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## **The recording industry and 'regional' culture in Indonesia : the case of Minangkabau**

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# TRADITIONAL VERBAL ARTS MEET RECORDING INDUSTRY

This chapter<sup>278</sup> focuses on the rise of a regional recording industry of Minangkabau oral literature.<sup>279</sup> It sketches the changes that have occurred in Minangkabau traditional folk genres under the impact of cassette- and VCD-based commercialization. The production of commercial cassettes and VCDs of these genres grew from the 1980s onwards, stimulated by the significant development of the West Sumatran recording industry. However, as I will describe, the mediation of Minangkabau verbal arts has been occurring ever since the ‘talking machine’ era.

The most significant development in modern media in Indonesia is the emergence of a ‘cassette culture’, to borrow Manuel’s term (1993). In the context of ethnicity, this phenomenon has drawn traditional verbal arts performers to engage with modern electronic media. Nowadays verbal arts genres of numerous ethnic groups in Indonesia have been recorded on commercial cassettes and VCDs. While foreign scholars are interested in this phenomenon,<sup>280</sup> Indonesian scholars seem unaware of it. Even as more and more local bards’ chanting has been captured on commercial cassettes and VCDs produced by regional recording companies, Indonesian regional verbal arts are considered as simply the repertoire of a traditional rural society untouched by modern media technologies. Indonesian researchers in this field have merely examined the impact of print media on traditional oral literature, a topic commonly discussed in seminars such as those frequently organized by ATL (Asosiasi Tradisi Lisan, ‘(Indonesian) Oral Tradition Association’). In such academic forums debates are often heard on whether the committing of oral literature genres into print will degrade their existence or can save them from extinction. Such a discussion of course presents a false picture, as if regional oral literature in Indonesia had not yet been touched by modern audio-visual media.

As regional recording industries in Indonesia have had a significant impact on Indonesia’s regional verbal arts, research done on them should be expanded by analysing the influence of modern electronic media on these verbal arts. The aim of this chapter is to examine how Minangkabau verbal arts engaging with recording media have shifted the cultural and musical conventions of these genres. I argue that numerous Minangkabau verbal

278 This chapter is based on Suryadi 2010.

279 Here I use the term ‘oral literature’. Though this term has sometimes been disputed on the grounds that it is self-contradictory if the original etymology of ‘literature’ (connected with *litterae*, letters) is borne in mind, the term has been widely accepted (Finnegan 1977:16). In this chapter I also use the term ‘traditional verbal arts’ as a substitute for ‘oral literature’, because what we are discussing here are regional cultural expressions expressed in oral language. These cultural expressions of course strongly engage with Minangkabau oral tradition.

280 See, for example, Andy Hicken’s ethnographic and ethnomusicological study of this phenomenon, using as a case study Torajan music in central Sulawesi (Hicken 2009).

arts genres have found their own ways to continue their existence in today's electronic society, and the West Sumatran recording industry's penetration into Minangkabau verbal arts has influenced their characteristics: their story-line, word choice, and artistic style. The genres that can adapt successfully to modern media will have a greater chance to survive. Due to the mediation of verbal arts genres, the Minangkabau people, both in the homeland and in *rantau*, have added to the ways they enjoy this mediated cultural repertoire. I want to show how the mediation of such genres, the commercial recordings made of them, has expanded their reception, both geographically and in terms of audience.

#### MINANGKABAU ORAL LITERATURE GENRES

There are many genres of Minangkabau verbal arts, which in regional and national terminology are called *kesenian tradisi* (traditional arts).<sup>281</sup> In Indonesian cultural discourse, this term covers diverse forms of regional arts presentations: storytelling or non-storytelling with specific rhythms and tunes, accompanied by musical instruments or not; those that do not involve verbal elements (like dance); and those that incorporate verbal elements (singing or chanting), music, and physical acting, like traditional theatre.

In the following section I briefly survey the major genres of Minangkabau oral literature which have been recorded by West Sumatran recording companies on commercial cassettes and VCDs. They include:

1. *rabab Pariaman*, *rabab Pesisir Selatan* (or *rabab Pasisia*), *dendang Pauah*, and *sijobang*: genres that consist of storytelling (*kaba*<sup>282</sup>), and are sung by professional singers, using specific rhythms and tunes, accompanied by musical instruments. These genres are performed by one singer accompanying himself on an instrument, or one singer accompanied by an instrumentalist.
2. *indang*, *saluang jo dendang* (or *bagurau*), *salawat dulang*, and *pidato adat dan pasambahan*: genres that consist of traditional *pantun* verse, sometimes interspersed with narrative verse, and are chanted by professional singers, using specific rhythms and tunes, accompanied by particular musical instruments.

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281 Adriyetti Amir, Zuriati, and Khairil Anwar (2006) recorded some 50 genres. But some other genres are not on their list, such as *luambek* in Pariaman regency (Pätzold 2004), the tiger-capturing song *dendang managkok-marinda harimau* in Pasaman (Kartomi 1972; Kartomi 2012:31-41), and *batintin* in Rao-Rao, Tanah Datar regency (Susanti 1992; Mulyadi et al. 2008:22-6).

282 *Kaba* are Minangkabau folktales consisting of narratives which present the social and personal consequences of either ignoring or observing the ethical teachings and norms embedded in *adat* (Bakar et al. 1979; Djamaris 2004). Traditionally, *kaba* are sung by storytellers in narrative verse with diverse rhythms and tunes, accompanied by traditional musical instruments such as *rabab* (spike-fiddle, violin), different sorts of bamboo flutes (such as *saluang Pauah*, *bansi*), *adok* (a sort of tambourine), *kotak korek api* (matchbox), *kucapi* (steel-stringed zither), *pupuik* (aerophone made of rice stalk, with horn made of young leaves of coconut), and *talempong* (small kettle gong).

3. *randai*: traditional open-air theatre, which incorporates chanting, music, and physical acting.

Traditionally the aforementioned genres existed in particular regions with texts strongly influenced by a particular dialect of the Minangkabau language. *Rabab Pariaman* and *indang* exist in Pariaman district on the northwest coast of West Sumatra. Performed by a solo singer who accompanies himself on a small three-stringed lute called *rabab galuak* (*galuak* is a coconut shell, used for the body of the instrument; see Suwondo et al. 1977:57-9), *rabab Pariaman* tells classic *kaba*<sup>283</sup> stories (Witnayetti 1992; Suryadi 1996, 1998). In contrast, *indang* is performed by three troupes (*sandiang*), each consisting of 8 to 22 performers, accompanied by a small frame drum which is called *rapa'i* (Kartomi 1986). *Indang* is performed as a contest in which two troupes face each other (while the third troupe acts as the host). The essence of *indang* is '*bersilat lidah*', which means literally 'fight with the tongue': the main singers of each group tease the other group by using a literary register of the Minangkabau language full of allusion, allegory, metaphor, and aphorism. *Indang* does not tell *kaba* stories. A plenary *indang* performance involves 21 troupes over fourteen nights, and is usually presented at *nagari* (Minangkabau village confederacy; indigenous political unit) festivities or at festivities celebrating the installation of a *panghulu* (Sulaiman 1989/1990; Suryadi 1994; Ediwar 2003; Ediwar 2007).

*Rabab Pesisir Selatan* and *dendang Pauah* are performed locally in the lowlands of West Sumatra's west coast. As suggested by its name, *rabab Pesisir Selatan* traditionally exists in Pesisir Selatan district, which is on the southwest coast of West Sumatra. *Rabab Pesisir Selatan* tells modern *kaba* stories.<sup>284</sup> It is performed by a solo singer accompanying himself on a *rabab*, which looks similar to a violin (Suwondo et al. 1977:30-1; Suryadi 1993a; Arni 1995; Koto 2003).<sup>285</sup> *Dendang Pauah* is found on the outskirts of Padang in Pauah district and surroundings. In this genre, the lyrics are composed in verse form (see description below) and are full of allegories, metaphors, and allusions. *Dendang Pauah* tells modern *kaba* stories. It is performed by two performers (usually male): a singer (*tukang dendang*) and a flute player (*tukang saluang*), who plays a bamboo flute called *saluang Pauah* (Suryadi 1993b).

