

## IN THE SHADOWS OF MODERNITY: Performing and Preserving the Bukoba Tradition Among Malay Society in Riau, Indonesia

Muhammad Ansor\*

Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau

\*Correspondence author: ansor@uin-suska.ac.id; Telp.: +628-137-164-3000

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### KEYWORD

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Malay society;  
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### ABSTRACT

*The following article explores the ways in which Bukoba oral literary cultures in Malay Riau, Indonesia, are being kept alive through performance. The author argues that the oral literary tradition that is an integral component of the cultural identity of the Malay people of Riau is in threat of losing out due to the pressures of modernity and the efforts that have been made to regenerate the tradition. In-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies were carried out in Rokan Hulu, which is located in the province of Riau, as part of this study, which employs a qualitative approach to data gathering methodologies. The findings of the study highlight the complicated features of the Bukoba transmission process as well as the difficulties that are encountered by dealers. The research also revealed that the rapid growth of technology and modernity led to a shrinking of the arena for traders to display Bukoba oral traditions in public areas. This resulted in a decrease in the number of public venues where these traditions were displayed. In the end, the writing arrived at the conclusion that the presence of the state was required in order to revitalise the oral literary heritage of the Malay Riau community in an effort to confront extinction. This conclusion was reached at the end of the writing.*

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### INTRODUCTION

This article explores the conservation and presentation of Bukoba's oral literary tradition in the Malay Riau community. Bukoba is a local expression of the Malay community in Rokan Hulu – one of the districts in the province of Riau – to name the Koba oral literary tradition that is displayed with a style of storytelling, singing, accompanied by musical tools, and using Malay language (Muslim et al., 2023). This article shows that Koba is one of the oral literary traditions in Riau that is potentially extinct due to massive technology and modernity. As is the case with a number of local traditions swallowed by the change of times (Afdholy, 2017; Fitriah, 1970; Kapoyos et al., 2022; Soebroto, 2018; Wiflihani & Suharyanto, 2015), the threat of extinction of the Bukoba tradition is caused, among other things, by a decrease in the audience or audience in the performance (Effendy, 1997), the limitation of the ability to adapt to modern performing art (Kapoyos et al., 2022), as well as the transmission of expertise in the slow-lasting community of Bukoba traditions.

Research on the oral tradition of Bukoba is still relatively limited. The research is important, but it has become a classic about the theme of Malay literature Riau wrote Will Derks with the title

*Tubuh Liar: "Realisme Grostek" dalam Cerita Melayu* (Derks, 2000). This article deals with the oral literature of Koba Panglima Awang and Anggun Cik Suri based on the statement of Taslim: a professional Koba Worker who is also a key informant in this article. Derks article is a brief version of a dissertation published under the title *The Feast of Storytelling: On Malay Tradition* (Derks, 1994). Derks' writings indicate that the oral literature of Koba Melayu Riau has received academic appreciation from foreign researchers, although it is still limited. Another work on Koba is the research of Amanriza, Effendy, and Mahyudin (1989). In contrast to Will Derks, who researched aspects of the content of the oral literature of Koba Panglima Awang in Rokan Hulu, the writings of Amanriza, Effendy, and Mahyudin are documentation of the narrative of several Koba in Rokan Hilir. There are at least ten types of Koba titles that are documented and transliterated into Indonesian in the book. Another important work mentioned is Effendy's book on the oral literature of Petalangan society (Effendy, 1997). Effendy compares some texts of oral tradition based on the speech of storytellers from various figures in the Malay Petalangan Society in Riau (Chambert-Lior, 1997).

In addition, there are a number of academic publications that address the oral literary tradition of Koba from various perspectives, although the number is relatively limited. Muslim, Juned, and Zebua (2023) discuss the role of the seventh in the oral literary performance of Koba Panglima Awang in the Pasir Pangaraian. Sri Sabakti discusses gender aspects in the oral tradition of Koba Malin Deman (Sabakti, 2020). Syam (2013) researched the Koba Panglima Awang show at Rokan Hulu with a focus on the aspects of creativity in celebrations, events, sounds, and mysticism (Syam, 2013). Another graduate explores the pedagogical load of oral literature in Bukoba (Nofrita & Putri, 2019; Syefriani et al., 2021). Among these studies, there is not much research focused on the preservation strategy and representation of the oral tradition of Koba in Riau, as was done by traders. Therefore, this research aims to enrich the academic discourse on the theme by focusing on the dynamics of conservation and oral literary performances of Koba in the Malay Riau community in the face of the challenge of modernization.

## METHODS

The research uses qualitative techniques with a cultural anthropology approach. The choice of this approach was made because the subjects of discussion in this study were the supporters of oral tradition and local wisdom that began to suffer extinction due to the pressure of modernity. In this respect, traditional traders are those who are involved in the preservation of a Koba oral literary tradition. The anthropological approach allows researchers to analyse cultures in society while understanding the dynamics of thought and the power relations that underlie a particular phenomenon (Beatty, 2004; Bernard, 2006; Varisco, 2005). Through an anthropological approach, the researchers interpreted a social practise related to Koba's oral literary tradition by exploring the relationship between structures and agents (individuals) (Archer, 2004; Bernard, 2006; Morris, 2006; Ortner, 2006).

