medical treatment for sick people. This book is written directly by *datu* (indigenous medical practioner by Batak letter on slab of bark called *laklak*). The second *pustaka* is written directly by the king of Batak on slab of bark, but right now no one knows where the books are. Some people say that the books have been taken by dutchman to their country after they conduct attacking and burning in the palace of Sisingamangaraja XII in Bakkara. *Pustaka habonoron* that is exist right now is a book written directly by Sisingamngaraja XII. This book is called *pustaka naimbaru* (new book) having humber is one and it is kept in Bale Pasogit Partonggoan centered in Hutatinggi.



*Pustaha habonoron* is considered as law source of *Malim* religion, there is the other law source as guidance and demand in a religion such as *poda*, *patik*, and *uhum*. The meaning of *Poda* is advice, based on the source, *poda* comes from *Debata*'s messenger, for example *poda* from King *uti*, *Simarimbulubosi*, King *Sisingamangaraja* and King *Nasiakbagi*. All religious teaching is considered as *Debata*'s voice that is not doubted the truth. The teaching containing in *poda* becomes basic and law source in teaching of *Malim* religion.

One of *poda* mentioned in every religious ceremony, especially *mararisabtu* ceremony is *poda* "five" mentioned commonly with *poda hamalimon* (religious advice). This five *poda* has intonation ordering obligated to be practiced by *parmalim* people in daily life. The five *poda* is *ingkon malim parhundulon* (a must to be holy in every sitting). This verse has big meaning because sitting that is meant is not only "manner of the good sitting", but more than it, position or dominance. The core containing in the first verse advice is to take care of self, so that human being is avoided from bad behaviour such as arrogant and doing mistake. Second, it is *ingkon malim parmanganon* (must be holy in eating). It is equal like the first verse having big meaning because the message containing in this verse is not a must to be polite and orderly in each eating, but the deeper meaning is to avoid ourselves from bad behaviour such as, stealing, corruption etc.

Third, *ingkon malim pamerengon* (must be holy in seeing), the meaning is to limit in seeing an object, so that not have problem either self or other people. The limitation in seeing can be measured by forbidden indicator such as anger, glared eye, and the other how to look categorized unpolite. If this ban is not implemented, it will takes to disaster to human. *Malim* religion believes that through eyes, it can obtain sin. Fourth, *ingkom malim panghataion* (must be holy in speaking) it means that to not bad speaking, lie, insulting and fooling etc. Fifth, *ingkon malim pardalanon* (must be holy in every walking), it means that to do polite behaviour and attitude such as how to dress and walk. Good behaviour has the other meaning that is life behaviour wherever. If some one in a place, the man must maintain himself to disturb, and to hurt people. The man must be friendly, protect, help and create harmony.

*Patik* in literally has meaning "regulation". *Patik* consists of chapters containing regulation aiming to manage human life. *Patik* is for implementing religious ceremony and guiding human life. *Patik* consists of five parts; *marsuru* (oeder), *mamisang* (ban), *paingothon* (reminding), *panandaion* (introduction) and praising. All *patik* teachings are arranged by King *Naipospos* and *parmalim* members obligates to remember it. *Patik* has 23 verses that always read together after religious ceremony completes. Redaction of *patik* verses as follows:

### Order Part

**Verse 1** : *Pujion ompunta Debata sian nasa roha*

Meaning : *Debata* must be praised from the deepest heart

Interpretation : Praising *Debata* is with real heart and good desire that aims to pray for *Debata*. Praising *Debata* is not because of the other people, but it come from sincere heart. The evidence of the sincerity and devout of someone in worshiping *Debata* can be seen on his/her behaviour and attitude on religious ceremony implementation while aura of religious ceremony can be seen on daily behaviour.

**Verse 2** : *Pasangapon raja, haholongan dongan jolma.*

meaning	: A King must be respected, fellow human beings must love each other
Interpretation	: A king like King Nasiakbagi must be respected, respecting Him is by implementing his teaching . If someone implements obediently <i>Malim</i> teaching, he will function for himself and respect to King Nasiakbagi and <i>Debata</i> 's messangers. Loving one is obligated as someone loves himself.
<b>Verse 3</b>	: <i>Padot iba mangula dihasiangan on, asa adong pargogo ni badan mamuji ompunta Debata mangoloi aturan ni raja diBanua Tonga on.</i>
Meaning	: Working hard in obtaining livelihood can be used as provision of live in praising and worshipping to <i>Debata</i> and following King's regulation in Banua Tonga.
Interpretation	:Working hard and getting livehood is the obligation for <i>parmalim</i> society, without working hard will not obtain livelihood easily. Livelihood is used for provision of live, have power in praising and obtaining to <i>Debata</i> , and following regulation conveyed by <i>Malim Debata</i> . Getting livelihood is by being allowed. A very high meaning of working hard is a worship as devotion to <i>Debata</i> .

### **Mamisang (Forbid)**

<b>Verse 4</b>	: <i>Manangko na so jadi</i>
Meaning	: Stealing is not allowed
Interpretation	:Stealing openly and hidden is a ban
<b>Verse 5</b>	: <i>Mangalangkup na so jadi</i>
Meaning	:An affair relationship or more than it and Fornicating or as level as it are hard ban
Interpretation	:Fornicating is not allowed, not only fornicating, but also making sheep's eye to one's wife of fiancée is not allowed,either good desire of bad desire is categorized of <i>mangalangkup</i> or forbidden behaviour. Moreover, <i>mangalangkup</i> is meant as courtesy in a discussion. If someone in a discussion just shows a rightness without respecting and recognizing the rightness of other people's opinion, it includes in <i>mangalangkup</i> category. It means that disowning, abolishing and ignoring right people's opinion in a discussion is forbidden. So, it must be clear in recognizing and accepting a rightness, if what is said is indeed right.

