



Literary Studies

Bakayat: Endangered Tradition of Oral Literature in West Sumatra

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A B S T R A C T

This is historical research on traditional oral literature, *bakayat*, performed in West Sumatra, Indonesia. As preliminary research, it primarily aimed to document the performance and collect its scarcely written sources. Data and sources were collected through observation, interview, and documentation methods. Descriptions of the performance or narrative, narrator or storyteller, text, and context are provided in this essay to introduce *bakayat* as a Minangkabau art and literature and to place it in a larger literary context. The data were collected by observing and recording *bakayat* in its actual performance setting, obtaining documents and archives, and interviewing its storytellers. The study found that *bakayat* is seriously endangered. Used to be one of the most attended performances in the area, *bakayat* is no longer appealing to young audiences. The sustainability and continuity of *bakayat* as a local tradition are at stake. Therefore, serious measures must be formulated and taken by the government, local adat dignitaries, and other cultural stakeholders to promote this unique tradition and encourage the young audience to learn and preserve *bakayat*.

I. INTRODUCTION

Bakayat is a literary art performance popular in the area around Payakumbuh, known today as *Kabupaten* (the regency) of Limapuluh Koto, West Sumatra. The one under study was performed in *Nagari* Mungka. The word *bakayat* is a local dialect of the Malay verb *berhikayat* (telling a story). As the name suggests, it is a story-telling performance in the form of one to three *tukang kayats* (the storytellers) singing out poetic narratives to a village crowd audience. All stories contain religious themes covering quotidian practices of Islamic teaching, prophetic stories – which are not limited to only the life of Prophet Muhammad but also include those of other prophets recognized in Islam - to the eschatological narratives which are believed in Islam to be experienced by every human being. Like other traditional entertainments, such as *kaba*, *randai*, and *saluang*, *bakayat* has twofold functions: education and entertainment.

This religious narrative of *bakayat* is usually performed in the houses of villagers who hold

festivities preceding important religious and traditional rituals or rites of passage, such as weddings, circumcisions, and *turun mandi* (baby bathing ritual). Babi bathing is a ritual to bless and introduce a newborn baby to a wider circle of family and friends while offering prayers for the baby's happiness and safety. It is also commonly found in smaller festivity occasions such as *badu'a* or *sadokah nasi*, often held in welcoming the fasting month of Ramadan and other thanksgiving. *Badu'a* literary means "to pray," while *sadokah nasi* means to give away food – a simple and humble feast intended as *syukuran* (thanksgiving) - expressing gratitude for God's blessing or expecting one. It is similar to the practice of *slametan* in Javanese culture (Geertz, 1976). *Bakayat* is performed during the daytime or evening, anticipating the nature of the occasion and the intended audience. The story is chosen from the available collection according to the occasion's intention or the host's request.

Once ruled by "a kingdom of words," as Jane Drakard calls it, the Minangkabau consider literary

excellence and verbal skill important components of their culture (Drakard, 1999). The Minangkabau admire eloquence and enjoy both practicing and listening to various verbal art, which ranges from traditional forms such as speech exchanges at formal *adat* ceremonies to the rhetoric of coffee-shop politicians. The language used in *bakayat* is a literary variety of the local dialect of Minangkabau.

Today *bakayat* is one of surviving but endangered oral traditions in Minangkabau society. This preliminary study documented the oral tradition so it could be further developed into a more profound and full-fledged study that hopefully will contribute to a short list of scholarships on the Minangkabau oral tradition.

The oral tradition of the same name, *bakayat*, is also found in other places outside West Sumatra, such as in Sasak society in Lombok (Suyasa et al., 2017) and Kuantan Sengingi, Riau (Riau Magazine, 2019). Like Minangkabau *bakayat*, in those two places, the name *bakayat* also means *berhikayat*. The Kuantan *bakayat* most likely originated from or related to the one in Limapuluh Koto. However, a comparative study is needed to determine their similarities and differences. While more popular in Limapuluh Koto, Minangkabau *bakayat* also exists in other areas in West Sumatra with name variations such as *Bakayaik* and *Hikayat*. However, some, such as in Sicincin, can no longer be found today (Phillips, 2009).

Among serious studies of oral tradition or literature in West Sumatra is the seminal work of Nigel Phillips on *Sijobang* (Phillips, 2009). Fewer studies are found on *bakayat*. Among the shortlist are the works of Oktavia (2018), Abnur (2007), and Jamaan (n.d.) which discuss the performance performed in other regions. However, no study on *bakayat* in Limapuluh Koto is found. Therefore, in this respect, this study on *bakayat* in *Nagari* Mungka is imperative.

