

The Use of Oral Literature Kei in the Rafak Rahan Tradition in Yamtel Village

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Abstract

This study analyzes the usage of oral literature in the rafak rahan tradition among the Kei people. The Kei people are an ethnic group in Indonesia who inhabit the Kei Islands in Maluku Province. The data gathering techniques employed are observation techniques, interview techniques, recording techniques, field note techniques, and documentation. The analytical results suggest that in Kei society, the rafak rahan tradition is a tradition that has existed for hundreds of years and has been passed down by ancestors, thus it must be honored and its existence safeguarded. In actuality, this rafak rahan tradition is not merely an idea that was developed hundreds of years ago and passed down through generations. The rafak rahan tradition comprises values of mutual collaboration, working together, or supporting each other, which is recognized as maren among the Kei people. The facts uncovered include that the rafak rahan tradition and the usage of oral literature, which are old traditions, are still practiced by the Yamtel group to this day.

Keywords: *Kei People; Oral Literature; Rafak Rahan*



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INTRODUCTION

In the field of literature, we are familiar with the term oral literature and written literature. Oral literature is an intrinsic aspect of written literature; it has played a vital influence in molding the public's understanding of literature (Finnegan, 2005). With the introduction of written literature, oral literature continues to coexist alongside written literature. It is called oral literature because it is passed down from mouth to mouth, from one generation to the next, without any written text (Wongsopatty, 2020). If oral literature has been written down, that manuscript is a record of the oral literature, including the declarations of that oral literature (Baihaqi, 2017; Firmanda, Effendy, & Priyadi, 2018). Oral literature is the first type of literature practiced in human culture. Oral literature uses spoken or verbal language as its medium of expression. Thus, the communication that occurs between the creator or performer of oral literature and the audience is direct communication, according to Teeuw (Latupapua, Maspaitella, Solissa, Somelok, & Lalapary, 2012).

Almost every ethnic group in Indonesia is familiar with oral literature. This is also true for Kei oral literature in Yamtel village, Kei Besar sub-district, Southeast Maluku district. Kei oral literature is oral literature that began and developed within the group that utilizes the Kei language. Endraswara (2003) states that oral literature found in distant locations is purer. Therefore, literature that is unfamiliar with communication technologies and new technology is genuinely intriguing to study. One of the traditions followed by the Kei people, notably those in the village of Yamtel, Kei Besar District, Southeast Maluku, is the "new house closing tradition." When building a housing, from the beginning construction process to the *rafak rahan* or house closing stage, the Kei people, especially those in the village of Yamtel, have a history or custom of working together and aiding each other throughout the construction process. Many rituals are performed during the construction of a dwelling, from the inception to the final closing. This is a representation of the trust of the people of Yamtel hamlet in the existence of Duang/Duad (the creator and preserver of the universe) and their ancestors. This notion is known as Taflur Nit, It Sob Duad. Additionally, there are traditional songs called "ngel-ngel snehat" sung by the homeowner and the community participating in the process of building a residential house in Yamtel village, Kei Besar sub-district, Southeast Maluku Regency.

The tradition of building houses in the village of Yamtel, Kei Besar District, Southeast Maluku Regency, is also rich in oral literature, but unfortunately, oral literature in the village of Yamtel is almost extinct because only a handful of the village's residents can use it, such as traditional elders. In reality, oral literature itself acts as a means for understanding ideas and conserving the values that have emerged within a society. As described above, while oral literature is on the point of extinction from one perspective, it also has essential functions and roles from another, so efforts must be taken to preserve it. Therefore, this research is particularly focused on the application of Kei oral literature in the *rafak rahan* tradition in Yamtel village, Kei Besar sub-district, Southeast Maluku Regency. Therefore, the research topic is: How is Kei oral literature used in the *rafak rahan* tradition in Yamtel village, Kei Besar sub-district, Southeast Maluku Regency?