### **Reminding Part**

<b>Verse 6</b>	: <i>Pajongjongon ugasan torop hongaluon ni na balga, hangoluon ni na metmet, di na so tuk balanjo</i>
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Meaning	: The construction of <i>ugasan torop</i> (community property) is for life need of big people (leaders) and small people (poor people), moreover if logistic food has been completed
Interpretation	: <i>Ugasan torop</i> is community property that previously is exist on King Nagsiakbagi age that source from his followers. From <i>ugasa torop</i> , King Nasiakbagi takes some funds to help someone who deserves it, because of poorness and getting disaster. So far, <i>ugasan torop</i> still implements <i>Malim</i> religion. Each member must give rice or money based on their ability.
Verse 7	: <i>Eme na so jadi ganda di bagasan sopo, di balian do na jadi gabe pasu-pasuon ni ompunta Debata</i> Meaning : rice should not be doubled in the rice barn, double is only in the farm, if <i>Debata</i> will
Interpretation	: Do not do usury. If someone lends money, rice or something else to others, the returned thing is not more than lent thing. The sweat itself that can be doubled is, if <i>Debata</i> will.

### Part of Introduction to *Debata*

Verse 8	: <i>I ma paboa ompunta Debata Mulajadi Nabolon, na manjadikon langit, na manjadihon tano on, na manjadihon saluhut na sa adong diliat portibi on.</i>
Meaning	: That is informed by <i>Debata Mulajadi Nabolon</i> , crating sky, earth, and everything in the world.
Interpretation	: <i>Patik Debata</i> is the word of <i>Debata</i> conveyed through his messenger. <i>Patik</i> is the way to know human self and <i>Debata</i> . The other word, through <i>patik</i> , <i>Debata</i> characteristic is described, so human knows that Lord's name creating universe is <i>Debata Mulajadi</i> , while human being is the creation.

### Praising Part

Verse 9	: <i>Asa mauliate ma tadok tu ompunta Debata saleleng ni lelengna; Et Nabonar, Et nabonar, Et nabonar ale junjunganhu.</i>
Meaning	: Let's we always thank to <i>Debata</i> forever, the one almighty Lord, enermous ord, my precence.
Interpretation	: This verse is praising sentence that is always mentioned together in the of prayers in every religious ceremony. This verse contains meaning that as long as human live in this world should praise without stopping. With the praising, King Nasiakbagi give guide and invite people to implement <i>patik</i> and the regulation to <i>Debata</i> .

All verses of *tona*, *poda* and *patik* are included in a name *uhum*. The meaning of *uhum* is law, the law is all regulations that are from *Debata* or *malim* (*Debata*'s messenger, including Batak tradition and culture. The other word, the word *uhum* is also tranlated "punishment" for follower and included King himself. The punishment happens if violance happens, *uhum* applies to all human beings indiscriminately because the man of the god's eye is the same.



## CONCLUSION

Some system component of *Malim* religion can be presented in this writing. *Malim* religion is not classified *agama wahyu* (religion of revelation) or written religion, but a religion in the term of anthropology called oral religion. This case is signed by unwritten teaching in the holy book as it is included in religion of revelation such as Islam and Christian. Based on the features, *Malim* religion is not too different with Buddha, Hindu, and Khong Hu Cu. Therefore, in this writer's recommendation, Indonesian government can be fair in looking *Malim* religion. It means that it is the time the government can reconsider the policy considering that this is a belief and not a religion.

The governmental policy considers that *Malim* religion is belief and not a religion, it requires to be reconsidered the concept of belief, of course it is different of religion concept. Belief in general definition is branch, group or sect of certain religion. The features can be seen from deviated teaching of main religious teaching, while *Malim* religion is not religion having the main but it is the independent and autonomous religion without being related to the other religion. If government has not acknowledged *Malim* religion sincerely as the official religion and equal with the other big religion in Indonesia, at least the government should have good conviction in placing this religion to be indigenous religion and local religion, just to change the term of the belief that is glutinous. *Malim* religion is not foreign religion, but it comes from Batak area, a region in Indonesia. As long as the policy is not change in viewing *Malim* religion, as long as *parmalim* people as national experiences unfair treat in everything especially in social administration service, work applying, building license construction etc.

It is impossible *parmalim* is forced to believe one of official religion because of unofficial in religious politic that they follow. They are very sure that in each ethnic or nation in this world, the one almighty Lord gives a religion to be a human life guide in this world. If Islam and Christian come from the middle east, Hindu comes from India and the other religion also come from certain region, so *Malim* religion does not consider that it itself is the one and only religion in the world, whereas as the rightest religion and accepted by *Debata*. but accepts the existence of the other religion. *Malim* believes the existence of religious diversity in the world and all religions are believed come from The one almighty Lord, *Debata mulajadi Nabolon*. So, the teaching of *Malim* religion very respects pluralism because this religion is really one view with pluralism defined by John Hick (in Munawar –Rachman), to avoid the rightness of one religion on the other religion normatively.

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