Adaptation of the Traditional *Randai* Performing Art into an Ethno-Fiction Film Scenario: The Story of '*Panyamun*'

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ABSTRACT

Randai is a traditional Minangkabau performing art based on storytelling that combines elements of dance, martial arts, singing, and traditional music. The strength of Randai lies in its oral narration, rhythmic dialogue, and improvisation by the performers. This is what makes Randai attractive for adaptation into an ethno-fiction film script. Ethno-fiction film is an ethnography-based cinematic approach that is fictional in nature, combining cultural observation methods with artistic dramatisation. This paper discusses the concept, adaptation process, and application of Sapardi Djoko Damono's method in transforming the Randai Panyamun story into a film script, rather than a finished film. This study finds that translating the narrative elements of Randai into a screenplay requires a strategy of narrative deconstruction, re-contextualisation of characters, and visual dramaturgical adjustments. The resulting screenplay retains the essence of Randai but is transformed into a cinematic ethno-fiction narrative.

Keywords: Adaptation, Ethno-fiction, Ethnographic Narrative, Film Script, Minangkabau, Randai

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INTRODUCTION

Randai is a form of traditional Minangkabau art that holds an important position in the social and cultural structure of West Sumatra society. As a story-based performing art, randai combines elements of dance, martial arts, singing, music, and dialogue in the Minangkabau language in a circular storytelling pattern (Amir, 1999). The stories performed are usually sourced from folklore, tambo, or stories passed down from generation to generation that are rich in moral values, social ethics, and traditional philosophy.

One of the stories featured in a number of randai performances is 'Panyamun', which in traditional practice serves as comedic relief. The panyamun character is not usually used as a realistic representation of a criminal, but as a humorous figure who enriches the dramatic dynamics. Like other forms of folk theatre, the randai text is not fixed; it is passed down orally and is highly dependent on the improvisation of the performers.

Film has different representational capabilities compared to traditional theatre. The transformation of randai into film requires a process of transposition, namely the transfer of a sign system from one medium to another without losing its cultural essence (Damono, 2012). The ethno-fiction genre, as introduced by (Jean Rouch, 1973), offers an approach that allows cultural exploration through the combination of ethnographic reality and fictional narrative. Thus, the adaptation of randai 'Panyamun' into ethno-fiction film can be a means of preserving and revitalising tradition.

This study discusses how traditional elements of randai are translated into film scenarios. The main focus is on the transformation of narrative structure, characters, humour, cultural values, and performative aesthetics into cinematic representations.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive analysis approach. The object of this research is the *Melawan Waktu* script. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research does not aim to measure variables statistically, but rather to understand the meaning behind the characters' actions and dialogues.

This research employs a qualitative approach using the transfer method. The stages include:

1. Literature Study and Field Observation

    Data collection through books, performance archives, and observation of randai groups in West Sumatra to understand movement patterns, dialogue structure, improvisation, and the social context of the performance.

2. Analysis of Randai Narrative Elements

    Analysis of characters, plot, pantun dialogue, humour, dramatic structure, and cultural symbols in the script 'Panyamun'.

3. Translation to Film Medium

    The adaptation process includes reorganising the plot, transforming spoken dialogue into cinematic dramatic form, and adding visual context not found in the performance.

4. Screenplay Writing Experiment

    The results of the analysis are applied in the preparation of an ethno-fiction film screenplay. The screenplay does not intend to imitate randai literally, but to maintain the values, humour, and dynamics of the characters' relationships.

This method allows for the documentation of the creative process as well as testing how cultural values can be transferred between media without losing their integrity.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION RESEARCH RESULT

1. Transformation of Spoken Dialogue into Cinematic Dialogue

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              PANDUKO MALIN
Yo lai ndak barubah pai tangan doh
yo pandeka?

              PANDEKA SATI
Aden lo nan pandeka test test, ka
den patah an go?

              PANDUKO MALIN
Eh indak indak.. Pandeka, lapeh an
lah lai aa, sakik Pandeka.

              PANDEKA SATI
Tu caliak caliak lah bisuak kok ka
ma ampai urang panduko..

Pandeka sati melepaskan tangan Panduko, Pandeka sati kembali
duduk di bangkunya. Panduko memberbaiki pakainya dan duduk di
sebelah Pandeka sati.