II. METHOD

The data in this preliminary research were collected by using historical methods: observing, note-taking, and recording *bakayat* in its actual performance context. In a narrower sense, I conducted a participant observation as I sat and mingled with other audiences. The documentation of the oral tradition was in the forms of audio and video recordings and a collection of the scarcely written texts, including handwritten ones, of the story, as well as obtaining personal archives. Interviews

with the two *tukang kayats*, limited transcripts, and descriptive analysis are also provided. Hopefully, it will add to the understanding of the narrative and performance and, more importantly, contribute to conserving the endangered traditional oral literature and art performance.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On Local Context of *Bakayat*

Nagari Mungka is one of the five *nagaris* administered under the sub-district Mungka. Other *nagaris* are *Nagari* Simpang Kapuak, Talang Maur, Jopang Manganti dan Sungai Antuan. *Nagari* Mungka is situated in *Kabupaten* (regency of) Limapuluh Koto, in the highland of West Sumatra, one of the three important *luhaks* of Minangkabau (Djalius, 2010) at the altitudes of 500 meters above sea level. The *Kecamatan* (sub-district) Mungka is home to at least 22,389 populations, with half living in *Nagari* Mungka. (Laporan Kantor Wali Nagari Mungka, 2007). It covers an area of 103,13 kilometers or 2,500 hectares. The *nagari* is around fifteen kilometers from Payakumbuh, the capital of the *Kabupaten*. It shares borders with its neighboring *Nagari* of Simpang Kapuak and Talang Maur in the north, *Kecamatan* Guguk VIII Koto in the South, *Nagari* Jopang Manganti in the West, and Taeh in the East.

Surrounded by the *Bukit Barisan* (Barisan Mountains), which stretches along Sumatra and is very close to Mount Bungsu, *Nagari* Mungka is blessed with fertile soil, making agriculture the main livelihood for the population (Edison, 2008). For the last twenty years, Mungka has been known as a center of farm egg production, with an average daily production of 1.5 million eggs (*nagarimungka* blog, 2009), making it a province-wide leading supplier and an important supplier for its neighboring provinces. Other kinds of livelihood are also found in the *Nagari*, such as freshwater/pond fish, smoked catfish, and wild duck farming (*Nagari* Mungka blog, 2009). A small number of civil servants add to this composition, which mostly consists of teachers and administrative staff of schools of all levels, from primary schools up to high schools, as well as itinerant traders and sharecroppers. (Edison, 2008)



Figure 1. Nagari Mungka in West Sumatra Province
(Kantor Wali Nagari Mungka, 2007)

For the Minangkabau, people's education is critical. A survey shows that West Sumatra has the highest literacy rate compared to other provinces in Indonesia (Lee, 2011), and the region of Limapuluh Koto is the highest in West Sumatra. It is particularly true for Mungka, where it is common for the village people to sell or pawn their property for their children's education. When they exchange greetings, they would ask how each other's children are doing, which is often proudly answered that such a *sawah* or piece of land had been pawned or sold for "sending your nieces and nephews to college" (Djalius, 2015). Being close to Payakumbuh, which is strategically passed by the main provincial road connecting West Sumatra to Riau, the population of Mungka is pretty much open, adaptive, and outward-looking. Besides, as part of Minangkabau culture, many people go *merantau* or voluntarily immigrate to other places to earn a better living or seek knowledge (Kato, 1992; Naim, 1974). Most of them go to Pekanbaru in Riau, Medan in North Sumatra, Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, and even neighboring

countries such as Malaysia.

On the Performance and Preparation: Context of Situation of *Bakayat*

Unlike other performances like *saluang* - another kind of Minangkabau oral tradition performance that combines a traditional musical instrument played usually by males and a narrative singer, mostly by females - the performance of *bakayat* received no cultural resistance given that the stories are based on Islamic teachings, eschatology, history, and the life of the Prophet Muhammad, following Minangkabau self-identification as Muslims best reflected in *their* adat or customary principle which says "*Adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah*, a Minangkabau aphorism means "Custom is based on Sharia (Islamic law), and Sharia is based on the Holy book (Qur'an)." *Saluang's* audience, on the contrary, is mostly youngsters, and the theme or topic of the narratives is mostly about the youth's life. Sometimes the narratives are considered too indecent. In Mungka, there was a period when *Saluang* was prohibited.

