

# KAPATA ORAL LITERATURE AS A DOCUMENTATION MEDIA OF MALUKU COMMUNITY HISTORY

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**Abstract.** Maluku is one of the provinces in Indonesia where historical documents are rarely found in written form. As an illiterate society, the majority of the Maluku people document important events considered as history in the form of oral literature. One such form is *kapata*. *Kapata* oral literature is poetry that is sung or recited with or without the accompaniment of a drum. Usually found in traditional ceremonies such as the coronation of kings. This research is a qualitative research using descriptive analysis method. Data collection techniques used are observation, interviews, and literature study. Data analysis was carried out based on Albert B. Lord's theory of oral literature regarding the function of *kapata oral literature* and Jan Vansina's theory of oral tradition as history. The results showed that the oral literature of *Kapata* has a function as a media for documenting the history of the Maluku people which is represented in the *Kapata poems* that are sung.

**Keywords:** oral literature, kapata, maluku history

## INTRODUCTION

Oral literature as a part of Indonesian culture. The diversity of ethnic groups makes Indonesia rich in culture in the form of oral literature. Vansina in Endraswara (2018: 39) emphasized that in oral literature there are monumental things as eyewitnesses of the times. This shows that oral literature is an important part of people's lives, namely as a forum for historical documentation. Asrif (2016:1) argues that history does not always exist only in written documents. According to him, for non-literate people, history is stored in oral literature, such as folk songs, myths, fables and fairy tales. Thus, the historical sources of a community group can be explored and found in various forms of oral literature.

Maluku as a part of Indonesia has a lot of oral literature spread across various cities and districts. The number of regional languages is a marker of the amount of oral literature owned by the community. The development of oral literature intersects with the current developments. The more dynamic the life of society causes oral literature to experience a shift and be eroded from people's lives. This happened in the oral literature that developed in Maluku. One form of oral literature in Maluku is *kapata*. *Kapata* is part of a folk song which is a vessel for storing the history of society. The Maluku people are non-literate people who did not recognize the tradition of writing in the past until the influence of Islam entered Maluku. Historical records are not stored in written form but orally in the form of songs known as *kapata*.

According to Latupapua, et al (2012:4-8) *Kapata* is the culture of the Maluku people which is passed down from generation to generation through direct speech in the form of songs delivered with or without musical instruments. Furthermore Sahusilawane (1933:28) reveals that *kapata* is a

poem sung in the local language whose contents tell an event or are informative. These two statements can directly show that kapata is part of the oral literature owned by the people of Maluku.

Unfortunately the development of kapata oral literature is not going well. The survival of kapata oral literature currently requires serious attention from various parties, both the general public and local governments. The threat of extinction of a number of regional languages is a sign that the oral literature of the local community is not in good condition. Several factors causing the existence of oral literature like this are the lack of mastery of the regional language which is the common medium for delivering oral literature. This statement is in line with Harlin's opinion (2021: 334) which states that generally the problem that occurs in society is that older groups or groups tend to be closed and stick with their own language than younger groups or groups. Younger groups are more easily influenced in using the new language they get, thus showing a negative attitude towards the local language. The extinction of the regional language greatly affected the oral literature of Kapata because the medium of delivery was the regional language. In this way, if the local language is lost, then the words will also disappear from the community. On the other hand, if the extinction of kapata oral literature also affects the extinction of regional languages. These two things influence each other.

Preserving and preserving regional culture, including the oral literature of Kapata, is an important matter that cannot be neglected either by the self-awareness of the people or through local and central government policies. The government and society must support each other to maintain the local culture they have. In traditional culture such as kapata there are historical documents that cannot be found in written form. The history of an area or region in Maluku is mostly recorded and stored in the form of folk songs or kapata

. It is through folk songs that the history of a community group in Maluku can be passed down. The process of inheritance is carried out directly through singing or speech. Even important information to be conveyed is done through singing. Much information about past history is recorded in the oral literature of Kapata.