              PANDUKO MALIN
Yoo dek lah lamo dak basobok, kecek
den tu lah ilang kapandain saketek
du..

              PANDEKA SATI
Eee sumbarang se Panduko ngah. Den
siku an yo bana kin lai aaa nak
patah rusuk du agak 3??.

              PANDUKO MALIN
   (Terseyum tipis)
Manga modetu bana pandeka, kan den
bagarahnyo ngah. Ni ooo niii
   (bertriak ke arah yang
   punya lapau)
Ambo kopi lo lah sakarek ni.
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Figure 1. dialog of Pandeka sati and Panduko malin
(source: Muhammad Jel Fadjri Matenas)

Randai dialogue takes the form of rhyming couplets, is rhythmic, and is often spontaneous. To be effective in film:
a. the dialogue is condensed,
b. the rhythm is slowed down to suit the naturalistic acting style,
c. the visual context is strengthened so that the meaning is easier for the audience to understand.

The example of transformation shows that the rhythm of randai is not eliminated, but controlled so as not to interfere with the cinematic flow.

2. Transformation of Improvisational Humour

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Semua mata di lapau mengikuti perjalan PANDEKA SATI yang
mendekat ke arah lapau, satu orang meneguk ludahnya

                    PANDEKA SATI
            Kopi lah ciek ni.

PANDEK SATI masuk santai. Orang orang di kadai masih
tercengang, beberapa ternganga. PENJAGA LAPAU masih terdiam

                    PANDEKA SATI
            Ni?,
                (Melambaikan tangan)
            oooo ni?

PENJAGA LAPAU tergerak. Hening pecah, pasar kembali
melanjutkan aktivitasnya.

                    PENJAGA LAPAU
            Ooo iyo. Iyo duduak lah lu Pandeka
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Figure 2. dialog of Pandeka sati and Penjaga lapau
(source: Muhammad Jel Fadjri Matenas)

Randai humour is situational and depends on improvisation. In film, humour is conveyed through:
a. comical movement choreography,
b. character facial expressions and reactions,
c. use of space (lapau, market, arena, hill),
d. typical absurd randai situations packaged as visual comedy.
e. This transformation preserves the roots of randai humour without losing cinematic effectiveness.

3. Restructuring of Dramatic Structure Randai tends to be episodic. Film demands a more cohesive dramatic flow. The film's structure is arranged as follows:
a. Setup: Introduction of Pandeka Sati in the market and initial conflict.
b. Confrontation: Meeting with Panduko Malin and the search for Pandeka Limbubu.
c. Climax: Chaotic and comical robbery action.
d. Resolution: The downfall and reflection of characters that remain within the corridor of humour.

This transformation maintains the episodic nature of randai but strengthens the dramatic tension.

4. Strengthening the Ethnographic Dimension Ethnographic elements are maintained by applying:
   a. talempong and gandang sarunai music as diegetic scoring,
   b. visualisation of Minangkabau silat movements,
   c. consistent use of the Minangkabau dialect,
   d. location sets that represent rural Minangkabau life.

   Ethnographic reinforcement ensures that the film does not reduce culture to ornamentation.

5. Character Development in Cinematic Language In randai, characters are more typological. In the film:
   a. Pandeka Sati is portrayed as impulsive and humorous,
   b. Panduko Malin as cunning but loyal,
   c. Pandeka Limbubu is given a clearer background.

   The deepening of the characters makes the narrative stronger without contradicting the randai tradition.

6. movement and space recontructioField observation data shows:

Randai Element	Field Finding	Transformation on film
Silat Movements	dominant hand and small steps	slowed down for cinematic close-ups
Humour	audience response determines duration	replaced by camera timing and editing
space	Open circle	translated through circular choreo

DISCUSSION

The adaptation of randai *Panyamun* into a film script is not merely a formal experiment in transferring stage performance into cinematic language. Rather, it constitutes a cultural negotiation process that involves preserving essential values while responding to the structural demands of film as a modern audio-visual medium. The theoretical framework drawn from (Amir, 1999; A. A. Navis, 1984; Sapardi Djoko Damono, 2012; Jean Rouch, 1973; Primadi Tabrani, 2015; Rini, 2019) provides a conceptual foundation for understanding this transformation as both cultural preservation and creative reinterpretation.

