

Kaba: An Unfinished (His-) Story *

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Background Information

The word *kaba*, 'kabar' in Malay, is derived from the Arabic *khavar* 'news'. It is synonymous with Malay 'berita' — *barito* in traditional Minangkabau but *berita* in presentday colloquial Minangkabau. However, in a kaba there is an expression: *tibo di langit tabarito, jatuh ka bumi jadi kaba* [reaching the heaven it becomes a barito, falling to earth it becomes a kaba], thus both are regarded as two distinct terms. It is simply taken for granted that a barito is different from a kaba. As it is taken for granted that everybody knows what a kaba is, it is assumed that they should know what a barito is. If a kaba, semiotically, has (+), a barito would have (–), or vice versa, but in fact, nobody bothers to define barito.

A kaba is a traditional Minangkabau literary genre. As far as the story is concerned, it is similar to *hikayat*, a genre in Malay or *carito/curito* 'story' — *cerita* in Malay. Because of this, J. L. van den Toorn published *Kaba Sutan Manangkerang* [1885] and *Kaba Manjau Ari* [1891] as 'hikayat'. A kaba is usually understood as a curito, or the terms are used simultaneously to become kaba curito.¹⁾ However, technically or stylistically, there are some literary devices differentiating a kaba from a hikayat or cerita. The units in a hikayat or cerita are linguistic units—sentences and paragraphs. A kaba unit, on the other hand, is neither a linguistic nor a poetic unit although it is related to both, or it is simply something between the two.²⁾ By arranging the units in poetic form, they can become a line in a poem as can be seen in *Kaba Rancak Di Labuah* [Paduko Alam 1953] as it was translated into Indonesian by A. R.

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- 1) A story can be of any length, could be short as is the case with a short-story, which is, in the history of the traditional Malay literature anecdotal. A kaba is definitely long. As there are several short-stories in a book, there is only one kaba in a book. It sometime takes more than 10 one-hour cassettes to deliver a certain kaba.
- 2) The nonlinguistic nature of the kaba unit forces Bahar Dt. Nagari Basa in *Kaba Sutan Lanjungan* [1965: 2] to say: *Tanda, (koma) dalam buku ini bukanlah berarti, (koma) dalam bacaan yang sebenarnya, tetapi pengganti—(garis pembatas)* [The (,) (comma) in this book is different from (,) (comma) in ordinary writing, it is similar to (–) (to denote a separation)].

Yogi. Accordingly, a kaba story can also be narrated in *pantun*³⁾ form, as is the case with the story presented by a *bansi* storyteller from Solok and a storyteller from Pauh. However, as the kaba is not usually arranged in lines, we cannot simply equate the kaba unit with that of the *pantun*. The unit is not a syntactic one either since it is not a sentence as we usually understand it, although it does not totally disregard syntactic laws. A kaba unit is an expression consisting of two elements of relatively similar length separated by a *caesura* as can be seen in the following examples: *tibo di langit/tabarito, jatuah ka bumi/jadi kaba* [Junus 1984: 17]. A kaba is also a narrative story which is narrated or sung by a storyteller, employing devices which are particular to it and which are simply associated with Minangkabau culture.

A story can also be delivered in *randai* form, another main feature characteristic of Minangkabau culture. This is not a performance by a single storyteller, but one by a group of people—around ten in number. The performers form a circle in an empty space surrounded by the audience. While narrating the story in the form of a song—its style is that of a kaba—they move clockwise, varying their steps with *silat* ‘martial art’ movements. They eventually stop in between these movements to let someone perform some dramatic act, conversing or fighting, in accordance with his/her character in the story. A *randai* is thus a “mixture” (?) between a narrative and a dramatic expression.⁴⁾

A story can also be delivered in the form of a drama. Although this is quite new, having been introduced from the western tradition, it is quite popular among the Minangkabau—I have in my collection 92 one-hour cassettes relating stories in dramatic form. As a matter of fact, it is more popular than *randai*. As far as its style is concerned, it has departed from that of the kaba. Its unit of expression is syntactic rather than poetic. Accordingly, it is quite interesting to note that the most popular drama performances—those of Group Rumah Gadang 83 and Balerong Group—are performed by people living in Jakarta, who are culturally different from the kaba storyteller who stays behind in Padang or in other isolated areas in Minangkabau. They might also have different educational backgrounds and have attained different

3) A traditional Malay verse usually consists of four lines. The first two lines usually do not have meaning connection with the last two lines. The important thing is that the first line rhymes with the third one, and the second with the fourth. However, this rhyming scheme is not applicable to the units in a kaba.

4) This phenomenon might create a funny situation. An actor who according to his dramatic role has to disappear from the stage—he is either dead or has gone somewhere else, has to be present forever on the stage as he has to play his narrative role. He is also a part of the narrative performance of the group. A dead dramatic actor has to be alive again in order to take part in the narrative function of the performance. The narrative function can then be regarded as questioning the validity of the dramatic role someone plays. Or the other way round. There is a dialogue between those two functions.

degrees of achievement. The world of the kaba storyteller might be associated with failure while that of the drama performers with success, or at least success in the immediate future.

For us, they are—as they are in audio cassettes—simply the world of sound. The main kaba element is narrative, sung by a storyteller, while that of the randai is a mixture between narrative and dialogue accompanied by sounds associated with movement, and that of the drama is simply dialogue. We can forget the other elements as they are not relevant. There is no problem with the written data because all of them are kaba.