Data is collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies related to the oral tradition of Koba in Rokan Hulu, Riau (2007). A profound interview was conducted against Taslim, one of the perpetrators of the oral tradition of Bukoba in Riau, who came from Rokan Hulu. In addition, the researchers also interviewed Apran (workers of art in Rokan Hulu), Sumardi and Yusri Syam (government staff of Rokan Hulu), and Zuarman Ahmad (cultural observatory in Riau). The writer recorded the interview and made a verbal transcript of the audio interview. In addition, the researchers conducted non-participatory observations of the traditional Bukoba performance performed by Taslim to learn about the practise of Koba performance and its audience characteristics. Several occasions of oral literary demonstrations Koba that Taslim performed attended researchers, either organised on the initiative of the

community in Rokan Hulu or even performances conducted on the invitation of the government of the county and the province. In the observations carried out, the researchers acted as non-participating observers who sought to understand each practise of Koba's oral literary tradition.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The social context of Bukoba in Malay society

Koba is a literary language of the Malay community in Riau that was once quite popular but now begins to be abandoned by society (Amanriza et al., 1989; Effendy, 1997). Koba's terminology refers to a understanding of oral literature that is told with a style of singing using Malay. Koba is a story containing myths, legends, and folk stories (Effendy, 1997). Koba is assuredly not only the practise of tradition that is typical of Malay Riau society, because the majority of other ethnic communities in Indonesia have a narrative about oral literature that is treated as up-to-date even though, in the present time, it begins to face extinction (Derks, 2001; Foley & Kahn, 2012; Mohamad, 2012; Safriandi, 2022). The Aceh community, for example, has oral literature about *prang sabil*, which, during Dutch imperialism in Indonesia, became a means to sacrifice the spirit of jihad in the fight against colonialism (Alfian, 1992; Rizal et al., 2013; Wieringa, 1998).

In the time before Indonesia's independence, Koba's performance tradition was often presented as a traditional entertainment medium for the royal elite as well as the local village community (Amanriza et al., 1989; Effendy, 1997). Moments of the Koba tradition are performed, among other things, at the time of a wedding event, a shower, a child's haircut, Indonesian independence celebrations, or other occasions (Amanriza et al., 1989). These adults have seen a decrease in the number of spectators and the frequency of Koba's art shows in public places. The social function of oral literature, which was once an arena for the exchange of information and entertainment, has been replaced by modern technology. People today consume information and entertainment through books, magazines, newspapers, or even social media (LIU, 2013; Rusydiyah, 2020). As a result, Koba's traditional art practitioners also experienced a decline in their population.

Based on the observations and interviews, the author did reveal that the Koba craftsman was born and grew up in rural areas or villages that are relatively far from urban centres. It is rare to find Koba workers who were born and raised in the middle of the urban crowd. Despite the fact that some of the Koba Workers who lived in the capital district were found today, their abilities and births in the district were not obtained at the place where they are now but were obtained at the time they were still in the village. The rural community environment contributes to the birth of a variety of traditional practises that have a different character than those that emerge in the urban community environment. It can be assured that Koba is a traditional oral literature rooted in the rural community.

Koba work is not a profession but an eye-catching source of family livelihood. Based on the search in Rokan Hulu, only Change is recorded as a Koba Worker who claims that his economic income relies on the Koba worker profession. While the majority of Koba Workers view this traditional profession as an additional source of income, even most of them hold Koba for hobby purposes without expecting economic rewards. *Atlas Kebudayaan Melayu Riau* identified at least 23 Koba workers in three districts, namely Rokan Hulu, Bengkalis, and Kampar. Seeing from the main subsistence of the family, there were as many as 16 people among the farmers, five farmers or village maids, and the rest occupied as retired veterans, private officials, and merchants.

Interestingly, it is observed that the profession of dukun, or village maid, occupied second place after the profession of farmer, the Koba Maid, in Rokan Hulu. It is estimated that the Koba Worker who catches the status of a dukun or a housekeeper is larger than the number suggested. Because at least five Koba workers were found whose professions were a combination of farmers

and villagers but were categorised as farmers (Rahman, 2005, pp. 718–762). By comparison, four out of the five Koba Workers who were made key informants by Amanriza, Effendy and Mahyudin in their research at Rokan Hilir (Amanriza et al., 1989), were farmers, and only one person was a teacher. None of those who, at the time of the study, were the majority of this old age relied on the profession of a Koba Worker as the primary source of subsistence for their family. Of the 23 Koba trainees named in *Atlas Kebudayaan Melayu*, 16 have completed basic education (Sekolah Rakyat, SR), six of them said they had never completed elementary education, while one was unidentified, and there are no trainees who have completed middle or higher education.