The performance of *bakayat* under study took place in the house of Hj. Nur Asma in Nagari Mungka Tengah, Kecamatan Mungka on Friday, July 29, 2011, at 11:00 pm (WIB), Western Indonesian Time, as a tradition of welcoming the holy month of Ramadhan. The earlier plan was to hold *bakayat* (storytelling) and *salawat* (prayers and venerations for the Prophet Muhammad) on two separate days. However, it turned out that all *salawat* groups and *bakayat* - which could be performed only by a couple of narrators - were fully booked as early as two months before the fasting month of Ramadhan. After some efforts and with personal lobbies, the *tukang kayat* agreed to hold a performance for Nur Asma and therefore sacrificed their break time that week. Knowing the *tukang kayat* could also perform the *salawat*, and due to the time and schedule constraints, Hj. Nur Asma requested them to perform both *salawat* and *bakayat* consecutively on the same day, with the *salawat* to be held first after *Maghrib* (sunset) prayers and then continued with the *bakayat*.

As commonly carried out in the village, the event is supposed to be attended and enjoyed by a crowd of neighbors and relatives, and for that occasion, special foods would be served. Unfortunately, the plan did not run as expected. The leading narrator of the *tukang kayat* failed to show up while his co-narrator, who had already

arrived, just waited in one of the small kiosks near the house. The latter did not want to start without the former, for he considered his partner the leader. Because the absent narrator could only be contacted almost at 11:00 pm, the host and potential audiences decided that the performance was canceled.

Much to the host's surprise, the *tukang kayat* eventually showed up when everyone was ready to sleep. It was past 11:00 pm when the narrators knocked at the already closed doors. Despite the late hour and the absence of neighbors and relatives as audiences, the host Hj. Nur Asma and *tukang kayat* decided that the show must go on. The main narrator's explanation for his late coming was that there was a "misunderstanding" between him and the host. While the host expected them to perform *salawat* and *bakayat*, the main narrator assumed they would do just the latter. Hence the *bakayat* was finally performed in the presence of only three persons as the audience. It was concluded at 2:00 am after performing for three hours.

When they were about to perform the *Bakayat* the main narrator said if I was interested, I could record it with my cell phone. Granted their permission, I then recorded the performance inconspicuously to give the impression that I was interested but did not put their performance under scrutiny, fearing that they would be self-conscious and would not respond naturally. I took pictures and videotaped fragments of the performance. Most of the data and information on *bakayat* were based on my observation, performance recording, and conversation with the storytellers of *bakayat*. The entire narration and conversation were recorded in a voice recorder.

On *Tukang Kayats*, the Narrators

The *Bakayat* was performed by two narrators born and bred in Mungka, where this study was conducted. The first narrator was considered the main storyteller, he was committed and dedicated to performing *Bakayat* since he started it for the first time. While his co-narrator or assistant changed from time to time. The performance was usually performed in this duo format.

The first narrator, who was considered the leading narrator, was Ahmadison. He was fifty years old and lived in Rambek, an adjacent village to the *nagari* Mungka. *Bakayat* was Ahmadison's part-time job, while his main profession was *berdakwah* or Islamic propagation. As *pendakwah*, the propagator, he propagated from one mosque to the other in the evening or from one place to the

other. Besides, he was also a *Syekh Mudo*, a junior leader of a Sufi order with the title of *Khalifah*, by which he was known and commonly addressed. Being a *Khalifah*, he was entitled to have his *surau*, a Minangkabau term for small local Islamic study centers, where he performed, led, and inaugurated those who joined the *Suluk* (meditation) ritual (Fathurrahman, 2008). During the daytime, in his leisure, he farmed.

Ahmadison had only an elementary school as his formal secular education. However, in studying Islam, he was a serious and committed itinerant student who studied at various places and from many *gurus*. He was also a grandson of a notable Sufi leader in his village from whom he studied Sufism and was also a *Khalifah* himself.