And Yet the Kaba Is an Unfinished (His-) Story

John Fowles [1978] regards his *French Lieutenant's Woman* as being unfinished. One is free to talk about it, add some information to it or give new interpretations to it. One might even alter it as Harold Pinter did in translating it into film. I would like to transfer the same idea to the world of kaba.

Traditionally, the kaba is regarded as a finished (his-) story or chapter. It has a finite corpus—some old stories about the (remote or ahistoric) past,⁵⁾ orally inherited from the ancestors. Due to this, one is always looking for an authentic kaba, free from any kind of corruption. It is *his story* and *history*, not a simple story and history. It is an authentic story narrated by a storyteller living in the remote past without interference from any storyteller after him. It is a historical record reported by a storyteller living in the remote past.⁶⁾ Accordingly, as an authentic record, it has to be col-

5) In the introductory remark to *Ambuang Baro dan Puti Intan*, essentially a kaba, although the title does not suggest it, the Commission responsible for the publication of old tales simply states that the story is one of the old Minangkabau literary works. Accordingly it belongs to the past, and it is not the product of today's literary activity. It has been replaced by new literary works. It is then a finished (his-)story rather than an unfinished one. This is contrary to what I am pursuing now.

6) There are some factors responsible for the presence of such an opinion. First, a kaba sometime indicates that it reports a true story. It simply reports an incident which really took place in reality. One then takes them at face value without paying any attention to the presence of contrary elements. As *Kaba Siti Mariam* [Dianjung and Adjung 196?] tells us that it relates an incident which took place between Bukittinggi and Medan, we might simply take for granted that everything in it is reality. We forget to notice the presence of *sifat curito fiktif* [the story is essentially fictional] accompanying the above statement. We simply forget the possibility that the storyteller has committed a lie—as warned by Guido Almansi in his book *The Writer as Liar*. When he tells us *kaba urang kami caritokan, duto urang kami tak sato* [we simply relate the story we heard from someone else, if there is any lies in it is his mistake not ours], we simply take that as a matter of style rather than the telling of the truth—the truth about the possibility of the presence of lie. We tend ↗

lected from the field where it is narrated by the elders—an endangered species⁷⁾—taking for granted that the performers are free from any untoward influences. Due to this, people tend to associate a kaba with stories like *Malin Deman* and *Cindua Mato*, stories about a remote past, or ahistory, full of fantasy as the term is understood by Robert Scholes [1975] and Tzvetan Todorov [1975], which can be easily associated with the primitive world. The existence of kabas dealing with the contemporary world, the immediate past, as is the case with *Kaba Sutan Lembak Tuah*, written by Syamsuddin St. Rajo Endah in the 20s [1961f] are simply ignored. Besides the old *Kaba Talipuak Layua* found in manuscript form in the library of the University of Leiden, there is a new version composed by Syamsuddin St. Rajo Endah in the 20s [1962a]. Katik Rajo Bainun and Talipuak Layua are no longer living in the old world. Syamsuddin has also given it a different ending, a sad one rather than a happy one. Talipuak eventually dies as she is not able to pursue her love for Katik since her mother forces her to marry a man of her mother's choice.⁸⁾ The number of kabas now available in the cassette form produced commercially are also similarly ignored. These kabas are neither a retelling nor a reworking of old stories. Most of them relate new stories which have just been composed.

A kaba is finite since one has a fixed idea about its story. There is a definitive story about Cindua Mato and Anggun nan Tongga. Any deviation is simply regarded as being false, a result of carelessness on the part of the scribe or perhaps something else. In order to find an authentic version we have to restore the original version of the respective kaba. We have to find the missing part and restore it. We have to erase any foreign elements, (un)intentionally added to it. However, the presence of several texts of a particular story, where one is different from another, is evidence of

↘ to do that as what we, as a second reason, have from the past is simply kaba. Due to that, in order to (re)construct our past we have to rely on its information. We will leave without any information if we start questioning its reality, the truthfulness of its report. This was later enforced by the presence of the concept that a literary work is a reflection of a reality, recording a reality, the third factor. Accordingly, one simply disregard other possibilities, especially those which are contrary.

- 7) Because of this, nobody bothers to collect the prerecorded kaba sold in the market. They are simply regarded as secondary or tertiary materials, subject to falsification. At least, it has been commercialized.
- 8) A. Damhoeri [1983] in translating *Talipuak Layua* into Indonesian made a further alteration. In reading the Minang version, we might conclude that Angku Palo is a young man and he is taking Talipuak as his first wife. But Damhoeri told a different story. Angku Palo is no longer young and he is taking Talipuak as his fourth wife after divorcing one of his wives. Damhoeri gave some rationalization to the story. It is quite impossible for a young and unmarried man to be an Angku Palo. He should be rather old, in his forties, and according to his age, he should have a wife or wives. And it is the stereotyped portrayal of an Angku Palo who would abuse his power in order to take a very young and beautiful girl to be his fourth wife. Accordingly, kaba is an unfinished (his-)story.

the unfinished (his-)story of the kaba.⁹⁾ A storyteller has his reasons for adding something to or erasing something from a kaba, or altering something in it.