Kapata oral literature. As Ririmasse (2012) has done about kapata as a historical story and a reflection of community identity. Pattipeiluhu, et al (2018) have conducted an Ethnopoetic Study on Ethnic Expression in the Kapata of the Alifuru Community in Central Maluku. Furthermore, Darman (2017) has also conducted a study of Historical Reality in the Oral Literature of the Kapata War of Kapahaha, Morella Village, Ambon Island. A number of other studies related to capacity can be found in various print and electronic media. The thing that distinguishes this research from previous research is the focus of this research on the disclosure of kapata oral literature as historical documentation of the Maluku people. So far, searches related to the history of society have generally been carried out through written sources and physical forms that can be seen or read. Even though historical content can be found in non-physical form or orally. Through utterances or chanting, researchers can find stored history. Various information related to an event or important matter is recorded in oral literature in the form of a kapata poem. Efforts to disclose the fact that in oral literature the history of the people of Maluku is recorded, it is hoped that it can become a reference for other researchers in studying relevant fields.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative research which, according to Moleong (2006:6) is a research that reveals something in the form of a description. The material object in this research is kapata oral literature and the formal object is Jan Vansina's theory which relates oral literature to history. Data collection was carried out through field research and literature study. Field research was carried out by means of observation, witnessing directly, interviewing sources, recording and field

notes. While literature study is carried out with the aim of obtaining references that function to complement field data as stated by Faruk (2012: 56) that literature study is the discovery of all sources related to the object of research.

## RESULT AND ANALYSIS

### 1.1 Kapata as Maluku oral literature

Hutomo (1991:1) argues that oral literature is an expression that includes the literature of the citizens of a culture which is passed down orally from generation to generation. He also further stated that oral literature has characteristics between others; the process of spreading it is done by word of mouth, born in a society that still has a village style, is considered a philosophy of life because it is a cultural heritage that describes the past, it is not known who the author is, it is not concerned with facts and truth but more in fantasies which are sometimes unacceptable to the public. modern society, has several versions and is sometimes pronounced incomplete.

Kapata oral literature lives in a traditional society. Thus, speakers of kapata oral literature are traditional people who still adhere to local culture in the form of traditions and customary rituals which are considered important to always be carried out in their daily lives. In Maluku, there are some areas where the number of speakers of Kakata oral literature is starting to decrease. This decline became the basis for kapata oral literature, which was rarely carried out by most of the existing traditional villages. As happened in the Ambon City area and parts of Central Maluku which are geographically close to Ambon City. As stated by Falantino, et al (2012: 7) that Central Maluku Regency is geographically located closest to Ambon Island as a center of economy, government, and education. So that people's lifestyles have got quite a big influence that is increasingly dynamic and modern. Based on observations and literature review, kapata oral literature can be found on several occasions, including during the coronation ritual of kings, coronation of soa heads, welcoming guests, when fishermen go to sea, starting a job, and in various other social activities.

### 1.2 Kapata Oral Literature In The Traditional Coronation Rituals Of Kings In Maluku

As mentioned above, kapata oral literature can be found in several traditional rituals. One of them is in the king's coronation ritual. Based on the results of field research conducted at the time of the coronation of a king in one of the traditional villages in Maluku, namely in Allang Village in Central Maluku Regency, several forms of kapata were found, namely the chanted kapata and the chanted kapata.

Kapata chants usually use the regional language and are delivered by certain people who are part of the traditional leaders. Based on the results of observations made in the field, kapata is not only in the form of sung poetry but in the form of narration delivered without chanting. In the traditional ritual of coronation of a king in Allang country, Central Maluku, both forms of conveying kapata are found. The interesting thing is that the chanted kapata is delivered by a group of people while the chanted narration is delivered by one person. Indirectly it can be concluded that the chanted kapata is part of the community's collective memory of what has been passed down from generation to generation together. The process of inheritance openly through chanting poetry from past history is one of the efforts to prevent cultural extinction. Parents who sing with young children illustrate that there is an attitude of openness in the process of cultural inheritance by parents and the responsibility of young people in receiving cultural heritage.