*Sijobang* is found in Lima Puluh Kota regency in the West Sumatra highlands. It is performed by a solo singer (*tukang sijobang*) accompanied either by the rhythmic tapping of a half-empty matchbox or by the strumming of the steel-stringed *kucapi*. *Sijobang* relates the

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283 The classic *kaba* tell stories set in the traditional kingdoms. The main characters have supernatural power (Junus 1984). The only modern *kaba* narrated in *rabab Pariaman* is 'Siti Baheram'. This story is based on a real tragedy: the robbery and murder of a rich woman named Siti Baheram in the village of Sungai Pasak in Pariaman on 11 November 1916. The suspects were a gambler named Joki, who was one of the victim's relatives, and his friend named Ganduik (*Sinar Sumatra*, 16 November 1916). The Dutch colonial government punished Joki by hanging him and Ganduik was sentenced to prison for several years. Since then, this tragic story has become very famous in Pariaman and surroundings and is represented in diverse art genres.

284 Modern *kaba* represent modern Minangkabau social life and cultural environment in the post-colonial era, with common people as the main characters (Junus 1984).

285 Linguistically, *rabab Pesisir Selatan* lyrics tend to use literal and modern words and phrases, noticeably different from the language of *rabab Pariaman* lyrics, which are rich in allusions, metaphors, and allegories.

adventures and romantic exploits of a hero known as Anggun Nan Tongga Magek Jabang (Phillips 1981).<sup>286</sup>

The four remaining genres, *saluang* (*bagurau*), *salawat dulang*, *randai* and *pidato adat dan pasambahan*, are found in many parts of West Sumatra, but sometimes carry local names.<sup>287</sup> The Minangkabau *bagurau* (literally jollity) involves humorous *pantun* singing. It is performed by a troupe usually consisting of one *saluang* (flute) player (male) and one or two singers (female) (Sukmawati 2006). The lyrics of the songs, which evoke the atmosphere of village life and serve as a vehicle for teaching morals, stir the audience's emotions and generate a nostalgic mood. As it is usually performed at night, the *saluang* performance is also known as *malam bagurau* (evening of jollity) (Firman 1992; Sukmawati 2009).

*Salawat dulang*<sup>288</sup> is a religious art form for 'remembering God' (Kartomi 1986). It is performed by two pairs of male singers, who accompany themselves by rhythmic beating on round brass trays (*dulang* or *talam*), as opposed to frame drums. The text, which is recited to the beat of a round brass tray, consists of Islamic teachings. *Salawat dulang* does not tell *kaba* stories (Amir 1995; Amir 2009:27-39). It essentially performs a 'fight with the tongue' (like *indang*), but the topics deal with religious matters. The performance is set up as a contest between the two pairs who chant in turn.<sup>289</sup> *Salawat dulang* is very popular among the Minangkabau, since this ethnic group is strongly associated with Islam (Amir 1996; Bahar 1997).

*Randai* is a Minangkabau genre of open-air folk theatre. This type of traditional drama is found in many parts of West Sumatra. Previously almost every *nagari* had its own *randai* troupe. Unlike other genres, *randai* is a high-spirited combination of dance, martial arts, dialogue, and music in a theatrical performance of Minangkabau *kaba*, accompanied by *talempong* gong-chime, as well as other gongs, drums and *pupuik* (aerophone made of rice stalk, with horn made of young coconut leaves), which produce a repetitive texture consisting of interlocking rhythms (Kartomi 1981; Pauka 1998; Latrell 1999; Cohen 2003).

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286 On the printed versions of the 'Kaba Anggun Nan Tongga Magek Jabang', see Bagindo Kajo 1925, Djamin and Tasat 1934 and Mahkota 1962. For the Malay version of this story, see Winsted 1914.

287 In Pariaman, for example, *salawat dulang* is called *salawat talam* or *batalam*, and in the Tiku district of Pariaman the local name for *randai* is *simarantang* (see Phillips 1981:5).

288 As has often appeared on cassette and VCD covers of this genre, though sometimes spelled *shalawat dulang*. In oral pronunciation it was pronounced *salawaik dulang* or *salawat talam* in some places, because in some Minangkabau areas *dulang* (drum brass tray) is called *talam*.

289 Reflecting its essence as a 'fight with the tongue' verbal art, *salawat dulang* troupes have powerful sounding names, such as Kilek Barapi ('Blazing Thunderbolt'), Piriang Talayang ('Flying Saucer'), Arjuna Minang ('Minang Arjuna'; in this context, the word *arjuna* can be meant womanizer or the chief hero of the *Mahabharata* who was well-known for his martial arts and sexual prowess), Gurun Sahara ('Sahara Desert'), Mustang (a type of fighter plane well-known during World War II), DC 8 (a type of aircraft produced by Boeing), Langkisau (Minangkabau word for whirlwind), Peluru Kendali ('Guided Missile') and Garuda Minang ('Minangkabau Garuda'; *garuda* is a mythical bird, mounted by the god Vishnu in the Hindu religion, which is used as the official seal of the Republic of Indonesia), which are strong and threatening in their referential meanings (Amir 1996). Each pair of performers asks questions (in *gurindam* or *syair* form), or members of the audience may ask the competitors questions, ranging from the religious to the clairvoyant, seeking advice or information (Kartomi 1986).

*Pidato adat dan pasambahan* is ceremonial oration or speech-making using a highly standardized literary register of the Minangkabau language, heavy with analogy, metaphor, allegory, and simile. It is presented on the occasion of events such as wedding parties or the festivities celebrating the installation of a new *penghulu* (head of matrilineal unit). The essence of this genre is also a ‘fight with the tongue’ (Hasselt 1883; Kasih 2008). Though the genre exists in many parts of West Sumatra, its textual composition differs between the Minangkabau highlands (*darek*) and the western coastal lowlands (*‘rantau’*, literally ‘place of migration’).

The texts of all these genres, whether they tell *kaba* or not, are composed in narrative verse chanted to various tunes. The texts of *rabab Pariaman*, *rabab Pesisir Selatan*, *sijobang*, *randai*, and *pidato adat dan pasambahan* are composed in narrative verse, but of course rhyming *pantun* are also used, usually to introduce the story, to mark turning-points in the plot, and to end the singing<sup>290</sup> (Navis 1984:247-9; Phillips 1991:81). The texts of *dendang Pauah*, *indang*, *saluang* and *salawat dulang* are composed in stanzaic verse forms – the former three in *pantun* form and the latter in *syair* form. In all these Minangkabau traditional verbal arts genres, each genre has its own vocabulary and idioms, giving rise to a wide variety of local traditions within West Sumatra.

Minangkabau oral literature genres are traditionally performed on public occasions of celebration, such as marriage festivals, the celebration of Prophet Muhammad’s birthday at *surau* (religious shrines), *nagari* festivals (*alek nagari*), and festivities celebrating the installation of a new *penghulu*. Performances are also often held to raise money for building public facilities like schools and village halls (*balai desa*). They are usually performed at night, after the *Isya* prayer (around 9 p.m.) continuing to daybreak (around 5 a.m.). For that reason, Minangkabau verbal arts are called the ‘night music of West Sumatra’.<sup>291</sup>

#### EARLY RECORDINGS OF MINANGKABAU VERBAL ARTS

A historical review shows that traditional Minangkabau verbal arts genres were one of the earliest regional oral repertoires of Sumatra recorded on gramophone disc. In 1939, for example, the Minangkabau *saluang jo dendang* was available on the Odeon Gajah label, produced by Toko Minangkabau in Fort de Kock. Referred to as ‘Njanjian Minangkabau Asli’ (‘authentic Minangkabau songs’), the *saluang jo dendang* appeared on two discs: the first disc had ‘Lagoe Simarantang’ and ‘Lagoe Moenah Kajo’ on one side and ‘Lagoe tangisan oerang Batoe Sangka’ on the other side. These songs were part of a *randai* play taken from classical Minangkabau literature.<sup>292</sup> The chanter (*tukang dendang*) of this disc was Djamarieh

290 In *sijobang* performance, for example, *pantun* are used in three ways: as *pantun pasambahan* (introductory *pantun*) before the story; to mark the beginning, resumption or end of a stint of singing; and as part of the dialogue and narrative itself (Phillips 1979:12).

291 To use Philip Yampolsky’s phrase. Yampolsky made a series of CD recordings of *saluang*, *dendang Pauah*, and *rabab Pariaman* in 1994, supported financially by the Smithsonian Institution. See [http://www.folkways.si.edu/projects\\_initiatives/indonesian/liner\\_notes/volume06.html](http://www.folkways.si.edu/projects_initiatives/indonesian/liner_notes/volume06.html) (accessed 5-3-2008).