Contrary to the myth that kaba is a folktale associated with an old literary tradition which has ended due to the introduction of new genres, the kaba is, as a matter of fact, an unfinished (his-)story as its production never stops. It has no *end* as it has its own *ends* which are responsible for its productive life in the 20s and 80s. There were several new kabas published in the 20s—most of which were reprinted with or without alterations in the 60s which directly or indirectly dealt with the contemporary social situation. Nineteen ninety-two saw the publication of *Kaba Hang Tuah* which was

9) Randai *Anggun Nan Tingga* by Klasik Minang Rumah Gadang ends with Tuanku Haji Muda preventing Anggun from marrying Gondan as he had been breastfed by her mother—according to Islamic teaching they are siblings. In Ambas Mahkota's version [1966], from which the randai version, I presume, is derived has another ending. After preventing Anggun from marrying Gondan, Tuanku took them to heaven. We might conclude that they might get married in heaven. There are some discourses in the text which suggest such a conclusion, i. e.: *Kamu bacarai hanyo lai, di akhirat ayah sampaikan juo* [You have to abandon the idea of marrying each other, I will however grant it in heaven], *janjian lah tibo maso kini, di akhirat kito sambuang pulo* [we have to accept fate now, and we will rearrange it in heaven], *batunangan malah ateh dunia, di akhirat ijab dibacokan, di hadapan kadhi Rabuljali, tidaklah surang nan kuaso, baitu lah garan suratan tangan, kito hanyo manjalani* [you are only allowed to be engaged to one another in this world, and the religious ceremony will only be held in heaven, and God will act as a *kadhi*, no human being can change it, God has decided everything for us, we simply follow his decision]. As the randai group does not believe, I assume, a living man can be transported to heaven, they purposely erase that part from their performance. For them, the rationality of the action is more important than other considerations. It might then be different from Ambas' point of view. His version encourages us to think that a mother's brother's daughter marriage gets divine blessing. It is sanctioned by God. Its contradiction to an Islamic teaching is simply a mundane phenomenon which can be annulled in heaven. Due to that, God purportedly transported them to heaven in order to let them marry each other, with his blessing. And I am sure that the composer of *Kaba Cindua Mato* of MS 6088 in the library of the University of Leiden had his reasons for going beyond the time usually found in that kaba. *Kaba Cindua Mato* usually ends with the death of Tiang Bungkuak at the hand of Cindua Mato. The time has been extended in MS 6088. After the death of Cindua Mato, Pagaruyung was ruled by Dang Tuanku's son who came down from heaven. He was lack of wisdom which was associated with Cindua Mato. Due to his stupidity, Pagaruyung had to secede some parts of Minangkabau to the Aceh sultanate. In addition, the sequence of incidents in *Kaba Cindua Mato* by Syamsuddin St. R. Endah, is different from that in MS 6088. In MS 6088 the marriage between Puti Bungsu and Dang Tuanku and Cindua Mato and Lenggo Geni took place before the death of Imbang Jaya. And Dang Tuanku, Puti Bungsu and Bundo Kandang ascended to heaven at the time of the arrival of Tiang Bungkuak to avenge his son's death—they were taken to heaven because of the chaotic condition of the world. In Syamsuddin's edition, the marriage took place after Tiang Bungkuak was killed by Cindua Mato. Accordingly, the ascendance of Dang Tuanku, Puti Bungsu and Bunda Kandang took place after the marriage and there was no reason given for the incident to take place. We also find a similar situation in other kabas and this proves the unfinished (his-)story of the kaba.

previously not available, and which is different from the corresponding story in Malay while *Sutan Lanjungan* is, in fact, a response to *Kaba Rancak Di Labuah*. It not only quotes an expression from *Rancak Di Labuah*, it also contradicts it. It is his own conscience, not his mother's, as is the case with *Rancak Di Labuah*, that drives Lanjungan to improve his economic condition. Lanjungan belongs to a different generation, not that of *Rancak Di Labuah*. The characters know there is something wrong with their living conditions and that they have to do something about it. They blame their elders for their present condition. Lanjungan's *mamak*, mother's brother, pawned the family inheritance and also did his best to preventing Lanjungan from going *merantau* to improve his living conditions.

There were some newly composed kabas published in cassette form in the 80s also dealing—directly or indirectly—with the contemporary situation. Their contemporariness can be seen in the title of a kaba narrated by Pirin Asmara, published by Tanama Record in 1992, i.e. *Merantau ke Malaysia: Mahyudin dan Erni*. The way Erni and Mahyudin merantau to Malaysia is different from how their ancestors did it decades ago. Accordingly, the (his-)story of the kaba complements the history of another genre. In the 20s it complemented the world of the “novel,” then a new genre. In the 80s it complemented the world of drama. Each presents a different world view which is comparable to the other, each is an unfinished (his-)story.

Kaba Is Subject to Unfinished Interpretation

If one simply believes that a kaba represents a traditional world which is often associated with primitiveness, one does not bother to question the validity of Dang Tuanku's ascendance to heaven. It is either simply associated with primitiveness, or is simply understood in terms of the presence of Islamic influence—the event is patterned after the *mi'raj* of Prophet Muhammad—in order to honor Dang Tuanku, the ruler. It is a divine legitimization of his rule. In this instance, a kaba is a finished (his-)story with a finished interpretation. The phenomenon just mentioned is seen as a “cultural” phenomenon taken from another “culture” as a token of the presence of its influence in the mainstream culture. The reason given in the text for the ascent to heaven is simply ignored: that they were vulnerable to the chaotic conditions of the world due to the oncoming attack by *Tiang Bungkuak*¹⁰⁾—this is missing from Syamsuddin's text [1961c]. This then goes beyond the mere presence of an influence from another “culture.” The author used it for a certain purpose. Accordingly, it can be related to the presence of another property of text.