1. Randai as Collective Cultural Expression

Randai is a collective cultural expression that integrates Minangkabau custom (*adat*), philosophy of life, and social organisation. Its circular performance structure symbolises egalitarianism and deliberative principles embedded within Minangkabau

culture (Navis, 1984). The circle functions not merely as a spatial arrangement but as a representation of communal balance, shared authority, and participatory storytelling.

In the film adaptation, this collective dimension cannot be replicated literally because cinema reorganises space through framing, editing, and point-of-view construction. However, the essence of circularity is reinterpreted through camera blocking, circular choreography, and ensemble staging. The egalitarian spirit of randai is therefore translated into visual composition rather than physical audience–performer interaction.

Randai traditionally functions as a medium of cultural education, embedding moral guidance (*petatah-petitih*), humour, and symbolic *silat* movements within narrative structure. In the cinematic adaptation, these didactic elements are no longer delivered through overt theatrical presentation but are integrated into dialogue subtext, character arcs, and visual metaphor. Cultural function is thus maintained even when performative conventions shift.

2. Transposition as Creative Reinterpretation

Transposition is understood not as literal translation but as the transfer of essential ideas and values into a different representational system (Damono, 2012). In this context, adapting randai into film requires structural transformation, including changes in dialogue rhythm, humour timing, character development, and dramatic progression.

Rhythmic and poetic randai dialogue is condensed and moderated to suit cinematic realism. Episodic storytelling is reorganised into a cohesive dramatic structure consisting of exposition, conflict, climax, and resolution. Improvisational humour, once dependent on audience response, is reconstructed through editing rhythm and visual choreography.

These transformations demonstrate that formal change is inevitable in adaptation (Damono, 2012). However, the preservation of core meaning—communal values, moral reflection, and cultural identity—ensures that the adaptation remains rooted in its source tradition. The film does not replace randai but reinterprets it through a new expressive system.

3.   Ethnofiction as Methodological Position

The adaptation process aligns with the concept of ethnofiction, which positions film between ethnographic documentation and imaginative storytelling (Rouch, 1973). The film version of *Panyamun* does not function as a purely documentary record of randai performance but constructs a fictional narrative grounded in ethnographic authenticity.

Ethnographic grounding is reinforced through the diegetic use of *talempong* and *gandang sarunai*, consistent Minangkabau dialect, visualisation of *silat* movements, and rural spatial design. These elements anchor the fictional narrative within a recognisable cultural framework.

Film also functions as an effective medium of cultural communication, particularly in translating traditional forms for contemporary audiences (Tabrani, 2015). Cinema furthermore possesses the capacity to sustain tradition through contextual visualisation (Rini, 2019). The adaptation of *Panyamun* reflects these perspectives by repositioning randai within a modern narrative format without detaching it from its cultural roots.

4. Negotiating Tradition and Cinematic Modernity

The adaptation operates as a negotiation between tradition and cinematic modernity. Randai's spontaneity, communal interaction, and typological characterisation are adjusted to meet cinematic requirements such as narrative cohesion, psychological depth, and visual continuity.

This negotiation does not result in cultural reduction but produces a hybrid form in which ethnographic authenticity and fictional dramatisation coexist. Tradition is not static but evolves through reinterpretation. By preserving cultural principles while embracing cinematic structure, the film script becomes a site of cultural continuity rather than cultural displacement.

5. Cultural Integrity in Adaptation

Cultural preservation in film does not depend on literal replication of performance form but on safeguarding philosophical values, social meanings, and symbolic systems within a transformed aesthetic framework. Through the integration of ethnographic elements, structured dramatic development, and controlled reinterpretation of dialogue and humour, the film script presents a model of adaptation that respects tradition while engaging contemporary audiences. The adaptation therefore functions not only as a creative process but also as a cultural strategy that ensures randai continues to live within the evolving language of cinema.

CONCLUSION

The adaptation of the randai performance 'Panyamun' into an ethno-fiction film scenario demonstrates that modern media can be used to preserve traditions without losing their cultural roots. Pantun dialogue, improvisational humour, martial arts movements, and circular aesthetics have been successfully preserved through creative reinterpretation in the medium of cinema. The ethno-fiction approach provides space to combine the cultural reality of Minangkabau with fictional narratives, thereby expanding the audience reach and strengthening the sustainability of the randai tradition. The adaptation method has proven effective in developing traditional art into new forms that are aesthetically and culturally relevant.

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