292 See Karim Halim’s essay ‘Si Marantang dan Moenah Kajo dalam kesoesasteraan Minangkabau’, *Minami*, 1 April 1943, pp. 19-21. The story tells about a rich itinerant girl merchant named Moenah Kajo (Rich Moenah)

(Djamaris in Malay spelling) from Batagak Bukittingi, the flute players (*toekang saloelang*) were Mak Pono from Singgalang and Datoek Panggak from Sungai Buluah, while the rice-stalk aerophone player (*toekang pupui*) was Mak Toelah from Koto Tuo. The second disc had 'Lagoe Membuaikan Anak' (Song for rocking a child in a cradle) on one side and 'Lagoe Siti Baheram'<sup>293</sup> on the other side. The chanter was Noeriahsjam from Suliki, Payakumbuh.<sup>294</sup>

In 1940, Djamaris and his flute player, mentioned above, signed a contract with Toko Delima in Batavia. The contract consisted of eleven articles. One stipulation (Article 7) was that the performers jointly would be paid royalties of 2 guilders for each disc sold by the producer. For the master recording of each song, Toko Delima would pay a one-off fee of 12.50 guilders (Article 8). Article 9 stipulated that all costs for transportation from Bukittinggi (to the recording studio in Batavia) and back, as well as lodging and food, were to be paid by Toko Delima. Under Article 5, Djamaris was prohibited from signing a contract with any other producer. Article 6 stipulated that the singer was not allowed to tell anyone how the recording was made. This document is clear evidence that a performer of verbal arts genres had been invited to make a recording outside West Sumatra (Batavia) in the gramophone era.<sup>295</sup>

A well-known *bagurau* performer, Syawir Sutan Mudo, recalled that his *bagurau* performances had been recorded on 78-rpm gramophone discs in the early 1960s before being re-recorded on cassette in 1972 (Yurnaldi 2000). Another well-known *bagurau* performer who was recorded on gramophone records was Adjis Sutan Sati. For example, his music troupe Ganto Sori had been recorded around 1960 on a gramophone record containing twelve songs (Fig. 6.1). In the same period, Elshinta Record produced a disc of the haunting Minangkabau *bagurau* music with the singer Bujung Kamang and the flute player Djaizar Sutan Nagari. Their music troupe is called Minang Saiyo. Their performance was recorded on a 33<sup>1/3</sup>-rpm disc containing six songs (Fig. 6.1). It is likely that Minangkabau *kaba* were also recorded on gramophone discs, and circulated in West Sumatra as well as in *rantau*. In Batavia, for example, the main distributor for *kaba* commercial discs was Toko Delima in downtown Batavia (Salim 1941:back cover). Since no copies of these recordings can be found now, I could not accurately determine which genres had been recorded on them. Nevertheless, it is very possible that recordings were made of *rabab Pariaman* or *rabab Pesisir Selatan* performances, two genres of Minangkabau verbal arts which are very popular for chanting Minangkabau *kaba* stories.

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who was robbed by Si Marantang and his friends when she and her uncle (*mamak*) passed by a lonely place in the Minangkabau highlands. Si Marantang is a gambler who in Minangkabau was associated with *parewa*, a male group in Minangkabau society who were not so religious because they loved their traditional customs (*adat*), hence they formed a contrast to religious groups. Moenah succeeded in beating him. Si Marantang restored Moenah's treasures robbed by him. He was punished by the Dutch colonial authorities with exile. At the end of his article, Karim mentions that the song was recorded on disc. See also Halim (2604 [1944]).

293 See footnote 6.

294 See Sinar Sumatra, 6 July 1939.

295 I would like to thank Prof. Mahdi Bahar for sending me a copy of this contract, which had been in the possession of Djamaris until he died.





Figure 6.1: Cover images of the Minangkabau verbal arts genre bagurau recorded on gramophone discs (Source: <http://madrotter.blogspot.com/2010/02/djazar-sutan-nagari-bujung-kamang.html>, accessed 20-1-2011)

## COMMERCIAL CASSETTES AND VCDs OF MINANGKABAU VERBAL ARTS

According to Umar Junus, in 1971 a small private company in Padang produced commercial cassettes of the rabab Pesisir Selatan 'Kaba Hasan Surabaya' ('The story of Hasan of Surabaya'), performed by Syamsuddin (Junus 1994a:410; Junus 1994b:109). This was the first instance of a Minangkabau oral literature genre released in cassette format for commercial purposes. Over the following years, in step with the increased consumption of cassettes in Indonesia, the number and variety of commercial recordings of Minangkabau oral literature grew. Most such recordings were produced by two leading West Sumatran recording companies situated in Padang: Tanama Record and Sinar Padang Record. Both companies were established in

the mid 1970s. Since the 1990s some other new competitors, such as Pelangi Record, Minang Record, and Talao Record, have also produced Minangkabau oral literature on commercial cassettes and VCDs.

In the following paragraphs I describe the cassettes and VCDs of Minangkabau oral literature genres made by West Sumatran recording companies. I aim to depict how far Minangkabau verbal arts have penetrated the West Sumatran recording industry. However, not all recordings ever released by West Sumatran recording companies are listed here, especially those that appeared in the late 1970s and 1980s, simply because the companies lack good archives. Most commercial cassettes of Minangkabau oral literature genres which are still reproduced up to today were initially recorded in the 1990s, while their VCD versions were produced after 2000.

*Rabab Pariaman* commercial recordings have been mostly produced by Tanama Record and released only in cassette format, performed by the singers Amir Hosen, Aly Umar, and Bagindo Sukiman, where the singer accompanies himself on a *rabab*. But recently the competitor Sinar Padang Record has been producing VCDs of *rabab Pariaman*. Appendix 5 provides a list of *rabab Pariaman* commercial recordings, both in cassette and VCD formats, which I was able to identify during fieldwork. Featuring the authentic characteristics of the genre, the visual images of *rabab Pariaman*, both on cassette and VCD covers (Fig. 6.2) and on their VCD clips, show traditionalism rather than modernity. Two generations of *rabab Pariaman* have been involved in recording media since the initial spread of cassette technology in Indonesia: the generation of singers Amir Hosen and Aly Umar, whose commercial recordings mostly appeared in cassette format in the 1980s and 1990s, and their successors like Monen and Mayur, whose commercial recordings were produced in VCD format starting in the early 2000s (Fig. 6.2).

*Indang* recordings have been released on cassette since the 1990s as well as on VCD since 2000. Like *rabab Pariaman*, the visual images shown on *indang* covers show traditionalism, though on the VCD covers one can perceive modernity in the performers' makeup and clothing (see Fig. 6.3). For example, Tanama Record produced cassettes of an *indang* troupe from Toboh Sikaladi village in Pariaman regency led by A. Karim (4 cassettes). The troupe is famous for the dexterity of its performers, who are very clever in playing *rapa'i* (small frame drum, the musical instrument typically used in *indang* performance), for their brightness in answering all the questions posed by the opponent troupe, and for the verbal pitfalls they fire off. Tanama also produced *Indang Piaman Sagi Tigo* ('Pariaman *indang* triangle'; 3 cassettes), performed by three troupes from Padang Kapeh, Kayu Samuik, and Banda Labuah villages, all situated in Padang Pariaman regency, and *Sejarah Syekh Burhanuddin dan Adaiik Basandi Sarak* ('The history of Shaikh Burhanuddin and Shariah as the basis for custom'; 6 cassettes) by the *indang* troupe led by Alam Sudin. In 2009 Sinar Padang Record produced VCDs of *indang* entitled *Indang Tradisi Pariaman Asli* ('Authentic *indang* of the Pariaman tradition'). The performance was carried out by troupes from Guguak Lurah Ampalu, Padang Baru Koto Buruk (Lubuk Alung), and Mangoe Batu Kalang villages, all situated in Padang Pariaman regency. I learnt from Pian (45 years old), one of the senior performers of the Koto Buruk



Figure 6.2: Rabab Pariaman cassette and VCD covers

troupe I interviewed on 29 October 2009, that Sinar Padang Record planned to produce subsequent volumes of this series, all in VCD format.