10) This can be compared to the situation in *Syair Ikan Terubuk* as it is discussed by Gijbert Louis Koster [1993: 293ff].

Cindua Mato in MS. OR 6085, 6086 and 6088 ordered his men to look for Lalat Tuo and Langkaneh¹¹⁾ in order to execute them as everything started with their discourse. Lalat Tuo and Langkaneh told Cindua Mato that Imbang Jaya was going to get married to Puti Bungsu. Tuanku Rajo Mudo, Puti Bungsu's father, had decided to marry her to Imbang Jaya even though she had been engaged to Dang Tuanku since early childhood as Imbang Jaya told him that Dang Tuanku had been isolated as he was suffering from a contagious diseases.¹²⁾ Langkaneh and Lalat Tuo also told Cindua Mato that Imbang Jaya had employed robbers to guard Bukit Tambung Tulang, the only passage connecting Imbang Jaya's kingdom and Pagaruyung, to prevent people from bringing in another discourse contrary to his. Consequently, the only discourse Tuanku Rajo Mudo heard was Imbang Jaya's. As they were able to pass through Bukit Tambun Tulang alive, Lalat Tuo and Langkaneh could not have been ordinary people. As a matter of fact, it took Sutan Lembang Alam, Cindua Mato's son with Puti Reno Bulan, to kill them as ordinary people had failed to do so. The essential element of the respective kaba is discourse; discourse about the type of action which should be taken against Tuanku Rajo Mudo who had not honored his promise to marry Puti Bungsu to Dang Tuanku; discourse questioning Cindua Mato's action of bringing Puti Bungsu to Pagaruyung. Did he commit a crime or not? In case he did, who should pass sentence on him¹³⁾; discourse about the legality of Imbang Jaya's charge against Cindua Mato. And there were some discourses questioning Dang Tuanku's and Cindua Mato's actions. How would the life of the ordinary people be affected? As this is different from how people usually understand the story—the glorification of Cindua Mato and Dang Tuanku—it simply shows the unfinished interpretations of the respective

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- 11) The role in *Ambuang Baro dan Puti Intan* was played by Aciak Cipeh Jilatang Kampuang. Every action in the story started with her discourse which ended up with the death of Ambuang Baro, Puti Intan and Pamuncak Sutan. As the people were looking for her as she was considered responsible for the tragic incidents in the story, she then decided to commit suicide by taking poison similar to that which had killed Puti Intan and Pamuncak. The people hoped that with her death no more tragic incidents would ever take place in the society. Rustam St. Palindih in *Dasima*, a rewriting of a movie story of the same title [1940], called Mak Buyuang *si langkaneh* [Mrs. Langkaneh], as her discourse made Dasima lead a tragic life. She ended her life as an inmate in a mental hospital.
 - 12) One might take the rumor as fact as Dang Tuanku spends his life staying within the house, never venturing outside. He is described as *gadang dalam rumah*—his greatness does not reach outside the house. This is different from Cindua Mato who never stays at home, always wandering around. As nobody sees Dang Tuanku, one might believe that he has been isolated as he has been infected with contagious disease.
 - 13) We have been expecting Cindua Mato to be declared innocent. However, we have to take a round trip through various channels of discourse before reaching such a conclusion. At one time we might suspect that he would be declared guilty as everybody is pointing at his mistake. He did not carry out the order to the letter. He had his own interpretation of it.

kaba. And in pursuing a particular interpretation, we are, in fact, deconstructing the previous one.

Everything in *Kaba Cindua Mato* starts with a discourse and the kaba is itself a discourse questioning everything. It questions the action taken by Dang Tuanku in asking Cindua Mato to bring Puti Bungsu to Pagaruyung as this brought displeasure and anxiety to the people. It questions Dang Tuanku's ascent to heaven while the people were left to experience the humiliating actions of Tiang Bungkuak. And the root of the problem is Dang Tuanku's engagement to Puti Bungsu: they are both members of very honored families. The kaba also questions the integrity of Pagaruyung as a power holder as his power was easily shaken by Imbang Jaya. According to John and Jean Comaroff's classification, his was a less than successful regime [1992: 30]. The kaba also tells us of the importance of keeping the flow of discourse free from any kind of obstruction. The trouble starts with Imbang Jaya's creation of a false discourse, his obstruction of the free flow of discourse between his kingdom and Pagaruyung, and his refusal to accept someone else's discourse. And his bad faith, believing that his discourse is the only true discourse, leads him to a non-discourse world, the world of action, thus sacrificing the lives of innocent peoples. The same is true of Sutan Ali Dunia¹⁴⁾ in the extended version of the kaba. His discourse of divorcing his wife gets him into trouble. He has to secede Agam to an Acheh sultan which makes him unpopular among the (Agam) people. They do not allow him to pass through their village, they serve him rotten food. And the kaba reserves for him an unfavorable description.¹⁵⁾ As a matter of fact, the respective kaba make us realize the tricky nature of discourse, how different layers of discourse¹⁶⁾ may be present. Cindua Mato is given two contradictory discourses, the official and the non-official one. Officially, on the surface, his task is to deliver the presents to Puti Bungsu. However,