They do not rely on Koba's skills as a source of subsistence. On the one hand, this is driven by the view that Koba is a form of devotion to tradition, while on the other hand, Koba's performance can ideally be an additional source of economic income for its perpetrators, although it is not the primary source of subsistence. Since the profession of Koba is not economically reliable, it is not uncommon for Koba workers to reduce the frequency of appearances because of concerns about disrupting work to earn a living. Taslim admitted that reducing the frequency of appearances when he saw it would interfere with his performance in meeting family economic needs. Tradition and economy are two things that are related to each other (Ansor, 2014). Certain social traditions in a society are believed to have difficulty surviving when societies do not get economic incentives from such cultural practises. This phenomenon becomes a dilemma because, on the one hand, the local government hopes that the oral literary tradition of Koba can be preserved in the midst of society, but this profession cannot provide economic incentives. Therefore, some of the Workers of Koba position this oral literary tradition as just a hobby or even a means of relieving the past situation that they experienced when they were young. Based on this narrative, the attempt to present young Koba as traditional traders in the future is quite difficult to realize.

### **Preserved the Bukoba Tradition**

The profession of Koba is based on a centuries-old tradition and is always passed down genetically, usually from parent to child or through a teacher to a student. In addition to the knowledge and skills to be mastered by them, for example, about the story, the bobano (company) played, the rhythm of the song, and the performance techniques, there is a lot of magical knowledge involved. This knowledge is about special prayers and spells and certain patterns in terms of behaviour that give strength to the Koba. Such mysterious knowledge can only be mastered by those who have been blessed and acquired it after undergoing certain rituals or forms of teaching. The knowledge of this magical thing is intertwined and forms a proof-of-proof skill. The intersectionality of society with Gaib nature and mantra is the practise of daily life and the social identity of Malay people in Riau (Ansor & Masyhur, 2013, 2023; Barnard, 1998; Kang, 2003, 2007; Porath, 2015).

Although a person's Koba abilities are generally acquired through the combination of rational, mystical, and geneological methods, there is difficulty explaining the educational process of a Koba junior. Research informants did not describe in detail how the process went. Based on interviews and research on the patterns of transmission of a person's experimental abilities, there are at least four models, namely the process of transfer through inheritance and environment, mystical heritage, and modern education such as courses and training.

#### *Transfer of skills based on inheritance*

Almost all Koba workers have blood connections with previous Koba practitioners. Taslim said hereditary factors influenced him. According to him, his mother had a collection of stories. However, it is not known whether his mother frequently attended the exhibition. This mother came from her grandmother's line. Although his father was not a Koba Worker, his grandmother from his father's line also had the skill of trying. So it was Miun, a Koba worker, who settled in the

Village of Gunung Malelo under XIII Koto Kampar. The ability of Bukoba Miun was obtained after years of following the performance of his own father, who was also a Storyteller and a Koba Worker (Rahman, 2005, p. 743).

Inheritance is not the only factor. The introduction and involvement of a child as a child in a koba performance is sufficient to influence a child's occupation as a Koba Worker after adulthood. The show involves children as spectators because they are invited by their parents. In this way, children become more acquainted with and learn about the behaviour of the Koba world. Children who grow up in an environment familiar with Koba's performances become interested in and hold on to oral literature as adults. Growing up in such environments and situations, it is not surprising that Dowek, for example, a Koba Worker from the Village of Pandalian in Rokan IV Kota Kampar, managed to collect some stories in Koba just by learning with his own parents.

#### *Trained by Senior Koba Worker*

Most Koba Trainers claim to have acquired knowledge after they have studied and experienced Koba under the guidance of a teacher. In Rokan Hulu, the names of the *Tukang Koba* who studied Koba with the guidance of teachers, among others, were Ganti, Taslim, and Wak Settah. Similarly, the Koba Students in Kampar studied Koba with riders like Abdul Sani, Arifin Yunus, Alwi, Zainab, and Zainal (Rahman, 2005, pp. 715–763). Ganti, an authoritative Koba trainer from Rokan Hulu, has mastered various Koba oral literatures, including Koba Panglimo Awang, Koba Panglimo Dalong, Koba Si Bocat, Kobe Dang Tuanku, Kobo Jumang Mat Sodin, and Koba Tunga Sibanan. He studied Koba with Khalifah Ali in Sumponu Alam Village at the age of 15. Wak Settah studied Bukoba with Datuk Kayo at the age of 13. He is recorded as mastering several oral literature Koba, among them Koba Gadih Wena Bungo, Kobe Panglimo Dalong, Koby Ombun Nun Tungga, Kobo Duli Dang Tuanku, Koby Bokuk, and Koba Sutan Bano. He also learned Koba from his teachers, Anum and Ganti. In Kampar, the association of teachers includes, among others, Taib and Abdul Sani. Sani hunted Taib at the age of 24. Arifin Yunus hunted Rahman Licin at the age of 21. Zainab, a woman born in Kampung Tandikat, fought with Alwi at the age of 21. In Koto Tengah Batu Bersurat District XIII Koto Kampar, Zainal Abidin rushed to Tamim at the age of 20.