Rabab Pesisir Selatan is the most popular genre of Minangkabau oral literature produced by West Sumatran recording companies; it has been appearing since the early 1970s. The singers of this genre are engaged by cassette producers more often than their comrades of any other verbal arts genre. Rabab Pesisir Selatan employs lyrical prose using modern Minangkabau language enriched by humour. Commercial recordings of *rabab Pesisir Selatan* have been made in cassette and VCD formats (see Fig 6.4). Appendix 6 provides a list of the commercial recordings of this genre that I identified during fieldwork.

Among the singers of *rabab Pesisir Selatan* who have released commercial cassettes and VCDs, Syamsudin seems to have been the pioneer. His recording of ‘The story of Hasan of Surabaya’ (5 cassettes) was released in 1971. In several other recordings, male singers

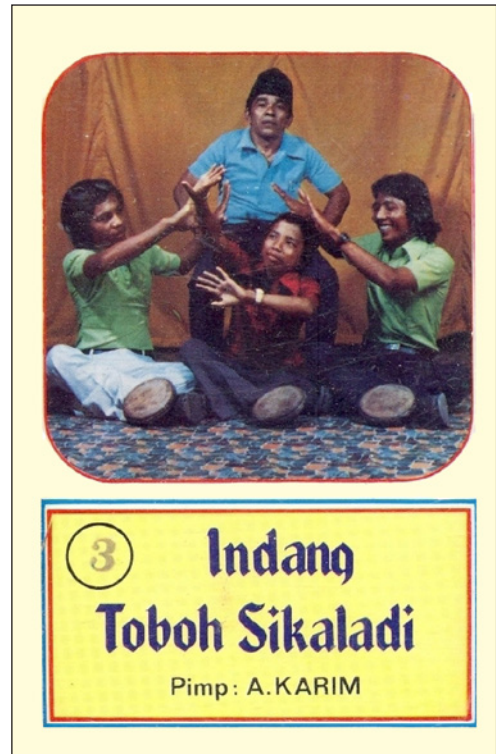


Figure 6.3: Indang cassette covers (above); indang VCD and its cover (below)

appear in duet with female singers such as Nurana or Erni. Sinar Padang Record has been the most aggressive company in producing commercial VCDs of *rabab Perisir Selatan*. Some singers have been recorded frequently by the company. For example, Siril Asmara, son of Pirin Asmara, has released 20 VCD titles under Sinar Padang Record's label. His VCD of *Kaba*

Sutan Palembang ('The story of the Prince of Palembang'), for which I observed the process of making the video clips (Fig 6.11), was released in mid 2011.

The visual images on the covers of *rabab Pesisir Selatan* commercial recordings suggest that this Minangkabau storytelling genre responds openly to cultural change and globalization. Modernity is visibly represented on the covers as well as on the clips of recent recordings of this genre. I would say that *rabab Pesisir Selatan* is the most flexible Minangkabau verbal arts genre, absorbing an element of modernity in its narratives and its performers. Examining *Kaba Zamzami jo Marlaini* ('The story of Zamzami and Marlaini', one of the most famous modern stories in this genre), as released by Tanama Record on commercial cassette by the singer



Figure 6.4: Rabab Pesisir Selatan cassette covers (above) and VCDs (below)

Syamsuddin, Edwin Wieringa (1997)<sup>296</sup> concludes that Minangkabau bards, in this context the storytellers of *rabab Pesisir Selatan*, incorporate modern elements in the stories they recite, making the stories current and relevant to their audiences.

*Dendang Pauah* seems to have been released in cassette format only, with titles such as *Kaba Seorang Bapak yang Tidak Bertanggung Jawab* ('The story of an irresponsible father'; 3 cassettes), produced by Tanama Record (Fig. 6.5). It was recorded by the singer Harun St. Rajo Bujang and the *tukang saluang* (flute player) Syarif Bagindo Basa. This story is none other than a modern version of *Kaba Urang Lubuk Sikaping* ('The story of the Lubuk Sikaping people')



Figure 6.5: *Sijobang* cassette cover (above) (photo by Nigel Phillips; the cassettes were initially in the possession of Gerard Moussay); *dendang Pauah* and *bagurau* cassette covers (below)

<sup>296</sup> Wieringa's analysis refers to my transcription and translation of the recordings of this story (see Suryadi 1993a).

(see Suryadi 1993b). Another performance by Harun recorded by Tanama is *Pasan ka Rantau* ('Message to our migrants'; 1 cassette). Tanama also released *Kaba Siti Jamilah* ('The story of Siti Jamilah'; 3 cassettes), performed by Burhan (singer) and Indiak (flute player).

The first commercial cassettes of *sijobang* appeared in 1974. Sung by Samsuir N., *Kesenian Minang Dandang Batambek Sijobang* (5 cassettes) was produced by Tanama Record in Padang (Fig. 6.5). Some amateur recording companies in Payakumbuh, capital of Lima Puluh Kota regency, also released *sijobang* recordings in the 1980s, which were sometimes played by vendors of folk medicines (*panggaleh ubek*) to attract customers (Phillips 1981:9). However, in recent times it has been difficult to find commercial recordings of *sijobang* on the market. Tanama Record and other West Sumatran recording companies in Padang and Bukittinggi

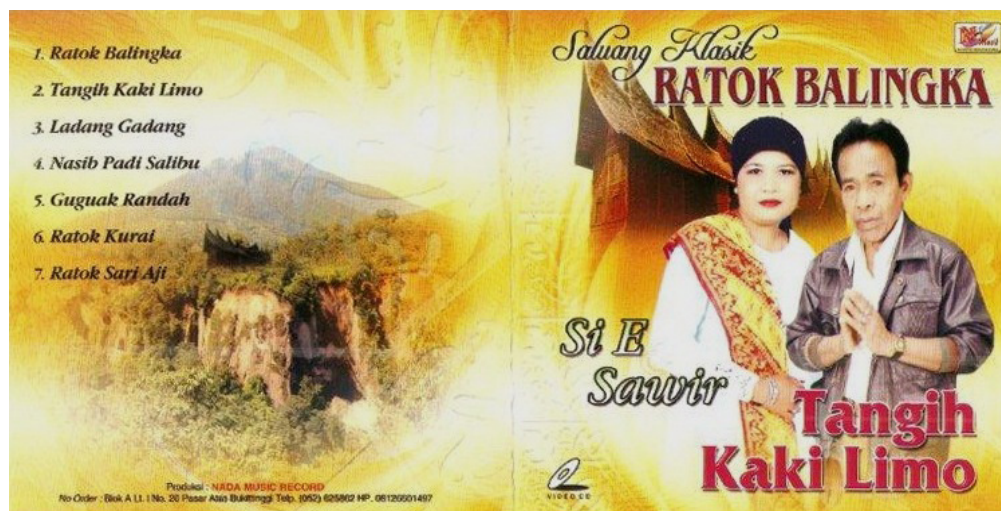


Figure 6.6: VCD covers of two recent commercial recordings of classic saluang or bagurau (photos by Andiko Sutan Mancayo, 2010)

no longer produce commercial recordings of this genre.<sup>297</sup> Perhaps this is because such cassettes are consumed only locally by Minangkabau from Payakumbuh and surroundings, as the language of *sijombang* is highly coloured by the Payakumbuh dialect of Minangkabau. Hence, *sijombang* is not so popular in other regions of West Sumatra because the language used is not agreeable to the ears of Minangkabau language speakers outside the Payakumbuh dialect area.

Commercial recordings of *bagurau* have been mostly produced by Tanama Record. One example is *Solok Bacangkeh* ('Solok has cloves'), by the Minang Maimbau troupe with its well-known female singer Syamsimar (Fig. 6.5). Called *saluang klasik* ('classic *saluang*'), it is performed by one or two female singers accompanied by a male *saluang* flute player. In 2009 some producers like Minang Record and Nada Music Record in Bukittinggi produced VCDs of classic *saluang* (Fig. 6.6). Nowadays, due to the greater influence of the West Sumatran recording industry, *saluang* is adopting new lyrics and musical styles that incorporate elements of *pop Minang*. This transformation is reflected on the covers of *saluang* cassettes and VCDs in the new style, which is described as *saluang maso kini* ('contemporary *saluang*') (Fig. 6.7), *saluang dangdut* ('dangdut-style *saluang*') and *dendang saluang mode AseRege* ('chanting *saluang* Asereje style') – the latter was inspired by the song melody 'Asereje' by three Spanish sisters known as Las Ketchup that became a worldwide hit in 2002.