Through the results of searches and interviews with informants, we were able to obtain several kapata oral literature in the coronation rituals of kings in Negeri Allang, Central Maluku. The forms of kapata oral literature found are as follows;

Kapata which is sung when welcoming guests by young men and women from the country of Allang. The text of the words as follows;

*Upu ama laha upu ina karelaa undo kori  
Upu ama hina allan allane uruwalu  
Upu ama laha upu ina karelaa undo kori  
Upu ama hina allan allane uruwalu*

*Ami sali hilu upu ama e lalaina e  
Jaka ite tilo ite hanu ite eseu  
Upu ama upu ama laha upu ina u  
Upu ama hina alang alang uruwalu u*

*Helolilapun limanu u  
Knei ite ise nutmeg loi  
Upu ama laha upu ina u  
Upu or contempt alan alan uruwalu  
Ria upu ama na congratulations  
Nusa Huwa Lula is the country of Indonesia*

*It means  
papa mama and grandchildren eight soa  
the children of the land of Allang  
papa mama and grandchildren eight soa  
descendants of the state of Allang*

*bring all the grandchildren here for work  
don't sleep, we wake up and work again  
we are all the same  
descendants of the state of Allang  
we work for future generations  
The day after tomorrow we will enjoy the results for our grandchildren*

Kapata poem tells about the land of Allang, other than that it gives a message to always work hard and don't be lazy. Encouraging each other to work for the happiness of our children and grandchildren in the future. This Kapata is sung in front of the traditional house as a form of welcoming invited guests. This chant was performed during the presence of honored guests who at that time were the delegation of the deputy governor of Maluku and the Regent of Central Maluku. The interesting thing in this section is that the chanters of the Kapata poem are young men and women who are called *jujaro* and *mungare*. But the majority of singers are women. This means that there is a good inheritance process from the previous generation. Women are considered as figures who play an important role in saving history. This is clearly seen during the observation process in the field. In the writer's observation, generally those who understand the text of kapata in the form of chant are women. In fact, in collecting data for this research, when the writer sat with male and female informants when asked, it turned out that the female informant had memorized the text of the kapata. This indirectly indicates that the role of women is very strategic in the inheritance of kapata oral literature. Passing down kapata is not just passing down an ordinary song poem, but rather is a legacy of history that is stored in the form of poetry.

In conveying this kapata poem, the singer uses a black shirt with a red handkerchief worn on the shoulder, symbolizing the sacredness in the customs of the Maluku people. Barefoot as a symbol of respect for invited guests who come. As stated by Pattipeilohy (2013: 83) that black clothes are usually used in ceremonies related to traditional rituals because they have sacredness and authority. While the red cloth used symbolizes courage and responsibility. In reciting the

kapata poem, the audience who masters the poetry can join in singing in its place. Don't join the chanter. After reciting the kapata verse, some of them put on the traditional cloth as a sign of respect and welcome to the invited guests.

### 1.3 Kapata oral literature as a historical documentation of the people of Maluku

Kapata oral literature is a form of speech art performed by ancestors to store history. If traced, it can be seen that in the past our ancestors kept a story or valuable things in a poem that was sung all the time. This is done as a form of effort to prevent extinction. This is in line with what was stated by Latupeirisa (2011:2) in Ririmasse (2012:184) that before the influence of Islam and European culture entered and developed in Maluku, Maluku people did not know writing. Therefore, culture or speech traditions play an important role as a medium for storing past history. Kapata oral literature is one such form of media. An opinion that is in line with this was also expressed by Asrif (2016: 1) that kapata oral literature is a folk song that contains historical stories of a country. History is frozen through songs and folklore. These songs are continuously produced or passed on from generation to generation so that the process of inheritance continues and history can be conveyed in each generation. According to him, chanters of kapata oral literature are those who position themselves as historical writers who compose, document, and archive in the form of songs called kapata. Thus, kapata oral literature cannot be underestimated and cannot be considered as entertainment for the community. Kapata oral literature has an important underlying purpose, namely as a reminder. Kapata oral literature was deliberately created by the ancestors as a reminder of history. If examined more deeply, it can be drawn a common thread why in Maluku there is almost no written culture because in the past parents preferred to record and store history in the form of poetry conveyed through chanting rather than writing it down. Even the history of Maluku culture that is found today is mostly written by foreign writers, not by the Moluccans themselves. Another thing that proves this is that Maluku does not have ancient scripts or letters. This is a sign that it is true that written culture is rarely used to convey history. Several foreign writers who wrote about the history of Maluku in the 17th century included EG Rumphius from Europe who wrote about culture related to natural objects, especially flora and fauna in Maluku. His writings are in the book *De Ambonische Rariteitkamer*.