The process of knowledge transmission between teachers and students is interesting. The process of transmitting knowledge is different from the widely known teaching model. Taslim, for example, mastered Koba Bujang Jauh and Siri Jailun learned how to listen repeatedly to his teacher's performance, Anum, as he described the story. He also replaced Khalifah Ali's teaching process by listening to his teaching performance. No trainer has been found to open a college to train students. Even if this happens, this college is usually personal between a teacher and a student only. The relationship between students in the learning-teaching process is not intensive. A student usually communicates that he is interested and asks for permission from a senior Koba Worker to study. When the senior is ready, he explains something related to the technique of studying Koba's poems, the model of the knock, the way of performing, and so on. When necessary, a teacher equips his students with some mystical knowledge that he believes can help them learn the art skills of Koba.

#### *Learned through the mystical process*

Taslim acknowledges that, in ordinary ways, it is quite difficult to transfer the skill to others. He believes that there is another factor that influences a person's ability to try, which is the teaching of mysticism. Taslim himself acknowledges his interest in studying Koba more deeply after he receives a mysterious order to preserve the Koba tradition. In fact, mystical and magical factors play an important role in the transmission of Koba knowledge to a candidate Koba Worker. Taslim is an example of a Koba worker who acquires skill through a combination of mystical patterns and autodidactic. His interest in and knowledge of Koba grew after dreaming of encountering

"something" he described as a "white man" asking him to revive the Koba tradition. Taslim said:

"To be able to dominate from the beginning to the end, is a bit difficult, even if only because of the hereditary factor. Try it, as if the story began with the statement that all of this is still a sea. There is only one tree. That was what existed at that time. And this is the story of the Panglima Awang until there are kingdoms. There is a kingdom, and there is a rule. Then the story grows up with Koba Panglima Awang dengan Anggun Cik Suri. It took a long time to say everything. It takes seven nights to be able to tell a story about Koba Panglima Awang dengan Anggun Cik Suri. I've heard this story from another Koba Trainer, then there was some sort of shadow or dream that I got. The broken one must grow, and the lost one must change. What appears here is just a shadow. It's like a white cloud. [...] It seemed to be clear what the name was, and I find it hard to explain. There is a kind of real clue to tell Koba: it looks from here to here, if it comes from here, this talk, this word. As the words are in the story of Koba Panglima Awang from the beginning to the end."

Regarding the encounter between Taslim and the figure he described as like a "white cloud" (*awan putih*), Yusri Syam, a culturist and staff member of the Rokan Hulu district government office, explained that "Koba Taslim actually originated in nature. So from the nature of the mind, he is a form of carrier. There is a designation called Taslim as a white cloud; in fact, if it is scientifically said, it is a mind-shaped nature and is then named. In the past, it was called Jin. It can also be called "spirit" (*semangek*). Taslim formed the nature of the mind here. It may come to a time when Taslim is 30 years old, and then a story appears in his mind because he often hears the stories of Koba. Inspired by Ganti's Koba, he identified Ganti as a teacher. Because he has developed himself, he has a natural mindset. The nature of the mind is what is said to be an unreal form, which gives it a picture of the story. And, to call the nature of the mind Taslim, it has its own ritual. One has his own way of creating concentration. Maybe someone gets concentrated by smoking. Taslim gains concentration through the ritual of burning the rainbow; the mantra called *sharru*, then appears in the nature of the mind and gives him a picture of the Bukoba narratives. Something that shaped the story in his mind's nature then he gave it a name and he called it his friend.

According to Taslim, the process of calling against the nature of the mind is not different from a *salik* in the attraction that does a *wirid* and a certain *zikir* that then believes there is something to see. Then he explained what he was going to do with him to find an explanation. Taslim identified and named himself something that found him with Tuk Shaykh Panjang Janguik. This is the character who guides him in the breaking up of the Bukoba stories, a long story whose release sometimes takes up to seven full nights. Taslim has a number of methods to present concentration in order to be able to tell the contents of the covered story. But the main point to be made is that, by his own way and method, Taslim acquired the skill of representing the koba through a mystical legacy: something he embodied as a white cloud (*awan putih*).