The goal of this research is to describe the use of Kei oral literature in the *rafak rahan* tradition in Yamtel village, Kei Besar sub-district, Southeast Maluku Regency. It is believed that the outcomes of this research will contribute to strengthening and enhancing the wealth of both "regional literature" and "Indonesian literature." Practically, the results of this research are intended to benefit: The Yamtel community, because through research and writing, cultural values contained in oral literature can be preserved in written form, thus encouraging the young generation of Yamtel village to process and be proud of various forms of oral literature such as "oral literature in the *rafak rahan* or *tutup rumah* tradition" and oral literature that has not yet been explored. And also as input for the Government and local governments, as well as interested parties, in attempts to conserve traditional cultural values, particularly those related to the *rafak rahan* or house closing ritual.

In essence, humans are cultural beings because they hold a central position in culture, acting as cultural agents. The term "culture" stems from the Sanskrit word "buddhaya," which is the plural form of the word "buddhi," meaning "intellect" or "reason." Edward B. Taylor describes culture as a complex system, comprising information, beliefs, art, morals, laws, conventions, and other capabilities gained by a person as a part of society. M. Jacop and B.J. Culture as something that covers everything, including technological, social, ideological, religious, artistic forms, and artifacts, all of which constitute social legacy. From that

view, it is evident that there is an inescapable relationship between humans and culture, and that culture even embraces practically all human activities and lives.

According to Brunvand (Danandjaja, 1986), oral literature is literature whose form is purely oral. Oral literature is a creation of human aesthetics and imagination. Oral literature has semantic meanings that are metaphoric, phoric. Oral literature or folklore is a literary work in spoken form, but the literature itself revolves around writing. Oral literature forms a more fundamental cultural component, but it possesses the characteristics of literature in general. Meanwhile, Ajip Rosidi (1986) in his book *Ikhtisar Sejarah Sastra Indonesia* says that: "...any literature written in the regional languages prevalent throughout the archipelago is called Nusantara literature. Meanwhile, Indonesian literature is just literature written in the national language. So, due to linguistic considerations, we in Indonesia have regional literature (Nusantara literature) and Indonesian literature. Regional literature denotes literature that employs one of the regional languages found in the Nusantara region, and Indonesian literature means literature that uses the Indonesian language.

Danandjaja (1986) says that oral literature is part of folklore, while folklore is an element of a culture's activities that are propagated and passed down through generations among members of a collective, accompanied by actions and binding tools. Thus, understanding a local culture is not only through oral forms or stories, but also through things that are important in reinforcing the appropriate beliefs. To identify oral literature from other civilizations, we must first recognize the primary differentiating traits of oral literature in general, which might be defined as follows: (a) Its distribution and inheritance, usually done orally, meaning it is passed through word of mouth (or with an example accompanied by gestures and mnemonic devices) from one generation to the next. (b) Oral literature is traditional, meaning it remains relatively constant in form or over a considerable length of time (at least two generations). (c) Oral literature appears in many versions and even varieties due to its technique of diffusion from mouth to mouth (orally). (d) Oral literature is anonymous; the creator's name is no longer known to others. (e) Oral literature usually has a formulaic or patterned form. (f) Oral literature has a purpose in the communal life of a community. (g) Oral literature is prologistic, meaning it has its own logic that does not correspond with universal logic. This defining characteristic is especially true for oral and partially oral folklore.

METHODS

This research is descriptive; hence, this research report will feature data quotes to provide an outline of the report's presentation (Sugiyono, 2018). The data acquired comes from interview transcripts, pictures, and notes. This is done so that the researcher can analyze the data that has already been acquired. Data collection was carried out utilizing numerous data collecting procedures, including observation techniques, interview techniques, recording techniques, field note techniques, and documentation. Data were analyzed in the following ways: (1) Data reduction, which is the process of selecting and focusing on reducing, abstracting, and altering data that arises from written field notes. (2) Data presentation, which is the second step in data analysis operations, reflecting a collection of facts regarding the study undertaken and allowing for conclusions to be reached and actions to be taken. (3) Conclusions. A systematic set of information allows for making conclusions and taking action. Drawing conclusions is merely half of an action. The conclusions were also validated during the research (Moleong, 2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Discussions including a special focus on oral literature. Folk Songs: (a). *Ngel-ngel snehat* According to Mr. Rahawarin, *Ngel-ngel snehat* is commonly sung by the vat yanur party, who carry the *kubil* while parading to the new house whose roof is going to be closed. This *Ngel-ngel snehat* song is directed to the Yan Baran and Mang Ohoi parties, or the peasants. The meaning of *ngel-ngel snehat* is to invite and advise the villagers not to be lazy or to disrespect community life or the tradition of working together. Rather, we must live by supporting each other. This can be seen from the following text sample from *ngel-ngel snehat*:

Data 1

Se sian wa, tub ko ya Oo

Bahob hob oooo

Se sian wa, tub ko ya Oo

Bahob hob oooo

Meaning:

It's wrong if you sleep, friend

Go together

It's wrong if you sleep, friend

Go together

Data 2

Bahob-hob

Vak lun lin we

Bahob-hob Ooo

Meaning:

Go together

Straightening the pillows and blankets

Go together

In the preceding text sample from *Ngel-ngel Snehat*, it is explained that there is an invitation in the term *Bahob-Hob*, which means "let's go together." The phrase "let's go together" is a word that incorporates aspects of both invitation and advise to someone to engage in various activities carried out by the village or community. *Ngel-Ngel* is a song also used during the *kubil*-carrying ceremony. The song is sung by the *yan baran* or the homeowner. The meaning of the song is to request admittance for the *vat yanur* party with the *kubil* they are carrying, as they cannot enter the new house until the procession comes in front of their home and receives a welcome from the *yan baran* or homeowner. As explained by Mr. M Rahawarin, the song can be sung by both parties in a call-and-response manner. This can be seen from the following *Ngel-ngel* text snippet:

Data 3

Baher-her

Tel ra min ra

Her na hueb Oo

Meaning:

Go begging

Say it there, then bargain there

The request has not been approved Oo

In the text snippet above, it is indicated that the words "Baher-her," which means to go begging, and "tel ra min ra," which means to say here and bargain there, show the aim of a request or plea from the person singing the song.

Data 4

Her na hueb Ub ko ya'au Ooo

Her na hueb Ooo

Her na hueb Ub ko ya'au Ooo

Meaning:

Your request hasn't been granted yet, friend Ooo

The request has not been approved

Your request hasn't been granted yet, friend Ooo

In the text *ngel-ngel* above, it is explained that the request has not yet been granted by the friend (*Ub* = house eye). The word "Ub," meaning "eye of the house," is a collection of several clans from each side. So,

if the clan from Yan Baran is *Elkel* and *Vat Yanur's* is Rahawarin, then their "eye of the house" or "Ub" is Elkel and Rahawarin, which are present in the new house closing ceremony or *rafak rahan*. *Siksikar* according to Johana Rahayaan, the song on Data 3 is known by the ohoi community as *siksikar*. This song is usually sung when someone or a resident of Yamtel village wants to do something. According to Johana Rahayaan, in the past, villagers were usually too busy with their work, especially their fishing, that they forgot about the work on land. So, when someone wants to build a house or create a new garden, they will sing the *siksikar*, addressing it to the people at sea. They hope they will return to land quickly so they can help with the work on land, which is building houses. This can be seen in the following text excerpt from *siksikar*:

Data 5

Ye Ner-ner

Ver wahan Oo

Ban'dat ye ban song reat Oo

Reat Oo

Oo reat Oo

Vuut ngel lo yow un dir met'ta yee ban song reat Oo

Ooo reat vuut ngel lo yon dir met'ta ye ban song reat Oo

Meaning:

Shark

What's at the end over there Oo

Invite sharks and dolphins Oo

Dolphins Oo

Oo Dolphins Oo

The fish sings in the box.

Invite sharks and dolphins Oo

The *siksikar* text elucidates that the song, upon content analysis, references several animal names, including fish such as sharks and dolphins, referred to in the Kei language as *ye* and *reat*. Fish are the catch acquired during maritime excursions, and the term "jemput" or "song" suggests that this *siksikar* might be read as a melody used to summon villages engaged in fishing at sea. Upon their return, they will bring back their haul, which may include sharks and dolphins.