On *Bakayat* History

Unlike most of the previous generation of *tukang kayat* who passed the skill from generation to generation within their family circle, Ahmadison learned it from a woman narrator, Mak Sumeh, who was not related to him by blood (*Interview with Ahmadison*, 2011). However, Mak Sumeh was not the first person who introduced him to *Bakayat*. He recalled how he was astounded by a group of women narrators from a neighboring village, Korong, Padang Pinang, from whom he first heard the *bakayat*. Since then, he has strongly desired to be a *tukang kayat* and thought he could improve his knowledge and skill. While those women narrators could only narrate the stories, which were sometimes difficult to be understood by their audiences, Ahmadison thought he could provide them with some explanations given that the stories were mostly based on the teaching of Islam and that he was an Islamic *ulama* and propagator. He thought he could also use *bakayat* to help his *dakwah*. As he mentioned, his congregation often wept while listening to him when he used *bakayat* to make them interested in and understand his propagation. He then learned it from the old lady, the late Mak Sumeh, from Mungka Tongah.

The second narrator was Ideh. He lived in Kampai Rumah Godang, the center part of Mungka. Before deciding to return to his village, he had experienced working in the Sumatran jungle for an oil drilling company in Duri, a city in Riau Province. His main livelihood was farming after working for some years as a sand gatherer from the village's main river *Batang Sinamar*.

Like Ahmadison, Ideh does not have a high

secular or formal education level. But, unlike Ahmadison he never attended any Islamic school or joined any regular religious study. He learned basic Quranic studies from local *suraus* and developed the ability to read the *Arab gundul* or Jawi (Malay borrowing of Arabic script) by himself. He was interested in and learned *bakayat* from a man named Rasyid Gilo (the mad Rasyid), once a known *tukang kayat* in Mungka. The *kayat* master was so-called as he underwent a mental breakdown which most people believe was due to economic pressure at that time. While he was a very fine narrator of *hikayat*, the skill of *bakayat* could barely support his life. *Bakayat* is only performed on certain occasions, so one cannot rely on it as a livelihood. It only becomes a part-time job for its narrator. Besides, this performance has no standard or fixed payment. *Bakayat* narrators never set the compensation for *bakayat* and leave it to their hosts to pay them whatever amount they can afford. Mostly it depends on their economic conditions. Sometimes, the *tukang kayat* gets a considerable amount of money; at others, it is just a very modest one that functions more as a token of gratitude or appreciation (Interview with Ideh, 2011).

Ideh started *bakayat* much earlier than Ahmadison. He used to narrate it with another narrator, Edi, who became his co-narrator. Sometimes he did *bakayat* with two other co-narrators, which he considered a maximum number of narrators in a performance, for he thought it was almost impossible to arrange and keep up with the harmony of the song and the turn-taking if the narrators were more than three persons. After his partner, Edi, passed away, Ideh no longer took any order of *bakayat* by himself, and since then, he would only act as an assistant to Ahmadison.

Ideh met Ahmadison for the first time in Surau Lukasok in Mungka, when he learned that Ideh was a former *tukang Kayat*. To their surprise, they also learned they are somehow related by blood. After a tryout in a house belonging to Mr. Yusir in Koto Anyia, Rambek, they became partners. At that time, they were the only *tukang kayats* in the region. Their union as *tukang kayat* strengthens their family bond. Ideh was the longest and the most reliable partner to Ahmadison. Before meeting Ideh, he often changed partners because they were mostly uncommitted young boys.

On *Bakayat* Audiences

The audiences of *bakayat* performances normally comprise members of the hosting

family, their close and distant relatives, and their neighbors. The audiences are of various ages, from children to adults and older people. They come from various educational and occupational backgrounds. Compared to the past, when there was no internet and only very limited and boring TV stations available, the number of young audiences today has decreased significantly. Very few teenagers join the crowd; most watch television or use gadgets (Interview with Ahmadison, 2011). The biggest compositions of audiences now are adults and the elderly. Small children come mostly with their parents to meet other children and play together. Most of the time, children play outside while their parents attend the performance.

On *Bakayat* Repertoire

The stories or *hikayat* are narrated in a simple and almost monotonous rhythm. They use the Minangkabau language with the local (Mungka) dialect. It is written in a script called *Jawi* or *Arab gundul* (Malay borrowing of Arabic script without diacritical marks).