Apart from Rumphius, the writers on Maluku were other Europeans, both capable soldiers and those who served in Ambon at that time. After that, later in the 20th century, a review of history and culture emerged again through the writings of Tourn and Drabbe. Tourn is an Austrian ethnographer who wrote the book *Patawa und Patalima*. Meanwhile, Drabbe was a European missionary who served in the second half of the 20th century in Tanimbar and wrote his book entitled *Etnografie Tanimbar*. There are almost no traces of written traditions containing the history of Maluku. Meanwhile, the oral tradition that contains history and information about Maluku's past can be found through kapata poems which have been passed down from generation to generation. Thus, it can be concluded that kapata oral literature was created to store history and important information that can be passed on from generation to generation orally.

Based on the two examples of kapata poetry in the previous explanation, it can be found that there are historical elements documented in them.

*upu ama laha upu ina karelaa undo kori  
upu ama hina allan allane uruwalu  
upu ama laha upu ina karelaa undo kori  
upu ama hina allan allane uruwalu*

*It means  
papa mama and grandchildren eight soa  
the children of the land of Allang*

*papa mama and grandchildren eight soa  
the children of the land of Allang*

Part of the Kapata poem tells about the village of Allang which consists of eight soa. Soa is a combination of several clans in a group that still has close kinship ties. Based on this kapata poem, it can be found that the country or village of Allang consists of eight groups of people who have kinship ties. In the regional regulations of the Ambon City government, it is explained that Soa is a genealogical territorial alliance that exists in a 'country' consisting of several clans. Soa is led by a soa head whose job is to help the king. (Mayor of Ambon, 2017:4). Thus it can be found implicitly through this kapata poem that Allang Village consists of many clans because one soa has more than one clan, if there are eight soa then there are many clans. This soa group is the original inhabitants of Allang Village who come from various places such as from North Maluku and so on. The eight questions are as follows;

1. Soa Paliya led by the Pelasula clan
2. Soa Koliya led by the Huwae clan
3. Soa Tapela led by the Sohilit clan
4. Soa Acamami led by the Siwalette clan
5. Soa Baru led by the Nussy clan
6. Soa Urubasa led by the Kaya clan
7. Soa Wara led by the Ralahalu clan
8. Soa Kampung Baru led by Lalihatu

The eight soa above were formed based on the historical story of Negeri Allang that in the past during colonial rule in the 16th century the Dutch East Indies government began to dominate the life order of indigenous peoples including in Maluku where Negeri Allang also received its influence. In an effort to control the Dutch East Indies government, every village or country was required to have a leader who was given the title of king. So at that time, Negeri Allang appointed a king named Matheus Letupuan Patty as king for the first time. Then, to facilitate the task of a king, leaders who were at the level below the king were appointed, namely the head of the soa . They are tasked with assisting the king in carrying out his leadership. Thus, every leader in the prayer is appointed . The leadership will be hereditary in a patrilineal manner.

With this description, it can be seen that the policy of each village being led by a king was inseparable from the influence of the Dutch East Indies government at that time. The goal is to be able to control his territory during the expansion in the Indies. Whereas in the past, before there was a king, Negeri Allang was led by captains . Kapitan in history is a war leader. At that time Negeri Allang was led by a captain , namely the captain maheri and assisted by a representative, namely Kapitan Hatu Rosu

## CONCLUSION

Based on the description in the discussion section above, it can be concluded that *kapata* is poetry that contains information to be conveyed to other people. One form of information in the *Kapata poem* contains history. Thus *kapata* is a form of historical documentation stored in oral form. It is through the *kapata* poetry that is sung that the process of telling or telling history is carried out from the older generation to the younger generation. Thus by maintaining and preserving *kapata* , the history and local language are also maintained and protected.

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