- 14) Sutan Ali Dunia was Dang Tuanku's son, who was sent down to Pagaruyung from heaven to rule it after the death of Cindua Mato. From the start he was described as being unfit. As he spent his time in the house, he had no contact with his people. He did not know what was going on. He made his own decisions without consulting "the elders" and this was contrary to the situation described in the first part of the kaba.
- 15) He was given the kind of physical description usually reserved for describing a girl, such as: "His face is a full moon, his hair is evening dew, his neck is a silver bottle, his ears like *talipuak layua*," and so on as can be read in the manuscript. In addition to that, there is another description which humiliates him as he steps on elephant feces, as can be seen in the following quotation giving in translation: "he tried to go forward and he stepped on elephant feces." Instead of praising the king, the text humiliates and condemns him as if he was the source of every trouble.
- 16) In selecting girls to be engaged to Lanjungan, Dt. Andika in *Sutan Lanjungan* proposed the names of two girls of dubious character to Tuanku Biaperi. This puzzled Biaperi. He did not know whether Andika spoke the truth or not. He simply asked him to approve of the girls. Or he proposed those names in order to find out Biaperi's reaction. This shows the tricky nature of discourse, and we do find such a thing in kaba.

unofficially, Dang Tuanku gives him another discourse, a contradictory one, ordering him to take Puti Bungsu with him. During the process there is a constant dialogue between both discourses. As a matter of fact, the kaba is a dialogue between contrasting discourses. Accordingly, there will be no final and definitive interpretation of *Kaba Cindua Mato*,¹⁷⁾ as a particular interpretation is always in dialogue with the other interpretations. It is always an unfinished interpretation which is responsible for the unfinished (his-)story of the kaba, the creation of new texts, complementing the old one(s) and in dialogue with each other.¹⁸⁾

This can be compared to kaba *Ambuang Baro dan Puti Intan* [Simarajo 1979]. Everything starts with Aciak Silaro's discourse with Rajo Bujang. Aciak Cipeh simply added her own discourse to it. And the effect is catastrophic. Aciak Cipeh was justly punished and she and those involved in the plot committed suicide.

The Unfinished History of the Kaba

By classifying kaba as *sastra lama* [the old literature], it is assumed that its history has ended, that no new kaba will ever be produced. A kaba is simply understood as the relating of a story about the remote past, not about contemporary phenomena. However, the history of kaba tells us a different story. The 1920s saw the production of kabas relating stories about the contemporary condition, no longer about the remote

17) Wisran Hadi had written a drama version of Cindua Mato's story, questioning the "old" version. Everybody led an immoral life. Dang Tuanku's and Cindua Mato's fathers were foreign soldiers who raped their mothers. They led an immoral life as every night they entertained women smuggled into the palace. Cindua Mato, as a matter of fact, had pre-empted Dang Tuanku in taking away Puti Bungsu's virginity. He did it during his journey alone together with Puti Bungsu from Sikalawi to Pagaruyung—in the old versions, nothing happened between Puti Bungsu and Cindua Mato. It is now a different story according to Hadi. They had every chance of starting an affair so they were really stupid if they did not make use of it.

18) It can be compared to the phenomenon regarding *Nyai Dasima* story—I am indebted to Dr. Kenji Tsuchiya for giving me his article on Nyai Dasima [1991] which gives me some valuable information. There were at least three versions of Nyai Dasima story: G. Francis' version [1896]—the first (and the "original"), Palindih's [1940] and Ardan's [1965]. They are so different from one another that it is quite impossible for us to tell which one is the authentic version. Only by knowing the history of their publication and the background for each publication and by employing the ideas of reception theory, can we say that Francis' version is the authentic one. However, this does not allow us to simply ignore the other two versions as they also provide us with important information. At least, they take us beyond the story of Dasima, the socio-cultural background which was responsible for the publication of every version of the story. We are no longer interested in the authenticity of a version. Every version, for us, has its own merit. The same thing is applicable to kaba texts.

or ahistoric past.¹⁹⁾ They were not a reproduction of old kabas, inherited from the ancestors. The development of the novel or *roman*, then a new genre in so-called modern Indonesian literature, in whose development writers with a Minangkabau background played an important role, did not put an end to the publication of kabas relating new stories. At the time, despite the possible differences in ideology, there were writers who wrote novels and those who wrote kabas. Accordingly, there is a parallel between a story in a novel and that in a kaba. There was even a time when people were encouraged to say that there was a relationship between the novel and the kaba story.

At least we can say that Nur Sutan Iskandar based his *Hulubalang Raja* [1934] on *Hikayat Sutan Manangkerang*.²⁰⁾ There are some parallels between these two works, although Iskandar did his best to change the name of the characters and gave it a different historical perspective. There are also parallels between *Sengsara Membawa Hikmat* [Sati 1928] and *Kaba Sutan Lembak Tuah* [Endah 1961f, 3rd printing], and between *Pertemuan* [Pamuncak n. S. 1927] and *Kaba Siti Nurlela* [Endah 1961d, 3rd printing].²¹⁾ Similar motifs occur in *Kaba Amai Cilako* [Endah 1961a, 3rd printing] and *Kaba si Sabariah* [Hamka 1957, 4th printing] on the one hand and *Karena Mentua* [Iskandar 1932] on the other. It is not by accident then, that Hamka wrote *Kaba si Sabariah* using his *gala*, Dt. Indomo—a 'name' which, according to Minang Adat is given to someone during his marriage ceremony, instead of using Hamka which he used in his novels. In his kaba, Hamka only blames the mother, a person, for the tragic death of Sabariah and Pulai, not the system, as is the case with *Merantau ke Deli*.