*Randai* recordings have also appeared on cassette and VCD. Among the *randai* cassettes produced by Tanama Record are *Kaba Salendang Dunia* ('The story of a pretty girl named Salendang Dunia'; 2 cassettes) performed by the Karih Pusako troupe; *Kaba Puti Ambun Suri & Buyuang Sarunai* ('The story of Princess Ambun Suri and Buyuang Sarunai'; 2 cassettes), and *Kaba Palimo Gaga jo Reno Nilam* ('The story of Commander Gaga and Reno Nilam'; 2 cassettes) performed by the Pulai Sati troupe; *Kaba Siti Rowani* ('The story of Siti Rowani'; 3 cassettes) and *Kaba Magek Manandin* ('The story of Magek Manandin'; 3 cassettes) performed by the Rumah Gadang '83 theatre troupe in Jakarta (Rosa 1990). Since 2000 *randai* recordings have also been produced in VCD format, for example, *Kaba Bujang Denai & Nilam Suri* ('The story of Bujang Denai and Nilam Suri') and *Kaba Rambun Pamenan* ('The story of Rambun Pamenan'; 4 VCDs), both produced by Minang Record in Bukittinggi (Fig. 6.7). Minang Record had previously released these recordings in cassette format. The VCD format enables the audience to enjoy not only the audio aspect of this Minangkabau folk theatre, but also its visual aspect.

Commercial recordings of *salawat dulang* are now available in cassette as well as VCD format, mostly produced by Tanama Record. Some prominent *salawat dulang* troupes from Tanah Datar and Agam regencies have been recorded by Tanama. Among *salawat dulang* cassettes released by this company are *Nabi Ibrahim & Pengorbanan-Nya* ('The Prophet Abraham and his sacrifices') performed by the Piriang Talayang troupe opposing the Gurun Sahara troupe (Fig. 6.8), *Takalo Nyao Kabapulang* ('When the soul is about to go home') performed by

297 Likewise the *ronggeng Pasaman* genre. Indra Nurdin (41 years), the warehouse manager (*kepala gudang*) of Tanama Record, mentioned that Tanama no longer (re)produces *ronggeng Pasaman* cassettes because of low consumer demand since it was first produced by his company in the mid 1980s (pers. comm., 25-9-2009). For more on *ronggeng Pasaman*, see Amir, Zuriati, and Anwar 2006:129-31; Gayatri 2010.





Figure 6.7: Modern saluang VCD and its cover (above) and randai VCD and its cover (below)

the Arjuna Minang troupe opposing the DC 8 troupe (Fig. 6.8), *Sabalun alun baralun* ('Before time began') and *Mengenal Hal Tubuah Nan Salapan* ('On the eight components of the human body') performed by the Kilek Barapi troupe opposing the DC 8 troupe (Fig. 6.8). In addition, *Martabat Diri* ('Self-respect'; 2 VCDs) performed by the Arjuna Minang troupe opposing the Langkisau troupe and *Nyawa dan Kulimah* ('The soul and the confession of faith') performed by the Kilek Barapi troupe opposing the DC 8 troupe are recorded in VCD format (Fig. 6.8).

*Pidato adat dan pasambahan* recordings seem to have been produced since the 1980s, pioneered by Yus Dt. Parpatiah, a *penghulu* from Maninjau, West Sumatra, who became the leader of the Rumah Gadang '83 theatre troupe in Jakarta. Commercial recordings of this genre have appeared only in cassette format (Fig. 6.9). Some recordings present Yus Dt. Parpatiah's monologues, while others present dialogues involving several actors. This genre is speeches in narrative verse spoken in a literary register with no musical accompaniment.



Figure 6.8: Salawat dulang cassette covers (above); salawat dulang VCD and its cover (below)

In unmediated public performances, a *pidato adat* performance in monologue is found only when celebrating the installation of a new *penghulu*, while in other contexts like marriage festivities it is performed in dialogues involving actors who can be grouped into hosts and guests. However, the commercial recordings of the genre feature more monologues than dialogues. Jennifer Anne Fraser mentions that such recordings, which are also used by Minangkabau migrants holding wedding parties following Minangkabau cultural practices in *rantau*, have homogenized *pidato adat*, disregarding its many variants. ‘The process of homogenization is made explicit through the apologetic announcement declaring that the recording presents a composite Minangkabau *adat* rather than any one specific practice’ (Fraser 2007:327), thus eliminating the local characteristics of the genre when presented in live performances. The recordings mostly present the old generation’s wise advice to young generations of Minangkabau to continually incorporate Minangkabau traditional custom and cultural identity in their lives, and to be aware of the negative impact of modern foreign

culture and globalization. This can be seen in volumes like *Kepribadian Minang* ('Minangkabau personality'; 2 cassettes), *Nasehat Perkawinan Versi Adat* ('Adat version of marriage advice'; 2 cassettes), and *Pitaruah Ayah untuak Calon Panghulu* (Father's advice for a candidate lineage head'; 2 cassettes). Other volumes present the ideal conception of Minangkabau custom (*adat*) while focusing on the dilemmas faced by Minangkabau traditional leaders (*niniak-mamak*) in the globalization era, as can be seen in *Konsultasi Adat Minangkabau* ('Consultation on Minangkabau custom'; 2 cassettes) and *Baringin Bonsai: Krisis Kepemimpinan Niniak-Mamak Di Gerbang Era Globalisasi* ('The bonsai banyan: a crisis of village leadership in the transition to globalization'; 2 cassettes). So, the recordings present the ideal version of Minangkabau *adat* on the one hand and on the other hand a way to respond to the cultural changes caused by modernization and globalization that seem to threaten Minangkabau identity.

Recordings of Minangkabau oral literature, whether in cassette or VCD format, and whether containing *kaba* or non-*kaba* stories, often come out in a multi-volume set. The *rabab Pariaman* recording of *Kaba Nan Gombang Patuanan & Sutan Pangaduan*, for example, takes twenty 60-minute cassettes. Many other *kaba* recordings fill 4 to 6 cassettes. *Kaba* VCD recordings also take several volumes, filling up to 7 VCDs. Non-*kaba* recordings, such as some of the *rabab Pariaman* genre – *Raun Sabalik* performed by Aly Umar, or *Jalan Kuliliang Bilang Nagari* ('Travelling around describing the villages') performed by Amir Hosen – take one or two cassettes. The media-bound genre of modern Minangkabau cassette drama also appears in multi-volume sets.

Some recordings of Minangkabau oral literature are released on both cassette and VCD (Fig. 6.10). They are released first in cassette format, and then, if market demand is high, the producer will re-release the recording in VCD format. This process is evident on many Minangkabau oral literature VCD covers, which read: 'Miliki juga kasetnya!!!' ('Possessing its cassettes too!!!'), indicating that the recording is also available in a cassette version. On the



Figure 6.9: Cassette covers of Minangkabau speeches by Yus Dt. Parpatiah



Figure 6.10: Kaba Kejadian di Batipuah Padang Panjang cassette cover (left) and VCD cover (right) of rabab Pesisir Selatan produced by Sinar Padang Record

contrary, cassettes never urge ‘miliki juga VCDnya’ (‘Own its VCD too!’). It is thus clear that the cassette version of the recording was produced earlier than its VCD counterpart. In such cases, the producer presumably uses the same master recording for both the cassette and the VCD versions.