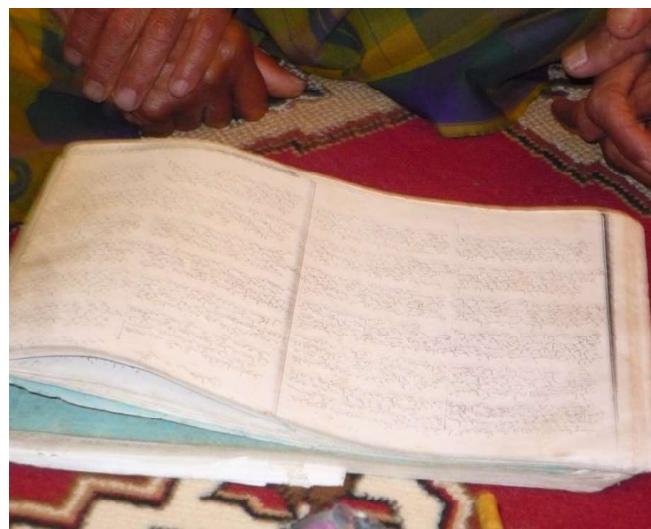


Figure 2. A copy of the handwritten storybook of *Kayat*

The main depository of the *hikayat* is found in handwritten books. Most of the sources are photo-copied books containing several stories. Ahmadison and Ideh had several hand-written books. According to Ideh, his teacher owned the original copy and had asked him to take and save it if she died. Unfortunately, when she died, no one knew the books' whereabouts. In the past, these valuable sources were duplicated by hand copying from the original books, such as those owned by Ideh. Ideh's teacher hand-copied the original book from his teacher, who copied it from an *ulama* who

brought it from Mecca. (*Interview with Ideh*, 2011). Inspired by the source, some earlier generations of *tukang kayat* also created other stories with modifications to accommodate local needs. Today existing books are disseminated and preserved through photocopying. Unfortunately, there is no new book written. The narrators rely on what is left by the previous generation of *tukang kayat*.

Each of the books possessed by Ideh and Ahmadison contains about ten stories. Among these stories are:

- *Nobi Bacukua (When the Prophet Shaved)*
- *Nobi Barompeh (The Prophet in a Duel)*
- *Nobi Baniago (The Prophet's experience in Trading)*
- *Nobi Pindah (The Moving of the Prophet)*
- *Kisah Kanak-kanak (The Story of Children/ on the Death of Children)*
- *Pasakik Mati (Difficulty of Dying)*
- *Asab Kubua (Life in Grave)*
- *Asab Kiamat (Torments in the Doomsday)*
- *Asab Mukasar (Torments in the Day of Judgment),*
- *Sarugo (the Heaven),*
- *Naroko (the Hell),*
- *and Kisah Hasan Husen (Story of Hasan and Hussein).*

The most frequently requested stories by the audiences are *Kisah Kanak-kanak* (on Death of children) and *Pasakik Mati* (Difficulty of Dying). Ahmadison's favorite is *Asab Mukasar* (Torments in the Day of Judgment), and Ideh's is *Nobi Baniago* (The Prophet's experience in Trading).

On *Bakayat* Sustainability

According to Ahmadison, at the time of this research, *Bakayat* can only be found in *Nagari Mungka*. The co-narrators, Ahmadison and Ideh, were the only surviving *tukang kayat* in the entire region of Limapuluh Koto. The narrators were unaware of *bakayat* existence anywhere else in West Sumatra. The narrators believed that *bakayat* originally existed in Mungka, initiated by some *ulamas* who returned from Mecca and brought with them some eschatological stories, stories about early Islam, and the life of the Prophet Muhammad. This first generation of *ulama tukang kayat* modified the stories and rewrote them in the local vernacular.

The enthusiasm towards the performance was quite high if judged from the number of audience attendance. The scope of the performance was also

getting wider. The narrators received requests to perform *bakayat* from neighboring villages and distant villages within the Kabupaten. They were occasionally asked to perform it in other provinces, such as Riau and Jambi Provinces. However, the frequency and the kind of events in which they used to be asked to perform were declining, as well as the number of its young audiences, which the narrators believed was significantly impacted by the penetration and accessibility of modern technology such as electronic media that reached even the remotest villages as Ahmadison and Ideh put it:

- *Kok daulu lai banyak nan mudo2 sabab iko baru budaya urang, kok lahia anak panggia salawat, kok sunat urang panggia salawat, bakayat.. dek kiniko maso lah baubah, zaman lah baganti. Laia anak panggia orgen, sunat saluang, orgen.. sadangkan olek.. kini ditompek jantan lah baorgen pulo.. Ado pangaruh TV, internet nan awak ndak manengok2 tio do.*
- *(In the past many of the young were amongst them (audience) because that was the only (available) culture. If babies were born, they would call salawat. In circumcisions, they would also call salawat and bakayat. But now, the time has changed, and the era has shifted. When new babies are born, people usually call electric solo organs. In circumcision again (they call) saluang and organ. Even at the groom's wedding parties nowadays, people have solo organ... Besides, there are also influences from TV and (the so-called) internet, which we have not yet seen.)*