19) It is difficult to trace the publications from that particular time. Most publications I can lay hands on are reprints of those kabas from the 1960s. However, in some kabas, reprinted in the 60s and 80s, the author did his best to tell us when and where he composed it. Endah, for example, told us that *Kaba Puti Gondorah* was composed in Padang on July 14, 1917, while *Kaba Siti Syamsiah* on July 15, 1919, in Alang Lawas Padang. He wrote *Kaba Siti Nurlela* on August 11, 1927, in Kubang Putih, Bukittinggi, *Kaba Amai Cilako* [The cursed mother], in Jakarta, on August 13, 1927—I suspect there is something wrong here as the time difference is quite small, only two days, while Jakarta was at that time quite far from Bukittinggi and air traffic was at an early stage and was reserved for the Dutch, and *Kaba Sari Bunian dengan Tuanku Sutan Duano* in Alang Lawas Padang on Monday night, Sept. 18, 1931. However, these dates can be used as an indication for the time of their publication.

20) In the late 50s, in *Mimbar Indonesia*, I discussed the possible similarity between *Hulubalang Raja* and *Sutan Manangkerang* entitled *Hulubalang Raja dan Hikayat Sutan Manangkerang: Kesamaan atau Peniruan?*—I do not have a copy of that article with me now. However, due to my lack of reading and the fact that literary theory had yet to develop, I saw the problem in terms of originality. Whether it was original or not? However, if I had to do the analysis now I would like to employ ideas developed within intertextuality and reception theory, and I am sure I would reach a different conclusion from the one I did before.

21) The copy of those kabas I have now might have been printed for the first time before the war, in the 20s or 30s.

Accordingly, the history of kaba continues into the modern era. The development of the novel has not stopped its development. In fact, it expresses an ideology which is different from that of a novel.²²⁾ A novel, as a myth of freedom, tends to condemn a *mamak* 'mother's brother'—who plays a dominant role in the Minangkabau social system—as he is regarded as being responsible for one's miserable life.²³⁾ Masri leads a miserable life in *Pertemuan* as his *mamak* forces him to marry his cousin. It is the other way round with a kaba. A family leads a miserable life due to the absence of a *mamak*. Someone has need to assume that duty. People only start to respect Malano's family in *Kaba Siti Nurlela* after he is able to take care of them, providing them with material support. As a myth of concern, a kaba expresses a traditional ideology. It tells its audience how to behave according to the tradition. In indoctrinating her children on how to behave, a mother also indoctrinates the audience. Thus, the didactic aspect of a kaba is more important than its story. The story of *Kaba si Saripudi* [Bogindo 1935] is quite simple, lacking any literary value. However, it has an important didactic value. Saripudi meets with a tragic death as she acts against her parents' advice. Everything Bahar Dt. Nagari Basa creates in *sutan Lanjungan* is to enable him to indoctrinate his audience on how to behave as new generation Minang people should. He creates certain conflicts to enable him to teach his audience how to resolve them. By introducing girls of dubious character to Tuanku Biaperi, Dt. Andika expects there should be some bad comments and that these comments would accordingly indoctrinate the audience. The same thing happens in *Kaba Sutan Lembak Tuah* and *Kaba si Gadih Ranti*, both by Syamsuddin St. Rajo Endah. Endah let Sutan Jainun in *Kaba Sutan Jainun* [1961g] marry several girls in order to show the ideal type of a Minangkabau wife—he stops looking for another wife after getting married to a *Jawahir*, a precious stone. As a matter of fact, characters in *Sutan Lanjungan* act according to what their name suggest. Sutan Kabanaran is a man of truth as *bana* means truth. It is inappropriate then to only pay attention to the story line of a kaba. One has to look into its non-story or extra-story line as well. It cannot be analyzed

22) In his novels, Hamka is critical of Minangkabau social practice and system. A man leads a miserable life as he is too dependent on that practice and system. Leman in *Merantau ke Deli* [1938] leads a miserable life after getting married to a Minangkabau wife and divorcing his first wife, a Javanese. He does this as he is too dependent on Minangkabau tradition. He feels ashamed that he has to stay in his mother's house when he returns home as his wife is a foreigner (to his village). In addition, his Javanese wife does not give him a child. Due to that, he has to give in to his family's enticement to take a girl from his own village as his second wife. On the other hand, Hamka's kaba expresses an ideology which favors some of the practices associated with the Minangkabau system. He simply lets himself be taken in by the traditional kaba world.

23) I now have some reservations regarding this dichotomic statement as it simplifies a problem which is quite complicated. However, I will refrain myself from questioning it in this article and discuss it on another occasion.

within a simplified structural analysis along the Propp and Levy-Strauss line. We have to treat a kaba as a text rather than a story. We are not talking about the story of Cindua Mato, but about it as a text.²⁴⁾ This makes the kaba different from the novel as the novel has been discussed primarily as a literary work. People occupy themselves with the problem of the novelness of a work which depends on its quality as a literary work. Only lately, have critics started to treat a novel as a text, by analyzing its non-story of extra-story line, and including as well its paratextual²⁵⁾ elements [cf. Junus 1988a].