The process of transmission of skills in this mystical way is not typical of Taslim. Other experts have experienced similar processes. The transmission of science mystically, in philosophy, is indeed commonplace for those who have certain skills. Imam al-Gazali, an Islamic thinker, claims to gain knowledge through the science of *laduni*—knowledge that is directly revealed to the Lord to the people he chooses without passing through the conventional learning process (Nisa, 2020; Wekke et al., 2018). Muhammad Abid Al-Jabiri called the percentage an *irfani* reasoning (Al-Jabiri, 2000). Ibn Arabi, a Sheikh al-Akbar in the Tasawuf Islamic tradition, wrote his thoughts on the transcendental issue, when he was in a trans condition: a term he called being in direct dialogue with God (Noer, 1995). Unlike Ibn Arabi, who did not give a specific identification to his guiding mind, Taslim identified the mind with the name Tuk Shaykh Long Janguik. In short, the transmission of knowledge in a mystical way is a custom. In the case of Taslim, the pattern that is used to present the nature of the mind that he called the Tuk Syaikh Long Janguik to guide him to *melafadzkan* the temples of the story in the koba of the Commander Awang is done by burning the fire and shooting a certain mantra during the performance of the koba.

The mystical abilities acquired by the Koba Worker through *tapa* (spiritual exercises), include all kinds of actions aimed at developing his internal strength as well as his skills. After a person learns from a certain senior Koba Worker, whether the teacher or the father himself, for a while, the master or father may decide that the time has come to unlock the magical knowledge he has for the student. This knowledge can be a spell that, when spoken before the show begins, will surely succeed in capturing the attention of its audience, or it can be a spell to drive away evil influences. This mystical ability is attached by the Koba Trainer to the knowledge acquired by carrying out the practise. This is what he sees as his own magical knowledge, so little of it is what he is willing to reveal to a group of chosen people.

#### *Formal education, course or training*

Researchers have not yet found who acquires Koba's performance skills through formal education, either through schools on role art, performance, or training or through specific courses designed to train professional Koba trainers. According to Sumardi, a member of the Tourism Service Rokan Hulu staff, the skill test cannot be lowered through training. This is because there are certain things of a magical nature that encircle the world of Koba that not everyone is able to access. In 2003, the Tourism Department of Rokan Hulu district organised the Koba Performance Training activity, a programme aimed at finding new Koba Workers' seeds. A number of people representing the squad were trained for two nights. The observers were taken from Koba perpetrators from various backgrounds to explain various things related to what Koba's oral literature is, how to learn it, what to do to become a professional Koba worker, and the like. But this effort did not yield results. After about four years of training so far, no one of the alumni of this training has been found to have Koba skills due to training, instead of being able to continue the oral literary tradition.

Unlike the training that has been sought by the local government, at this time no Koba courses have been found that are specifically prepared for the birth of a professional Koba worker. Similarly, in the lectures, no subject was specifically dedicated to studying the oral literature of Koba. Some students from AKMR (the Academy of Malay Riau Arts [*Akademi Kesenian Melayu Riau*]) or University of Riau conducted research on Koba. But the research was more focused on what Koba really meant. Not yet directed on how to become a Koba worker. Koba's oral literature in the modern academic and educational world seems to still be placed on a bookshelf called cultural texts and has not yet become a cultural act. This is based on the non-existence of the Koba worker, who was born into a modern educational institution.

### **Koba on stage and its matters**

#### *Invite the Koba Worker*

Contracting a Koba Worker is not a sufficiently accurate term to refer to an activity seeking an agreement between a facilitator or respondent and a Koba Worker related to a deal. The basic term for this activity is inviting. That is, the activity presents a Koba Worker performed by the organiser when communicating the meaning of using the word "inviting the Koba worker". Nevertheless, this transaction is used among others because a Koba Worker is also expected to receive a certain reward from the skill of the trial. Also, other than that, the future transactions and agreements between the two parties are expected to meet the qualification of the word transaction in the usual sense, so that the art of the oral literature of Koba can be preserved by providing economic contributions to the perpetrator.

Usually, a Koba Worker is contracted a few days, weeks, or months before the show. In the case of a Koba craftsman who is considered to be busy, an invitee must contact him far away the day before so as not to fail to present the desired Koba craftsman, or he can schedule a time to

meet the performance request. On which day a demonstration that represents Koba should be held, a facilitator or host who has a legacy is the determiner of the performance time. Therefore, usually when the show is held, it is determined first before a worker is contacted. If the Koba Worker is not able to serve on the appointed day, usually a client or respondent will look for someone else who can replace the failed Koba worker. Here is the procession of dialogue when a Koba Worker is asked to perform by his client:

"My grandfather, I have a plan. I intend to invite Grandpa to perform Bukoba on Monday night. If there is no obstacle, my arrival represents the family inviting Grandpa. As our custom, we hand over the following sirih and kapur." This word was sent by an invitee by placing the sirih teak in front of him, and wrapping the sirih teak to the side. When I am hindered from performing Bukoba on the scheduled schedule, then I take the sirih, and say: this sirih I still eat, the pinch remains divided, and the conversation we also do. Regarding the purpose, I apologise for not being able to accept, for being in the way." But Koba supported the invitation, and then he said, "Cut me some food; the conversation is done too. On Monday night, I came to accept the invitation."