On *Bakayat* Narratives

Answering my question on whether there was any particular ritual or preparation needed before their performance, either earlier at their homes or on the site of the performance, both the narrators said that there was no need for specific action or ritual like chanting certain mantras or making special offerings like *sesajen* (Geertz, 1976). which used to be provided by the Javanese in many of their cultural or religious practices.



Figure 3. The storytellers, Ideh and Ahmadison, performing Bakayat

The narration of *hikayat* was started by the leading *tukang kayat* addressing the audience with short introductory remarks, followed by opening prayers commonly recited in every Islamic religious speech or sermon. The narrative performance or recital was done in a duet and interactive two-way traffic. When necessary, the narrators often stopped to give explanations and descriptions. At other times they were interrupted by spontaneous comments from audiences.

Albeit reading stories from written sources, the narrators almost half memorized the stories. Quite often, they recited the stories without consulting the book. During the performance, I noticed several times when the leading narrator, Ahmadison recited the stories with closed eyes. Sometimes, I caught him dozed off while his co-narrator, Ideh, continued singing the stories.

Following is a transcript of only a small fragment of the performance. The complete audio recording of the *bakayat* is preserved and available for further study:

The leading Narrator, Ahmadison, started the prayers:

“Awak mulai lai yeh...”

“Bismillahirrahmanirrahim”.

“Jadi malakik bakayat wak mulai, samo-samo kito didalam bulan suci... ka manyambuk bulan suci heh. jadi untuak itu dulu awak samo2 sadokah Al Fatihah dulu. Awak hadiahan ka sabesar pahalonyo ka urang tuo-tuo awak biapun nan masih hidup maupun nan lah dipanggil oleh Allah. apolai bagi kito nan kiniko, diborinyo kito andaknyo kakuatan oleh

Allah untuak beramal beribadah dalam bulan Ramadhan yeh.”

(Shall we start now?

“Bismillahirrahmanirrahim”.

Before we start, and since we will soon welcome the holy month, let us recite Al- Fatihah. We present the reward of this good deed to our parents, both the alive and the dead. As for us here, may Allah bless us with the strength to do all good deeds in this month of Ramadhan.)

They start with opening prayers:

“Auzubillahi minashaitanirrajiim bibismilahirrahmanirrahim.. Ina hidratim nabi mustapha rasulullahialaiwasallam.. syaifullillah ... Al Fatihah..” (All who were present recited together the Al-Fatihah, the first verse in the Qur’an, until the end)

“Amiin... amiin ya Allah, amiin ya Karim, amiin ya Rahman, amin ya mujibud saiidin... bori pahalo Al Fatihah kami ya Allah limpahkanlah ya Allah kapado arwah ibu dengan bapo ya Allah biarpun yg si hidup ya Allah lobiah2 yg telah engkau panggil ya Allah. Ampunkanlah Allah sakalian doso ibu jo bapo yo Allah. Ampunilah ya Allah sakalian doso guru2 kami ya Allah, ampunkalah doso2 kami ya Allah. tarimolah ibadah kami ya Allah tarimolah sumbayang kami ya Allah. Walaupun kurang syarat dan rukun ya Allah tarimo juolah ibadah kami ya Allah. Mudahkanlah sagalo urusan kami ya Allah. Kuatkanlah keimanan kami ya Allah. Fiiha subhanarabbika rabbiizzati ammayasifun wasalamun alal mursalin walhamdulillahirabbil alamin..

(Amiin... amiin ya Allah, amiin ya Karim, amiin ya Rahman, amin ya mujibud saiidin... O Lord, please send the reward of this Al-Fatihah to the soul of our mothers and fathers who are still alive and those who already returned to you. Please forgive all their and our teachers’ sins and our sins. Please accept our good deeds, worship, and prayers. Although they are not perfect, please accept them, O Allah. Please help all our works, O Allah. Please strengthen our faith, O Allah. Fiiha subhanarabbika rabbiizzati ammayasifun wasalamun alal mursalin walhamdulillahirabbil alamin..)