The development of the novel, which is associated with the world of writing and printing, did not stop the development of the kaba. As a matter of fact, the kaba made use of the availability of printing facilities. Instead of relating a story orally, a storyteller now related it in a printed form. As they no longer depended on their memory—its capability being limited to some (old) stories—storytellers were now able to compose new stories, kabas, and have them printed. The introduction of new technology encouraged the production of newly composed kabas dealing with contemporary phenomena, previously not available. It continues to be a development of the 80s.

The second part of the 60s saw the introduction of audio-cassettes, which had so many advantages over the ordinary record, at least commercially. Even in the early 70s, some record shops in Padang took advantage of this development. They started producing commercially—on a small scale—kabas in cassettes. The first kaba on cassette I bought in 1971 was *Kaba Hasan Surabaya*. At the time, I thought it was only an incidental phenomenon. Because of that, when I visited Padang in 1981, I did not

24) For a further comment on this matter see my article on Mustiko Adat Alam Minangkabau [1988b]. Stylistically *Mustiko* is a kaba, a fiction, but the title might make people think differently, that is an essaylike account of Minangkabau adat. Accordingly, we cannot treat it as mere fiction as it has an essaylike quality. Accordingly, we can not talk about it in terms of its story line only. And we can not treat it as a mere essay as we cannot ignore its story properties. The same thing happens in our reading of a kaba. We cannot simply concentrate on its story line. We have to take into account its non-story properties as it is an organic part of the text, although not of the story. (People tend to ignore it since it distorts the unity of the story).

25) I use the term for the sake of convenience in the absence of a more appropriate term, to enable me to talk about a group of phenomena. It covers the way an expression is written—by italicizing it, underlining it, by bolding it, capitalizing it etc., the way a word is spelled—the using of figures rather than word, the illustration, the make up of a page and other extra-story properties [cf. Hutcheor 1989]. Accordingly, they are the properties of a text and have to be considered in reading the text as they contribute to the formation of its meaning. However, the term itself might tell a different story: they are outside the text rather than (within) the text. This makes me hesitate to use the term. However, I have to accept it as, according to Gunnar Olsson [1991], no word is free from its history. We cannot use a word as if it were virgin as it has experienced a long history which we cannot simply erase. It will be there all the time.

bother to look for other kabas recorded in cassette form. It was a different story when I spent my sabbatical leave in Padang in 1985.

My initial research project at the time was to collect dramas recorded on cassette and produced by either the Balerong or Rumah Gadang Group in Jakarta, which confronted Minangkabau people with contemporary conditions. However, when I visited shops selling cassettes in Padang I discovered that there were an abundance of cassette kabas recording. I accordingly revised my project to concentrate on (pre)recording kabas—and by 1992 I was able to collect around 300 one-hour cassettes most of which were newly composed kabas on incidents supposed to have taken place in the remote, as well as in the immediate past.

The recording of newly composed²⁶⁾ kabas in the 80s was made possible by the introduction of cassette technology. They complemented the drama-type stories prepared by the Minangkabau people residing outside Minangkabau. Both type of stories have different characteristics.

Drama-type stories deal with the problems faced by Minang people vis-a-vis the modern and the traditional world and how they are victimized by the old-fashioned members of the community. A father, for example, leaves his wife and children as his son refuses to marry his sister's daughter. It does not, however, make them hate Minang culture. Their problem is how to accomodate the modern world within the framework of Minangkabau tradition or the other way round. Being modern does not mean losing the Minang identity. The Minangkabau people are very concerned about retaining the Minangness. The kaba in cassette form express a different ideology. There is no indication of Minangness in it. The storyteller does not bother about it because the most important thing is survival in this unfriendly world—how an *outcast*, a nobody, “improve” himself. By being adopted by a rich man, an unwanted boy can become somebody. Erman in *Judi membawa sengsara* [Gambling brings unhappiness], a kaba in cassette form by Syamsuddin, was able to pursue his education as he was adopted by a rich man after he and his sister were abandoned by his divorced mother. His education enabled him to become a prominent civil servant and he was later able to unite his scattered family-members. As he felt unwanted by his father, Abu Tazar in *Carito Rukiah & Malano* [The story of R & M]—a kaba in cassette form by Syamsuddin—ran away from his father. He was able to improve himself as he was adopted by a rich man who sent him for further education. He was later able to

26) Most of the kabas published in cassette form are newly composed. Only 11 out of the 48 kaba titles on cassette were ever known before, in the oral as well as in the written tradition. And only 10 out of 48 stories tell of the incidents in the remote past. In addition, there is an important phenomenon. Instead of relating *Kaba Sutan Lembak Tuah*, Bagindo Sukiman chose to narrate *Kaba si Kacak jo si Midun* (Tanama Record) based on *Sengsara Membawa Nikmat* by Tulis Sutan Sati—of course with some radical changes.

reconciliate his previously divorced parents. As the son of a poor family, Yanuir in *Cinto tak sampai* [The unfulfilled love]—a kaba in cassette form by Syamsuddin—was an outcast. His marriage to Yarni, the daughter of a rich man in his village, enables him to improve himself. He was able to marry her as he had put a magic spell on her because she had once called him names. Sometime the storytellers do not bother about the Minang identity as they are living in it and are very much part of it. In addition, the kaba in cassette form have “deviated” from the tradition set by the kaba in printed form composed in the 20s. It no longer has a didactic aspect. Midun and Lembak Tuah were good people and they went into prison for a crime they did not commit. Rasidin in *Rasidin nak rang Pariaman* [R the boy from P] and Aslam in *Silaing Padang Panjang*—kabas in cassette form by Syamsuddin and published by Tanama Record Padang—are of dubious character. They went to prison for a crime they did commit. As they got a break while in prison, some bad hats might, accordingly, be tempted to get a prison term just to get the same break the kaba characters got.