There is a kind of requirement for transactions and negotiations between the two sides to be carried out in the House of Koba concerned. It is not ethical when an invitation to a Koba Worker is delivered in a meeting that occurs by chance, such as a meeting in a bar or on the streets. In addition, a Koba Worker is almost certain not to serve the request of a client or facilitator when Dian receives the request in a meeting that does not take place at his home. This is probably due to the fact that the transactions and negotiations carried out by both parties have requirements to be fulfilled, namely by bringing a clearance sheet that will be delivered to the client to the worker Koba as a kind of "contract agreement letter".

The processing of transactions as described above is commonplace at a time when there are no advanced means of communication such as the telephone or other electronic mail. In addition, setting the location where the transaction occurs is carried out between the two parties who are in the same village or district. The question of whether there is any flexibility in the pattern of transactions when, for example, the inviter and the client are in a distant place and they judge for the effectiveness of the time that the client only sends a letter of appearance or via electronic communications may only be answered by Taslim with the word "this may only happen". This estimate is based on the case when the local government invited Taslim and other Koba Workers to make an official written request. Transactions between the two sides are not accompanied by a circular site, as is the usual procession when inviting a Koba Worker.

#### *About Ritual in the Koba Performance*

Like other performance arts, Koba requires mature preparation so that a performance can meet the expectations of both the client and the concerned Koba Worker. But unlike other performing arts, Koba performances have a sacred dimension. A spectacle is seen as more than a mere entertainment spectacle; it is intended for a purpose with a dimension of sacredness, either to expect salvation and protection from God or to avoid the occurrence of something unwanted in everyday life. The preparations are divided into two parts: the things prepared by the hosts and the things that were prepared by the coworkers. Under certain conditions, both sides jointly prepare the show. The host sometimes asks the coworker about things to prepare. In the case, for example, where the worker Koba needs equipment to show up but the host does not have the equipment, the purchase of the tool is done with the agreement of both parties. The place and setting of the room are usually prepared by the host. The other thing the host has prepared is to provide stage equipment. The decision about whether the show will be held for a few hours, one night, or even up to seven nights is usually made by the host authority.

The host is also responsible for the order in which the audience enjoys the performance. When a performance is performed in the framework of a wedding party or a child's invitation, the invited family and friends of the host side are at the same time the audience participants. In



determining the audience, a Koba Worker has hardly any authority to do so. The Koba trainer can only customise the type of Koba and the content that will be displayed in a performance. When the audience who enjoys Koba consists of a mixture of parents and children, a Koba Worker will definitely choose a story that suits the model of the audience.

Derk said that Taslim never displayed certain parts related to the bed scene of Koba Panglima Awang and Anggun Cik Suri that he was presenting because he judged the part too vulgar and less relevant to the audience who saw his performance. The point is that the performance took place outside his own village, at the home of an acquaintance, and in front of a less-known audience (Derks, 2000, p. 86). In addition to the physical and material preparations shown, a Koba Trainer also performs personal rituals to bring concentration during the performance. Taslim says that in a show, there are at least three processes that must be passed: (1) first open the road, (2) then see the way, and (3) walk straight. To be able to open the way, he said, there are at least two things to do. First, burn the spell, and second, do soru or melafadzkan certain spells that are played with poems and rhythms that are included in a series of Koba stories but are placed at the beginning of the performance. Burning the fire for Taslim is a ritual that he never missed every time he performed it, at least when he introduced Koba Panglima Awang and Anggun Cik Suri, Ratok Si Bongsu Bilang Malam, and Koba Sicuriang. When the researcher asked if burning had some implications for him during the performance or even was a ritual associated with the level of sacrality of a performed Koba, Taslim explained that it was done to "forget the nature of the Koba itself." This ritual is believed to arouse energy when performing the show.

Taslim did not explain more deeply the mystical dimensions of the incineration performed before the performance. The strong estimate of the researchers of this was done by Taslim, as his attitude of caution related to this burning of the fireplace. Because, for some, the ritual of burning the same shrine Therefore, the ritual of burning a moment before the show appeared to be hidden by Taslim. As previously stated, the incinerator was burned and then attached to the inner walls of Bebano to avoid a striking impression in this procession. Taslim said he sometimes received criticism from his colleagues or teachers about his attraction to certain rituals he performed at the time of the performance. Another ritual is to do soru (calling) or read a spell that is sculpted with a poem and rhythm that is included in a series of Koba stories. This appeal seems to be used to call out or reprimand what he describes as "other beings close to the nature of mind." Unlike the ordinary spell that is expressed in secret, this call is performed by Taslim with a tone, rhythm, and pressure of sound that are exactly the same as when the content of Koba's story is represented. The layout of this call was made at the beginning of the Koba presentation so that some people would think that the Taslim shooting was part of the story content in Koba. Here is an example of the Koba Panglima Awang:

Oooi...lo na Awang  
 Rang mudo koba panglimo Awang  
 Subolun lah nak kisah di cito boralih  
 Subolun ti nak koba rang mudo ti cito diuraikan  
 Dimakan ti nak dolu nak sirieh bosamo kapuo  
 Diisok rokok ti non sobatang ai  
 Baru disoru, nak mudo ti non Syaiah lo  
 Tuk Syaiah lo Panjang Janguik  
 Non duduk di ateh rang mudo tuhelo pulo awan  
 Turun Niek Syaiah lo  
 Panjang Janguik non buselo di awang-awang  
 Janguik tulepo ko ribannyo  
 Izinkan kami niek Syaiah lo Panjang lo Janguik  
 Untuk momukak si tambo Panglimu lo Awang pulo  
 Dengan amai bonsu ti ko Anggun Cik Suri ei...  
 Non bak kato nyenyo urang

*Batang jua lah ditumbuk potuih  
Kapa lo dalam morano juo, oi  
Colu di lua ino mungotuih  
Hati di dalam boramok juo*

The quotation reveals something he identified as Tuk Shaykh Long Janguik. This name is a gift from Taslim itself, based on the features of the present figure. The Sososk was identified by Taslim as a friend and guide in portraying the good temples of the Koba story. Tuk Shaykh Long Janguik described him as something that hit his mind so that he could remember the sequences of the story, how to hit the knock, and even the choice of words used in the story. After passing these rituals, it is now time for the content of Koba to be delivered to the public in a wide range of ways according to the allocation of time provided by the facilitator or host.

The ritual was also performed when a Koba Tester completed a performance for seven consecutive nights. According to Taslim, telling a story about Koba is a prestigious achievement for a Koba Worker. Therefore, when a Koba story succeeds, a relatively large-scale Thanksgiving ceremony will be held in honour of the Koba Worker who succeeded in completing a very long, complete, and exhausting story. This event is called Krojat. One of the events carried out in gratitude for Koba's departure after seven consecutive nights was usually done by cutting a goat or at least one chicken or goat. The cutting of goats was carried out as a form of tribute to "the hard work of the worker trying to try from the beginning to the end." In addition, the special thing about this Koba ritual is that certain parts of the goat's cut are to be given to the Koba Worker who managed to realise the Koba, namely the brain part. It cannot be eaten by others. The slaughter of goats is done by bringing part or even the entire audience together to eat the goat meat. There are special rituals that must be fulfilled. According to Taslim, something peculiar about this Croatian event is the presence of certain parts of goats that are swallowed in the river.

#### *Performance of the Bukoba Tradition*

The party inviting Koba's performance is sometimes a family representative, and sometimes it is also a representative of the community of the village or the village where he lives. In addition, it may be that a Koba Worker is invited by a particular private agency or government, which subsequently acts as a facilitator. But the third group's displays have relatively less frequency compared to the first and second categories models. According to Taslim, the party where he was most often invited to perform the koba during the period from 1971 to now is the wedding party. The second round was followed by the momentum of the children's show. The two most important events in the journey cycle of the Malay people's lives: marriage for daughters and chitanan for boys. Other events in life travel, even if they are only celebrated in the family. In addition to these two events, the Koba performance in the framework of a family event is carried out as an expression of gratitude for the rescue or in order to occupy a new home.

When the marriage is held in the framework of thanksgiving, it is usually held at the time of the Muko Pinang evening event in the residence of the men's worship. Place the event when making and preparing the equipment for the shipment items at the house of the prospective bride, because in the morning of tomorrow the shipments will be delivered to the house of the bridegroom. On that night, while entertaining people who make chain pins for packages or other shipping supplies, a Koba Worker is asked to entertain. If the show is done, there will be no other entertainment. Koba is not the only entertainment that is often held by the host of the bride during the Moko Pinang procession. Because, in this event, in addition to Koba, sometimes hosts show Burdah, a kind of special Rokan Hulu art that is rooted in Islamic tradition. But among many of these types of entertainment, the host chooses only one.

When the gathering is carried out in the framework of the reception of the child's show, it usually takes place before the coach arrives on the stage. Even often, the stroke has lasted a few

days or even weeks before, especially if it is clinically performed, as is now commonly done. Chitanan children in the Malay community tradition are a ritual of life that is always celebrated. Both boys and girls are celebrated, although only boys are celebrated. Khitan or circumcision is defined as the process of cutting the skin of the male end of the penis (Rahman, 2006, pp. 44-45). It is usually done when someone is young. This process is carried out with the aim of opening the head of the penis in order to clean up all the dirt on the penile. From a cultural perspective, khitan is a ceremony of transition from the state of 'crab' in infants or children to the condition of 'sacred', that is, to become a holy and noble Muslim.