Tukang Kayat, both Ahmadison and Ideh,

(TK): “Jadi hikayat wak baco “Pasakitan

Mati” namonyo yeh. Jadi alam nan ka wak tompuah peristiwa nan harus kan kito lahui.” (So, we will read the story “The Difficulty of Dying.” The realm we will step into. A situation that we all have to face.)

Audience (A): “Yooooo...” (yes, right!)

TK : “Jadi iko baco kini dulu yeh” (We’ll read this one first.)

A : “Pasakik Mati.” (Difficulty of Dying.)

TK : “Bismillahirrahmanirrahim”

“Wahai sahabat, tolan saudaro..hiduik ka mati... janganlah lupu. Boka di jalan.. ondaklah kokoh. Sosa disitu.. paguno tiado.”

(So, my friends, brothers, and sisters, don’t forget that we all will die. We should have enough supplies for our journey. Regrets later are going to be useless.)

TK’s explanation: jadi indak ado gunonyo sosa wak isuak.. (So, no use of regrets later.)

A : “sosa kudian” (late regrets!)

TK :Aaa kok manyosa wak, iyo kinilah kito manyosa. Kok ka manangih wak, iyo kinilah tangisi diri

(Yes, if you want to regret it, do it now. If you want to cry, you better cry now.)

TK : “Mouk pun hadir, sosalan tibo. Lalai baramal, manyosa la disano. Uang haroto, manjadi dayo. Hampir ka mati, datang marupu.”

(When death arrives, regrets come. If you neglect doing good deeds, you will regret it there. Money and wealth are temptations that will come to you when you die.)

TK: itu haroto nan indak nomuah disadokahkan.

(that’s the wealth that you keep for yourself and unwilling to donate)

TK : “Ollahurobbi, sosa disanan. Mouk lah datang jo gargaran. Kito maliek, luluah para-saian. Takuik tak dapek maimbau kawan.” (Oh my God, if we regret there, death comes with a giant. The look of it will surely scare us.)

TK: Tu takuk wak manjolang mati itu eh, indak dapeek maimbau kawan..baitu bona. (So, we will be scared before we die, and we cannot call for any help from friends, truly.)

A : “indak ado patolongan do yeh...” (No help then...)

TK: indak ado lai Mak! (No, mam.)

TK : “Takuk dan rusuah, apo lah dikato. Anak

jo cucu, lupu disano. Badan mananguang, luluah taraso. Sondi jo tulang ruruik sagalo. Suatu riwayat, dongarlah tolan. khobar Ibrohim rasul pilihan. Sawatu hari mouk ka sanan, Ibrohim barkato wahailah tolan. Ambo sakarang, sanak lah cinto. Mangambil nyawa paliakkan rupo.... Maumin dan pasia supayo nak nyato...Jokok lai mungkin paliakkanlah ambo.

(Fear and worry are inescapable. There, you will not remember even your offspring. Your body will not be able to endure it. All your joints and bones will fall out. Now please listen to this story—a story of the prophet Ibrahim. When the Angle of Death met him, Ibrahim said, “O brother, now could you show me your face so I can see you? If possible, please do so.)

TK: Itu kondak datuak awak nobi Ibrohim.. (That’s the request of our prophet, Ibrahim.)

A: “Baa caro o tu?” (How?)

TK : Bakondaknyo nak manengok inyo wajah para malakul maut. Soman aa bona bontuak angkau, rupo angkau disaat ondak mancabuk nyawa urang nan lai baiman...nan indak baiman.

(He requested to see the face of The Angel of Death. “How will you look when you are taking the lives of the believers and non-believers?”)

A : “Ka malaikat?” (To the Angels?)

TK: “Ka malaikat mouk cako.” (Yes, to the Angel of Death.)

TK : “Kapado Ibrohim, mouk barkato’ Wahai Ibrohim, saudaro ambo, jokoklau itu hajat sungajo. Piciangkanlah mato dengan sugiro.”

(To Ibrahim, the angel said, “If you wish, my brother Ibrahim, close your eyes now.”)

A : Nde e..! (Oh My...)

TK: Mamicianglah nabi awak. Dirubahlah bontuak dek para malaikul mouk cako. Bukaklah mato ongkau hai Ibrohim, mamandanglah! Dibukaklah mato mamandang, jatuh pingsan datuak awak nobi Ibrohim dek inyo sakali. (Our prophet closed his eyes. The angel changed his face. “Now, you may open your eyes, Ibrahim; look!” Our prophet Ibrahim opened his eyes and passed out instantaneously.)