Though the producers and West Sumatran recording industry practitioners I interviewed would not divulge exactly how many copies of each recording have been made, two of them, the aforementioned owner of Pitunang Record and former executive board member of Asosiasi Industri Rekaman Indonesia (ASIRINDO) Agus Taher (59 years old), and Indra Nurdin (41 years), the warehouse manager (*kepala gudang*) of Tanama Record, told me that each recording of Minangkabau verbal arts genres or *pop* Minang albums was produced in an edition of 2,000 copies of cassettes or VCDs. It is difficult to obtain accurate statistics on the production numbers of West Sumatran recording companies since many producers seem reluctant to give information on how many recordings their companies make and sell. Cassette and VCD covers give no date of the first edition on following editions, and this applies to all genres produced by West Sumatran recording companies.<sup>298</sup> Perhaps the producers do not want outsiders to consider the significant profits they might have earned. But what startled me is the account of a traditional arts performer named Musra Dahrizal who indicated that some producers seem to have acted as hijackers who ‘pirated’ their own products. Musra is a performer of the Minangkabau verbal arts genre called *bagurau*. His avowal is based on

298 The dates of cassettes and VCDs cited in this book (see References: Discography) were obtained by asking the publishers or the singers.

his own experience when he was recorded by a producer (he does not mention the name of the producer). He said he was paid Rp 500,000 for one song (roughly US\$ 50). According to Musra, the producer reproduced his recording without informing him, even though in the initial agreement between the producer and the performer, it is stated that performers will receive additional royalties for reproduced copies of their recordings. 'It can be said that in West Sumatra the producers are 100% hijackers,' he said (pers. comm., 6-10-2011). This helps us understand how regional producers are able to survive during a period often hit by economic fluctuations. Though having the status of small-scale businesses, regional producers seem to have grabbed a significant profit by practising 'clandestine pirating' on their own products, which enables them to minimize expenditure by paying less money to performers.

As has occurred in other regions (see Weintraub 2004:170 on the production of Sundanese *wayang golek* commercial cassettes), performers of Minangkabau oral literature who have been recorded by West Sumatran recording companies have been excluded from decisions relating to aspects of production, including editing. Due to the *jua putuih* contract system between performer and producer, as explained in Chapter 4, the producer has unlimited rights to reproduce the master recording. Usually, storytellers of Minangkabau oral literature do not receive additional royalties or remuneration from their reproduced cassettes or VCDs. Production dates are not usually noted on cassette and VCD covers, so it is difficult to calculate how many times a master recording has been reproduced. Thus the *jua putuih* contract system is exceptionally beneficial for producers because they can reproduce unlimited numbers of copies from the master recordings they hold.

Most master recordings of Minangkabau oral literature genres in cassette format are made in studios. Established producers such as Tanama Record, Sinar Padang Record, and Talao Record have their own recording studios, which are sometimes rented by other producers who do not own a recording studio or by producers of regional pop recordings from neighbouring provinces like Jambi and Riau (see Chapter 9). When the master recordings are produced in a studio setting, it means that the performances are carried out without the participatory audience which would be present at a public performance, where audience reactions 'affect the nature and purpose of performances of oral poetry in various ways' and 'often have an effect on the form and delivery of a poem' (Finnegan 1977:231).

Likewise, the master recordings for Minangkabau oral literature genres in VCD format are also made in studios, while the video clips are made outside the studio. In an interview with Pian (45 years old), a senior performer in the *indang* troupe from Koto Buruk called Lubuk Alung, who was involved in the production of *Indang Tradisi Pariaman Asli* (3 VCDs) released by Sinar Padang Record in 2009 (Fig. 6.3), he explained that the performances for the master recordings of the VCDs were first recorded in the Sinar Padang Record studio in Padang. After that the competing troupes performed again in public in several locations in Pariaman, by day and by night, to shoot video clips which were then integrated into the VCDs. During the public performances, the master recording was played in order to keep it corresponding with the performers' body movements. This technique is also used in making

VCDs at the national level in Indonesia (see Wallach 2008). A similar process was used in producing clips for Siril Asmara's new VCD of *Kaba Sutan Palembang* ('The story of the Prince of Palembang') produced by Sinar Padang Record. On 19 July 2011, I was invited to see the process of making clips in the Padang suburb of Pasir Jambak. Organized by crew members of Sinar Padang Record, Siril was shot with a video camera while he moved his mouth as if he were really talking, following the sound of the master recording that was being played. He was shot from different angles and had to change his dress several times (Fig. 6.11).

Replication of copies from the master recording, both for cassettes and VCDs, is carried out in Jakarta. According to Agus Taher, cassette producers are unwilling to establish a recording factory in West Sumatra because of the high cost involved, and the likelihood that it would not be profitable if it relied only on local consumers (pers. comm., 11-1-2010). For these reasons of cost, the replication of master recordings is still carried out in Jakarta.

#### KABA VCD CLIPS: ANACHRONISTIC IMAGES

The production of *kaba* recordings in VCD format has enabled and challenged producers and performers to visualize these stories. How are such stories, most of them referring to the past, translated into clips? In general, West Sumatran producers use personnel and technology at as cheap a cost as possible. Because of their status as small-scale businesses, the companies have limited capital and must be careful in spending money.

The clips of Minangkabau *kaba* on commercial VCDs are of two types: 1) images of the singers in different clothes that are often shot from the front; 2) images of individuals representing the characters of the stories against a background of urban or rural scenes. The singers look static: they sit facing the camera with an unchanged position throughout the recording. But they appear randomly during the recording in different styles of clothing. Some singers wear Western-style clothes like a business suit and tie, while other singers wear non-Minangkabau clothes like *batik*<sup>299</sup> and Islamic-style clothes. Images of singers exhibited on the covers of such VCDs are pictures taken during the making of the clips. But other images are taken from photos of performers wearing clothes particularly intended for the cover design of the VCD. So, these visual images, on the covers as well as in the clips, iconographically represent elements of regional culture and global culture, past time and present time, which suggests the cultural tension between authenticity and modernity.<sup>300</sup>

The images of countryside scenes, as a backdrop for characters' actions, are always from the Minangkabau region, but often do not correspond to the stories. The most extreme case

299 Though *batik* originated in the Javanese culture, it has become the national symbol of Indonesian textile.

300 This tension can also be suggested in the printed words found on these VCD covers: on *indang* VCD covers (also on cassette covers), for example, we find the text 'Pariaman Asli' ('authentic Pariaman') (see Fig. 6.3), whereas on the covers of some *rabab Pesisir Selatan* VCDs (also on cassette covers) we find the text '*gaya baru*' ('new style') (see Phillips 1991:81), suggesting the storytellers' attitude to modernity. Conversely, on another cassette cover we find the text '*rabab Pesisir Selatan asli*' ('authentic *rabab Pesisir Selatan*') with pictures of the performers wearing Minangkabau traditional clothing (see Fig. 6.4).

can be seen in the clips of *Kaba Gombang Patuanan* ('The story of Prince Patuanan'), a set of VCDs produced by Sinar Padang Record with the singers Momen and Mayur (see Appendix 5). *Gombang Patuanan* is a classic *kaba* about a young prince from Pariaman who struggles to free his mother, who was kidnapped by an evil king.<sup>301</sup> This classic *kaba* is set in the traditional kingdoms with the main characters having supernatural power. The story is very popular in the Minangkabau west coast rantau (Tiku, Pariaman, Padang, and Pesisir Selatan). There are no characters in the clips that represent the characters of the story. It is different with the clips of *rabab Pesisir Selatan*. Since this genre tells modern *kaba*, visualization of the characters of the stories in clips is not as difficult as visualizing characters in *rabab Pariaman*, which mostly tells classical *kaba* stories. Appearing in a modern setting, clips of *rabab Pesisir Selatan* show the characters wearing modern clothes and using modern technologies (like cars and motorcycles) in rural or urban settings. Nevertheless, they do not fully match the stories, which mostly represent the Minangkabau socio-cultural situation prior to the 1950s.

Lengthy traditional narratives like *kaba* originally had only auditory characteristics. When they are presented in VCDs, producers try to translate parts of the stories into visual form. This is of course not necessary if the stories are recorded on cassettes. Because the narratives are so long, VCD producers seek a way to supply the oral aspects with matching visual elements. But this is not easy since the stories deal with times in the distant past. As a consequence, the visual element does not match the audio element: the distant past of the story sung by the singer is translated into a modern-time situation in the video clips.



**Figure 6.11:** Making clips for Siril Asmara's *Kaba Sutan Palembang* ('The story of the Prince of Palembang') of *rabab Pesisir Selatan* (17 VCDs) produced by Sinar Padang Record (photograph by Suryadi, 2011)

301 For further details of this story, see Udin 1991. A synopsis of this story is available at: [http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaba\\_Sutan\\_Pangaduan](http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaba_Sutan_Pangaduan) (accessed 30-9-2011).