The ceremony is usually done with complete preparation. Traditionally, when a boy has almost reached "reasonable" age, he is deceived by a dukun, pawang, or mudin. On the day when a child is to become pregnant, the child will be bathed and encouraged to swim long in the water so that he is cold and the skin becomes less sensitive. In some of the Malay communities, among others in Rokan Hulu, the child who will be treated is perfectly decorated: dressed in Malay and new clothes, crooked, decorated with flowers or cloth. Children are carried around the campsite with the sound of a rebel or a compass while walking in a carnival, being carried on their shoulders by a family member, or being hanged on a chair or a small boat. After the parade or carnival, the child is taken to the room or part of the house where the ceremony will take place.

Before the ceremony was held, the blessing prayers were held. On this occasion, entertainment is presented, among others, by performing Koba. In addition to Koba, the entertainment presented at this party is optional, including, among others, Berzansi, Marhaban, or Burdah. Sometimes Koba's performances in the celebration ceremony are held at night. Because the location of the Koba performance is performed as entertainment for the invitees and family members who have a favour, the Koba performance on the occasion of the Khitan party celebration usually only takes the maximum amount of time for one night. The purpose of Koba's performance on this occasion, besides entertainment, is for the safety of the children who are stunned.

Except for the reasons above, I found the show was done in order to fulfil Nazar. Nazar is the commitment of a man to himself before God. When what he wants is fulfilled, he will do something. Something that is revealed when it comes to a personal commitment (Nazar) is what has to be accomplished when what it wants is realised. Unlike promises, Nazar involves someone with him when committing to doing something. Since Nazar is categorised as a promise, the fulfilment of a Nazar in Islamic tradition is an obligation. The performance of the Koba performed in fulfilment of Nazar appears in various forms. Sometimes someone is invited to a wedding party, or his son's invitation will be a cowboy. Sometimes, when a man succeeds in passing a test or disaster that he thinks is too difficult to pass, he will do something. When he wishes to do so or when he wants to do it, he has the power to do what he wants.

Another event that led a family to invite Koba's performance was the need to occupy a new home (Rahman, 2005, pp. 1003-1005). The purpose of the prayer is to pray and express thanksgiving to God for His mercy so that the building of the house can be completed without obstacles. As for the sequence of events in the ceremonial procession of occupying this new house, it started with the arrival of the building's owner and Pawang, who brought white water containing a slice of purple limau that Pawang had donated. The event usually takes place before sunrise. White water is spilled around the building, inside and out. Then the prayer ceremony begins. Sometimes it is during the day, but it can be delayed until the night. In the moment of burning the prayer of bliss, the flames and the heights are burned. The ceremony of occupying a new house is sometimes postponed even though the owner has already occupied the new house. Such conditions usually occur due to certain considerations of the host that are usually related to economic conditions. In the event after the blessing prayer, the host usually displays entertainment among others by inviting the Koba Worker. This means that placing the koba performance in the event will occupy this new house as an entertainment event after the core procession of salvation

prayer is carried out.

Another opportunity for a Koba Worker to show up is when commemorating a particular big day. The celebration of the day of independence of the Republic of Indonesia, the anniversary of the district, the people's arts celebration, the harvesting of padi, or the performance in the framework of educational celebrations is a momentum for them to demonstrate their experimental skills. Koba art exhibitions in the educational framework are carried out when there are parties asking for a Koba performance to be discussed or researched. Presentations for the purposes of the latter are relatively rare, although what is done in this series of research with the introduction of koba is one of the examples where the oral literature is displayed for educational interests.

## CONCLUSIONS

The above exposure shows a change in public appreciation of Koba's oral literature. Although the art based on the skills of processing words and writing once occupied an important position in Malay Riau culture, its appreciation has already faded. Weddings, children's gatherings, or even certain big-day celebrations have already provided space for the Craftsmen to demonstrate their skills. The Koba performance as a means of entertainment for society has now been replaced by various types of modernity-based entertainment. In the past, the social status of a Koba Worker once occupied a relatively considerable position, especially in his position of connecting human beings with the imperceptible forces that surround and influence him. Therefore, the social status of a Koba craftsman in Malay society occupies a position above the average of general society.

There are four patterns that are the medium of transfer of bucu skills, namely through heredity of descent, the environment, the senior Koba worker, and mystical or magical inheritance. Not a few found a Koba Worker whose birth was obtained from the combination of these patterns. It is interesting that until now there has not been a Koba Worker whose intelligence represents the oral literature of Koba obtained thanks to training or courses, as is commonly found in the modern educational system, such as through teaching in schools or colleges.

In the midst of modernity, which threatens the existence of Koba's oral literature, there are still many options that can be made to revitalise Koba's verbal literature in the face of changing times. First, make documentation in the form of a recording of all the texts of Koba's narrative that are still in the memory of the Koba Worker. Second, raise the degree or status of the social life of the Koba Workers so that they are no longer seen as economically suburban social groups. Third, incorporate the discussion of Koba into the Local Charge in schools for education at the level of primary school to Higher High School. Fourth, the important thing is to change the thinking, orientation, and behaviour of some of the people who still see Koba's oral literature as a subaltern culture into something they need in everyday life.

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