There are other aspects in the historical development of kaba I would like to discuss. First, the importance of the didactic aspect in kabas printed in the 20s, which makes them not only different from the kabas published in cassette form in the 80s, but also from some old kabas which are supposed to have been inherited from the ancestors. Except in *Cindua Mato*, and to some extent *Anggun nan Tongga* and *Umbuik Mudo*, the didactic aspect, the indoctrination of how to behave, does not play a dominant role in most old kabas. The most important thing is the storyline and it is not subjected to the educational purpose of the kaba as is the case with *Sutan Lanjungan*. *Kaba Manjau Ari* simply tells us about Manjau's success in revenging himself on the religious teacher who had victimized him, his sister and his parents. It simply teaches us to be suspicious of foreigners. On the other hand, the kabas printed in the 20s—some of which were reprinted in the 60s—give us a different picture: of the importance of didactic aspect. The sole purpose the author has in mind in composing this type of kaba is to indoctrinate the audience on how to behave as a proper Minang. It shows us the ideal and the non-ideal picture of a Minang mother, wife and husband. *Kaba Sutan Jainun* tells us that Jainun had to marry several times before getting an ideal Minang wife. *Kaba Siti Kalasun* [Endah 1962] relates the story of an ideal Minang wife who was faithful to his husband although she was pressured by her mother to divorce him. *Kaba Amai Cilako* gives us a picture of a non-ideal Minang mother who makes her children lead a miserable life. By telling the story of how Nurlela is corrupted by the modern world, *Kaba Siti Nurlela* teaches us how to “react” to modern influences. Accordingly, by inculcating traditional values, we learn how to react to the modern world. The kaba was not created for the sake of describing the

traditional world *per se*, it was created as a guide for the audience on how to behave *vis-a-vis* the modern world. Thus, there are kabas—*Lembak Tuah* and *Gadiah Ranti*—which tell us how a native power holder abused his power, and how the respective power holder is “punished” by the Dutch authorities and replaced by a new person—in this sense the kabas are quite similar to some of the old ones which also tell us about power struggles. The only difference is the absence of another power holder in the old kabas. There is no Dutch power holder in the old kabas, who is ready to interfere in case there is a power struggle between native power holders. Some kabas were simply aimed at maneuvering people’s discontentment towards the native power holder who had abused his power and acted as a tyrant. The most extreme case is *Kaba Pangulu Kapalo Sitalang* [Sinaro and Tjaniago 196?] which deals with an incident in 1903 where the people cut the body of an abusive native power holder into pieces and were then severely punished by the Dutch authorities.

There were several factors responsible for kaba revival of the 60s. The defeat of the PRRI—the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia which challenged the Sukarno’s regime—(by Sukarno’s army) demoralized the Minangkabau people and made them lose their pride—they associated the PRRI with their discontentment with Sukarno’s regime. Besides being humiliated, they also felt that the new power holders established by the winning side had abused their power and put them in a disadvantaged position. In fact, there are some expressions in *Kaba Pangulu Kapalo Sitalang* which discredit the native power holder installed by the government.²⁷⁾ The Minangkabau people hoped that reprinting the kaba—a valued cultural property through which some of them could express their revenge towards with regards to the abusive power holders—they could rectify the condition. At least it gave them back their pride. They no longer had to be ashamed of being a Minang. And those kabas

27) *kununlah dek angku kapalo, dek harok mencari tuah, dek nak tapuji di induak samang, disuruah sagalo anak buah* (35) [and then by the village head, wishing to be known, to be praised by the employer, he ordered his subordinates to]; *io baliau angku kapalo, dapek pujian dek pamarentah* (37) [and the village head was praised by the government]; *bak ka tapuji dek urang pamarentah, buliah dek lamo mamakai pangkaik, io manjadi angku kapalo* (38) [hoping to be praised by the government, so he could hold his position as village head for a longer time]; *inyo nan urang pamarentah, pakai bisuluik dari ateh* (40) [he was a government man, got a license from the top]; *kok nyo tabunuah angku kapalo, tahu urang pamarentah, baratuih saradadu nan ka tibo, datang manangkok manyia kampuang* (41) [if the village head got murdered and the government knew, they would send hundreds of soldiers, to catch and to burn the village]; *dek karano baliau angku kapalo, sabab mamakai bisuluik dari pamarentah, tantu manyusah kamudian, mungkin baratuih saradadu datang kamari* (44–5) [as he was the village head, appointed by the government, and it would get us in trouble, hundreds of soldiers might come here]. These statements might be applicable to the village heads appointed during the post-PRRI era who had to serve their master rather than to serve the people.

relating the story of the defeat of a tyrant, not only criticized the abuse of power by the power holders installed by the victorious side—I have mentioned this in my review of *Culture and Politics in Indonesia* [1974], they also promised the people victory against that power, even if it was a fictitious one. And this was made possible by the government decree in the 60s encouraging the reissuing of the folktale as an element of Indonesian culture, thus enriching Indonesian culture. The Minangkabau elite took advantage of this challenge. Then kaba is an unfinished history and we can not predict anything. Everything is possible. Everything is unfinished, the history as well the story.

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