The producers and singers I interviewed mention that presenting the singers in different styles of clothes in clips is intended to avoid monotony for the audience. This is one way the medium of VCD has adapted to the long duration of traditional oral narratives like *Minangkabau kaba*. It is interesting to see how space, event, and time are presented on the *kaba* VCDs. The clips of singers look rather static, whereas clips of landscapes show one scene after another in rapid succession. So, the clips of *kaba* VCDs are constantly presenting opposition and distortion not only in terms of the nonmatching of the audio (the story itself) and the visual (clips) elements but also the chaotic variety of images in the clip itself (Suryadi 2011c). I conjecture that this affects the audience's understanding of the story, making it different when listening to *kaba* on cassettes compared to attending live performances.

#### EFFECTS OF RECORDING ON ORAL TEXTS

My investigation of the narrative of *kaba* stories in commercial recordings shows that storytellers take the medium into account when they compose texts for commercial recordings. I mean that certain characteristics can be identified in the texts of oral literature genres that are performed for commercial recordings. For example, particular lines and formulaic expressions found in the recorded texts suggest that storytellers are aware of the limited space available on media like cassette and VCD. Consequently, this influences some features of the recorded texts, which differ from the texts used for live public performances. When watching the aforementioned *indang* VCDs produced by Sinar Padang Record, I noticed some couplets in which the performers say that they could not talk at length because time does not allow (*dek wakatu indak maizinan*), indicating that a consciousness of the limited space on a VCD causes performers to save time. In other couplets performers remind the audience that they are just performing for fun in the studio, implying that the performance they make for the recording is not a competitive tussle as it would be in a public performance.

<p><i>Mako dek tupai balun baambiak, Buah jo tampuak carai alun patuik. Kok diresek-resek buah nan masak, Urang punyo kabun kok marameh paruik.</i></p>	<p>The reason why squirrels have not taken the crop Is that it's too soon for the fruit to part from the calyx, If the ripe fruits are squeezed, The owner of the garden might be frightened.</p>
<p><i>Mukadimahe ndak dipapanjang, Cuma ka panonton sajo nak dagang sabuik, Nak jaleh bana dek urang banyak, Di Sinar Padang kami main bagaluik.<sup>302</sup></i></p>	<p>The introduction will not go on any longer, I just want to say to the audience, In order to make it clear to the public, In Sinar Padang Record's [studio] we perform for the fun of it.</p>

We may hypothesize that a storyteller who has often recorded in studios has his own biological clock to make his narrative match the available space of the recording medium being used. Consequently, the texts of oral literature on commercial recordings may have their own specific characteristics depending on the medium being used. In fact, the oral literature texts

302 Pian Indang, dkk., *Indang Tradisi Pariaman Asli* (Sinar Padang Record 2009, 3 VCDs): VCD no. 3, *sandiang* 3.



recorded on cassette or VCD tend to be condensed, as has been shown by Nigel Phillips, who compared a *rabab Pesisir Selatan* text 'The story of migrating to Jambi' performed at a wedding near Padang and its commercial cassette version, both with the same plot and sung by the singer Syamsudin (Phillips 1991; Phillips 1992). The wedding performance took about six hours to sing, that is about one hour and a quarter longer than the studio recording.<sup>303</sup> '[T]he diction used in the public performance was, on the whole, somewhat less condensed than that of the studio performance' (Phillips 1992:67). Syamsudin told Phillips that producers sometimes remind performers to condense the text. Phillips also noticed a lack of parallelism in Syamsudin's stories on cassette.

When asked about the lack of parallelism in his stories, Syamsudin said that he purposely left out repetitions and unnecessary phrases and tried to speed up his stories because the recording company wanted him to use fewer cassettes per story. This is presumably from a wish to save on fees [...] and to make the stories more attractive to buyers. (Phillips 1991:84)

Nevertheless, it seems that not all recording companies apply this policy, as indicated by the aforementioned recording *Kaba Nan Gombang Patuanan & Sutan Pangaduan* of *rabab Pariaman* produced by Tanama Record, which fills 20 cassettes. However, we can assume that the text of this *kaba* performed in the recording studio is not necessarily the same as the text presented in public performances. A dictum in the theory of oral literature says that circumstances (including audience responses) influence the oral form (Lord 2003:14). There is a difference between oral literature performances conducted in front of a listening audience and those carried out in a recording studio for commercial purposes. In a public performance, the singer interacts with a participatory audience: they make comments, whistle, and clap in response to the singer. Even in performances of some Minangkabau oral literature genres we find such a fanatic audience. For example, in *indang* and *dendang Pauah* performances there is a person who serves as *sipatuang sirah* (literally 'red dragonfly'). Associated with the appearance of a red dragonfly, which contrasts strongly with the surrounding environment dominated by the colour green, the *sipatuang sirah* has the duty to provoke the spectators in order to keep them always enthusiastic about the performance. The *sipatuang sirah* does this by interjecting comments, clapping, and exclamations during the performance (see Suryadi 1993b:21-2; Suryadi 1994:231). This situation is hardly ever re-created for singers of oral literature when recorded in a recording studio. Yet spontaneity and audience interaction is an intrinsic part of the performance of these oral genres.

In the case of a literary poem there is a gap in time between composition and reading or performance; in the case of the oral poem this gap does not exist, because composition and performance are two aspects of the same moment. Hence, the question 'when *would* such and such an oral poem be performed?' has no meaning; the question should be 'when *was* the oral poem performed?' An oral poem is not composed *for* but *in* performance. [...] We must eliminate from the word 'performer' any notion that he is one who merely reproduces what someone else or even he himself has composed.

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303 It reminds me of Garrett Kam's study on the influence of commercial cassettes on Javanese classical dance (Kam 1987). Kam found that the duration of Javanese classical dances on commercial recordings are shorter than their counterparts in public performances.

Our oral poet is composer. Our singer of tales is a composer of tales. Singer, performer, composer, and poet are one under different aspects but at the same time. Singing, performing, composing are facets of the same act. (Lord 2003:13, emphasis in the original)

As every performance is in some respects a new creation by the singer, every oral literature performance potentially results in a new text. Consequently, performances conducted in recording studios result in texts which can be expected to show specific adaptations by the singer to the circumstances of studio recording, which usually lack a participatory audience. The singer's awareness of these circumstances is sometimes made explicit. For example, the singer Amir Hosen in *Kaba Nan Gombang Patuanan & Sutan Pangaduan* of *rabab Pariaman* uses formulaic verse elements (*pantun*) that indicate that his text was being performed for a commercial recording. He says (my emphasis):

<i>Ujuang tali pangabek paga,</i>	The end of the string for binding the fence,
<i>Putuih bajelo masuk balai,</i>	Broken, it trails into the market,
<i>Jelo-bajelo ka kadaian,</i>	Trailing and trailing into the shops,
<i>Ujuang nyanyi jatuah ka kaba,</i>	The end of the string falls into the story,
<i>Sakarang kini kito mulai,</i>	Now we are beginning it,
Disambuang [di] kaset nan kalapan. <sup>304</sup>	<i>It is continued on cassette number eight.</i>

In the verse quoted above, Amir Hosen announces that he will continue his singing on cassette number eight. Whenever he moves to the next cassette, he uses this formulaic expression, matching the end rhyme of lines three and six. A similar medium-specific formulaic verse is found on *indang* VCDs, as in the quotation below (my emphasis).

<i>Jadi sahinggo itu dulu,</i>	That is enough for now,
<i>Nan lain lo lai carito nak diulangi,</i>	I shall repeat a different story,
<i>Balambek-lambek daulu ka kami sabuik,</i>	We will recount it slowly at first,
<i>Ka Sinar Padang mintak tarimo kasih,</i>	Thanks to Sinar Padang [Record],
<i>Sungguah bapisah kito di hari siang,</i>	Though we are apart in the daytime,
Kaset kaampekk nantik samo dinanti. <sup>305</sup>	<i>We'll wait together for cassette number 4.</i>

In sum, it can be said that the engagement of oral literature genres with new media like cassettes and VCDs affects their texts. Such adaptation to cassette and VCD media has the linguistic consequence of new expressions appearing in oral literature texts. The texts of studio performances tend to be condensed, due to less parallelism, fewer pairs of synonyms, and fewer long evocative phrases. Medium-specific formulaic elements are incorporated, a clear indication that the texts are mediated texts.