A : “ manengok wajah!” (because of the face!)

TK: *Dek manengok buruak cako. (Yes, because of the scary face.)*

TK : *“Ibrohim mandongar pician sakali sabontar manyolang mouk lah tadiri. Rupo lah baraliah dari nan tadi. Gagah jo hebat tidak saporoti. Mukonyo hitam jo buruak rupo matonyo kombang, api barnyalo. Ibrohim maliek pensan tatimpo. Karono dek takuik maliek rupo. Daripado pensan Ibrohim lah sehat lalu barkato “wahai sohabat” kok tidak bona azab akhirat, maliek ongkaku azab lah oreh”.*

(Ibrahim opened his closed eyes and saw the towering angels standing before him. The face had changed. No longer look handsome and dashing. His face is black and ugly, and his eyes are flaring. Ibrahim passed out immediately because of the look. When Ibrahim gained consciousness, he said, “My friend, even if I don’t go to hell, looking at you is already a torment.)

TK: *baitu bona kaburuak an, kok indak bonalah konai dek azab akhirat manengok ongkaku bagitu buruak tu lobiah daripado azab. Jadi Dari situ nampaknyo awak lah konai azab. Iko bagi urang nan indak beriman cako.*

(That’s how scary it was. Even when you are not tortured in hell, looking at the angel’s face is more than torture. So, from there, you are already started to be tortured. This is for the non-believers.)

A : *“Nan buruak amal.” (Those with evil deeds.)*

TK: *aa nan indak ado amal cako ko mak! (Yes mam, for those who has no good deeds!)*

TK : *“Ibrohim mamintak barulang juo (mangambilan ?) urin baapo pulo. Mouk sabonta barialiah muko. Endah jo tompa larangan samo jo lomah lombuik golaknyo endah baunnyo horum mangobarkan aroma intan zamarud bagai bartata kanan dan kiri cahayonyo mamonca.*

(Ibrahim asked the angel to see the other face. The Death angel quickly changed his face. So handsome with friendly soft laughter, smelled so good, and shined like emeralds.)

TK: *Jadi nan lai baiman cako, coga ndak tanguang2 tampak para malaikul maut, orun indak basiagak2.*

(For the believers, the death angel looks so handsome and smells unbelievably fragrant.)

A: *Balawan jo nan tadi! (Unlike the one be-*

fore!)

TK: *Aa.. iyo barlawanan. (Yes, exactly!)*

TK : *“Ibrohim maliek suko nyo sangat lalu barkato “wahai sohabat miski kok tidak sarugo akhirat, maliek ongkaku lak cukuk niak”)*

(Ibrahim loved what he saw and said, “My friend, even if I don’t go to heaven, seeing you is enough.)

TK: *itu dek kaancakannyo reh. Kok indaklah masuak ka sarugo, manengok bagitu indah bagitu harum tu lobiah daripado sarugo. Jadi elok buruaknyo malaikul maut tu tagantuang daripado amal.*

(That’s how beautiful it is. If you are not going to heaven, seeing the handsome and smelling fragrant angel feels more than heaven. So, whether good or bad, the angel you’ll meet will depend on your deeds.)

IV. CONCLUSION

Bakayat, an oral tradition found in Mungka, district of Limapuluh Koto, is surviving but seriously endangered. Used to be one of the most attended performances in the area, *bakayat* is no longer popular amongst young audiences who prefer modern entertainment now made available and accessible through new technology such as the internet. Besides, the story and narrative of *bakayat* remain in their traditional forms and topics. Unlike other oral traditions, such as *kaba* and *saluang*, performed with Minangkabau traditional music instruments *Rabab* and *saluang*, both narrative and the story’s topics of *bakayat* are trapped in the form of singing the written texts without musical background. While in *kaba* and *saluang*, the story is adaptable and modifiable to the condition, even to the impromptu request from the audiences, the choice in *bakayat* is limited to *tukang kayat*’s repertoire of religious topics no longer appealing to young audiences.

The sustainability and continuity of the *bakayat* as a local tradition are at stake, for the new regeneration shows little attention and interest in learning the endangered oral tradition. Even the storytellers are unable to convince their children to learn *bakayat*. A further study needs to be done. The government and local *adat* dignitaries and authorities must take serious measures to promote this unique tradition and encourage the young audience to learn and preserve *bakayat*.

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