Alias: (a). *Vat Yanur* is a moniker signifying respect or admiration for ladies or girls who wed beyond their ancestral clan or family, or even outside their village or town. This accolade was established to enhance connections between *Vat Yanur*, *Yan Baran*, and *Mang Ohoi*. (b). *Yan baran* is a moniker for boys, denoting the most cherished brother; its significance parallels that of *vat yanur*, which embodies respect or admiration for siblings.

Traditional Expressions: (a). *Duang vuan ler, kan'ton, nit tan lae*; The literal interpretation of *Duang vuan ler* is the creator of the sun and moon, while *Nit a lae* signifies ancestors. The traditional saying signifies that before constructing a house, one must first seek blessings from the creator, God (*Duang/Duad*), and their ancestors. Meanwhile, "*kan'ton*" precisely denotes the name of an animal, namely a species of insect or green grasshopper characterized by robust leg muscles. *Kan'ton* serves as an expression, metaphor, or analogy for the beliefs of the Yamtel village community. The utterance of the phrase (*Duang vuan ler, Kan'ton, Nit tan lae*) at the initial lifting of the pillar is thought to invoke the blessings of the Creator and Ancestors, ensuring that the home is supported by robust and resilient pillars, akin to *Kan'ton* with its powerful leg muscles. (a). *Om thye khamis*; This traditional expression signifies that if an individual secures their home or elevates their possessions on Thursday, they will attain considerable fortune in their life. (c) *Om mobtu*; This traditional term signifies that if an individual secures their residence on Saturday, the homeowner will be bestowed with longevity in that dwelling.

Symbol: (a). *Kubil* is seen as a symbol, as it is a visually appealing arrangement of food that signifies familial solidarity in the face of societal challenges. In the customs and convictions of the Yamtel community, the *kubil* functions to join families and embodies a sense of kinship, facilitating the reunion of family members dispersed by marriage to engage in various communal activities. The method employed is

the tradition of parading the *kubil* at the house closure ceremony. (b). Gold, Fabric, and Discs (Mas, Sobo, Bigan) Gold or mas is a *yelim* or contribution presented beside the *kubil* by *vat yanur* to *yan baran*. The gold provided by *vat yanur* is positioned atop the *kubil* and displayed to *yan baran*, the new homeowner seeking to be *rafak rahan*. Upon arrival at Yan Baran, they will receive the Yelim or donation and conceal it with fabric. If they do not conceal it with fabric, *yan baran* can provide mas and plates in exchange. The Kei indigenous people utilize gold, linen, and historically significant plates, among items such as the *lela* (cannon) and gong, as valuable components in their traditional celebrations. The importance of gold, textiles, and dishware as emblems of familial connections in housewarming rituals.

Dialect: The people of Yamtel village have a dialect or variation in their speech. The dialect of the Yamtel people belongs to the Kei Besar Tengah dialect.

CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that the Kei oral literature utilized in the house-closing ritual of Yamtel village, specifically *ngel-ngel snehat* and *siksikar*, is classified as folk songs. Moreover, there are nicknames such as *vat yan ur* (designating women who marry outside the tribe) and *yan baran* (referring to devoted brothers). Both nicknames serve as expressions of affection or gratitude for both sisters and brothers. Conventional phrases associated with the housewarming tradition include, firstly, *duang vuan ler, kan'ton, nit tan lae*; secondly, *om thye khamis*; and thirdly, *om mobtu*. These three statements may signify parallels, parables, counsel, or life concepts. The fourth is the sign. The *kubil*, situated on the house's roof, serves as a symbol, as it is constructed solely when one intends to seal the house or *rafak rahan*; it is absent in other customary rituals, such as the *masuk minta* ceremony. *Kubil* is created by *vaat yanur* or sister/to *yan baran* as a contribution, a gift in the terminology of the Kei yelim people. Gold, cloth, and plates are seen as symbols because to their function as instruments that reinforce kinship or familial bonds. The final aspect is dialect.

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