304 Amir Hosen, *Nan Gombang Patuanan & Sutan Pangaduan* (Tanama Record 1996, 20 cassettes): cassette no. 8.

305 Pian Indang dkk., *Indang Tradisi Pariaman Asli* (Sinar Padang Record 2009, 3 VCDs): VCD no. 3, *sandi* 3.

Philip Yampolsky (1995) has shown how the regional cassette industry (in addition to factors like television, tourism, and central government cultural policies) has changed regional musics and performing arts. He mentions that ‘professionalism in performance is encouraged and proliferation of new repertoire is also encouraged – partly to provide new products for purchase, but also to make the repertoire so extensive that amateurs can no longer master it’ (p. 717). Along these lines, the engagement of Minangkabau oral literature genres with electronic media has, to a certain extent, opened up new ways of reception of these genres in addition to the traditional pattern of public performance at traditional festivities in Minangkabau villages. Commercial recordings of Minangkabau oral literature genres in cassette and VCD formats have provided Minangkabau people, especially the *perantau*, with new ways to appreciate these genres far from their land of origin, West Sumatra.

In West Sumatra itself, the reception patterns for Minangkabau oral literature genres, thanks to their commercial recordings, have expanded. Today we often see commercial VCDs of Minangkabau oral literature played at wedding ceremonies, as I saw on one such occasion on the outskirts of Padang municipality in July 2011. The host placed a television screen on the terrace of the house, linked to a VCD player with powerful loudspeakers (Fig. 6.12). A decade or two ago, such a happening was impossible. Today, devotees of *rabab Pesisir Selatan* who do not have enough money to pay for a live performance, can use an alternative way by playing a commercial VCD.

Cassette retailers I interviewed in Padang, Pariaman, and Bukittinggi said that commercial cassettes and VCDs of Minangkabau oral literature were often bought by Minangkabau migrants. As we know, the Minangkabau people have a tradition of voluntary migration or *merantau*. It is estimated that more than half of the total of six million Minangkabau people worldwide now live outside West Sumatra. Their places of residence are in many towns throughout Indonesia as well as in neighbouring Malaysia and Brunei. So, the products of West Sumatran recording companies are distributed both in the West Sumatran homeland and in *rantau* as well. Cassette and VCD technologies have enabled Minangkabau migrants to ‘take along’ diverse Minangkabau oral literature genres to the *rantau*. Playing such recordings fosters their nostalgia – ‘sentimental longing for one’s past’ (Sedikides *et al.* 2008:305) and ‘a longing for a place’ (Boym 2001:xv). The leading producers, Tanama Record and Sinar Padang Record, have established their own supplier shops in Glodok Plaza, Jakarta, in order to develop new expanding markets of potential consumers. At these supplier shops, retailers based in Java and the islands of eastern Indonesia can order Minangkabau commercial cassettes and VCDs.

For contemporary Minangkabau society, then, attending public performances in the West Sumatran homeland are no longer the only way of enjoying and appreciating their oral literature. Thanks to the electronically mediated Minangkabau oral literature genres available on commercial cassettes and VCDs, Minangkabau migrants as well as those who live in West



Figure 6.12: Watching commercial VCDs of *rabab Pesisir Selatan* during the first night of a wedding ceremony on the outskirts of Padang (photograph by Suryadi, 2011)

Sumatra are now able to appreciate their traditional verbal arts in the privacy of their own home.

I even saw these kinds of recordings marketed in neighbouring Malaysia, where many Minangkabau have migrated (see Chapter 9). The reception of these genres, thus, has expanded to cover a geographically wider area. The best example of this is *rabab Pesisir Selatan*, which nowadays is popular far beyond the boundaries of its original location (Pesisir Selatan regency). Nevertheless, it seems that Minangkabau migrants are not fully satisfied by consuming only recordings of Minangkabau oral genres. Recently Minangkabau migrants have taken on the custom of inviting storytellers of Minangkabau oral literature to conduct performances in *rantau*. For example, *saluang* and *rabab Pesisir Selatan* singers have been invited by Minangkabau migrants living in Jakarta, Bogor, Bandung, Medan, Pekanbaru, Palembang, Batam, and Denpasar (Fig. 6.13). Siril Asmara, a *rabab Pesisir Selatan* singer who has often been recorded by Sinar Padang Record, has been invited to perform many times by Minangkabau migrants in Malaysia since 1998 (pers. comm., 19-7-2011). In the Jakarta district of Petamburan, as another example, there is a restaurant called Kampung Minang Resto that on certain nights offers traditional Minangkabau oral arts performances (like *bagurau* and *rabab Pasisia*) and *kim* game music (see Chapter 5) to its customers, most of whom are Minangkabau migrants. Similar Minangkabau restaurants can be found in other towns, like Palembang, Medan, and Jambi.



**Figure 6.13:** Performance of a *bagurau* group from West Sumatra who were invited by Minangkabau migrants' Minang Restaurant Association in Bali. The performance was in Denpasar on 29 July 2007 (photograph by Hasanuddin Yunus, 2007)

By coming together to enjoy such performances in *rantau*, Minangkabau migrants' nostalgia for their homeland may be satisfied. This development suggests that the mediation of oral literature genres does not threaten their live performance. Though cassettes and VCDs have created a new audience, especially in urban areas of the *rantau*, apparently people are still inclined to want to enjoy Minangkabau live verbal arts performances in public settings. The success of commercial recordings of storytellers thus seems to have increased the popularity of their live performances – a phenomenon also experienced by Minangkabau pop artists.

## CONCLUSION

Historically, commercial recordings of Minangkabau traditional verbal arts were first produced on gramophone discs in the 'talking machine' era, but they grew into a significant phenomenon in the 1980s when cassettes, and then VCDs, became widely used in Indonesia. Nevertheless, many studies on verbal arts in Indonesia still regard these regional oral repertoires as if they were untouched by modern electronic media. This chapter has shown that as the West Sumatran regional recording industry gained prominence in Sumatra, it increased the production of commercial recordings of Minangkabau oral literature genres.

Engagement of Minangkabau verbal arts genres with the regional cassette industry has brought about impacts on these genres' features and socio-cultural meanings. More specifically, the production of commercial cassettes and VCDs of Minangkabau oral literature genres has altered their textual features. For example, some genres, such as *bagurau* and *rabab Pesisir Selatan*, show innovations in the language used in their texts and in their performance style. Other genres still retain their traditional form, although their texts do incorporate references to the recording medium on which they are recorded. Producers have their own approaches to translating spoken text into a visual format. Lengthy oral narratives of Minangkabau *kaba* stories in VCD format present visual clips which do not match the audio content, but audiences have their own cultural conventions for understanding this. Each genre has found a different way of adjusting to changing culture. The visual elements of Minangkabau verbal arts cassettes and VCDs, too, reflect continuity, adaptation, and change in Minangkabau oral storytelling. Such visual images express authenticity on one hand and modernity on the other hand, which can be interpreted as the way Minangkabau people maintain their ethnic identity in the face of a globalized world.

The engagement of Minangkabau verbal arts with modern electronic media has also changed distribution, reception, and transmission patterns. Through commercial cassettes and VCDs, the auditory and visual dimensions of Minangkabau oral literature can now be enjoyed far away from their point of origin. These recordings carry a flavour of traditionalism, which serves to reinforce a sense of cultural authenticity among Minangkabau migrants, and helps maintain an emotional relationship with the homeland. Although new electronic recording media have made performances available to a large, geographically dispersed virtual audience, live performances of oral literature genres still confirm ethnic identity and community, both in the homeland and in *rantau*. In contemporary mediated culture, the popularity of live performance is driven by electronic media. Cassettes and VCDs of Minangkabau verbal arts genres have greatly extended the traditional reception boundaries of these genres. Performers who have made many commercial recordings have become even more popular and are often invited by Minangkabau *perantau* to towns outside West Sumatra to give live performances. This shows that the extensive mediation of oral genres does not threaten their live performance. So, instead of clashing, recordings and live performance mutually complement each other.

After the discussion of the mediation of Minangkabau verbal arts in this chapter, in the next chapter I look at the third category of West Sumatran recording industry products: media-bound genres. Media-bound genres – cultural genres which are dependent on electronic media – emerged as an outcome of the cassette and VCD culture which, as elsewhere, has become a phenomenon in Indonesia. The case study focuses on Minangkabau children's pop music. This choice is not without reason, given that children's involvement in the media industry worldwide, both as performers and consumers, has increased greatly in recent years. The next chapter looks closely at how this phenomenon occurred in the Indonesian regional cultural context.