

Preserving Oral Tradition amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Cultural Adaptation in *Salawat Dulang*

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected various aspects of people's lives, including oral traditions. In Minangkabau, oral traditions are in danger of being lost or forgotten by the community due to the pandemic. During the pandemic, oral tradition performances involve only few people, though the performances typically require the presence of many people. This current study aims to explain various things that happened to the oral tradition in Minangkabau amid the COVID-19 pandemic, especially *Salawat Dulang*. It uses a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through observation, note-taking, and interviews. The study found that the Minangkabau oral tradition, especially *Salawat Dulang*, survived and continued amid the pandemic because it implements various forms of changes and adjustments. These changes and adjustments include the involvement of virtual and direct media. There are very few audiences attending the live performances, and they must strictly adhere to health protocols. Performers also use social media as a means to maintain the existence of their traditions. In this sense, they see the conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic as a source of inspiration to create the spoken texts. These findings imply the important role of all the performers, the community, and the government in proposing efforts to preserve this oral tradition.

Pandemi COVID-19 telah mempengaruhi berbagai aspek kehidupan masyarakat, termasuk tradisi lisan. Di Minangkabau, tradisi lisan

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terancam hilang atau dilupakan masyarakat akibat pandemi. Di masa wilayah pandemi, pertunjukan tradisi lisan hanya melibatkan sedikit orang, meski semestinya pertunjukan ini mengharuskan dihadiri banyak orang. Kajian kali ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan berbagai hal yang terjadi pada tradisi lisan di Minangkabau di tengah pandemi COVID-19, khususnya Salawat Dulang. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, pencatatan, dan wawancara. Kajian ini menemukan bahwa tradisi lisan Minangkabau, khususnya Salawat Dulang, mampu bertahan dan berlanjut di tengah pandemi karena telah terjadi beberapa perubahan dan penyesuaian di dalamnya. Perubahan dan penyesuaian tersebut meliputi penggunaan media virtual dan media langsung. Penonton yang menghadiri pertunjukan langsung sangat sedikit, dan mereka juga harus mematuhi protokol kesehatan. Para pemain juga menggunakan media sosial sebagai sarana untuk mempertahankan eksistensi tradisi lisan mereka. Dalam hal ini, mereka melihat kondisi terkait pandemi COVID-19 sebagai sumber inspirasi dalam menciptakan teks lisan. temuan di atas menyiratkan peran penting seluruh pemain, masyarakat, dan pemerintah dalam melakukan berbagai upaya untuk menjaga tradisi lisan ini.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic; local culture; oral tradition; *Salawat Dulang*

Introduction

Oral tradition has become an inseparable part of cultural activities in the Minangkabau community. The forms and styles of the oral tradition are diverse, and they are still performed today even though some have been lost. Among the forms of Minangkabau oral tradition that are still performed and developing in today's society are *Randai*, *Salawat Dulang*, *Saluang Bagurau*, *Rabab*, *Indang*, and *Ronggeng Pasaman*. However, Large Scale Social Restrictions (Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar/ PSBB) due to the COVID-19 Pandemic imposed since March 2020 has caused several performing arts activities to be canceled. The pandemic has caused severe effects concerning the sustainability of local culture and traditions, especially performing arts such as oral tradition.

As a cultural product, oral tradition has entered the era of literacy with the invention of the printing press, the telephone, the radio,

television, and various types of electronic technology (Banda, 2016). In this era, oral traditions also face changes and adjustments to survive and meet the community's needs. Some of them have already disappeared before being noticed and appropriately managed. A study found that most of the 34 types of oral traditions were not found in the community (Amir et al., 2006). The Government of the Republic of Indonesia, through Law No. 5 2017 on the Advancement of Culture, has determined that oral tradition is one of the objects for advancing the culture of the Republic of Indonesia. The oral tradition is placed as the number one object among other objects that must be managed and maintained.

Researchers have discussed various changes in local traditions since COVID-19, such as by Rustianti et al. (2021). Through the research, Rustanti mentioned that the Balinese performing art named *Wayang Wong* is one of the traditional arts affected by the pandemic. Although the art can no longer be performed, the artists have developed a technology-based performance art model. In addition, Darmawan's research (2020) in the arts in Bali since the COVID-19 pandemic said that some traditions are still maintained and performed with various strategies, while others are not. Next, Sulkarnaen (2017) discusses the *Maddojo Bine* tradition among the Bugis community, which has also undergone many changes. The said tradition is related to the socio-cultural changes that occur in the community.

Based on some of these studies, it becomes clear that the oral tradition has undergone various changes in line with the social and cultural changes that occurred in the community itself. Likewise, when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, social and cultural changes occurred in the community, which directly or indirectly affected the survival of oral traditions, especially in Minangkabau (Collins, 2020; Rikarno & Saaduddin, 2021). Meanwhile, Anwar's research (2018) titled "The Economic Strength in Minangkabau Oral Literature" explained that economic matters also impact the sustainability of oral literature. Primadesi's research (2012) titled "Preserving of Information Value in

Oral Tradition of Minangkabau society, West Sumatra, Indonesia" maintained that local values and wisdom in every oral tradition must be passed down between generations. Further, Amran et al. (2020) and Meigalia & Putra's research (2019) look at the form, meaning, and function of the Minangkabau oral tradition in the industrial era 4.0 and various defense efforts in that era.

Given the many and varied oral traditions that developed in Minangkabau, this study focuses on one of the oral traditions, namely *Salawat Dulang*. *Salawat Dulang* is a form of narrating (singing) stories of the prophets and apostles, the study of *sharia*, and the *tarekat* in Islam accompanied by the rhythm of tapping fingers on the tray. This tradition is usually performed in commemorating Islamic religious holidays, *nagari* (*kampung* or village) events, and events held by individuals. This study explains explicitly the changes that occurred in the *Salawat Dulang* performance during the COVID-19 pandemic and the strategy carried out by the performers and the related parties to maintain the tradition.

This study employs a qualitative research approach carried out in four stages. The first is on-site pre-research, where the researcher observes the research area. The second is on-site pieces of researches aimed at collecting data carried out by observing *Salawat Dulang* shows, interviews with resource persons, and literature studies. The third is identification and data analysis. The fourth is preparing reports in the form of articles.

***Salawat Dulang* as Part of Minangkabau's Oral Tradition**

Salawat Dulang is a Minangkabau tradition categorized as an oral tradition. The performance's aspects in this oral tradition include the performers reciting the *salawat*, the spoken text, and the audience. Amir et al. (2006) classifies *Salawat Dulang* as an oral tradition with a religious theme. It is because the text spoken through the *salawat* contains the teachings of the Islamic religion. Likewise, the performances are usually held in connection with the celebration of major Islamic holidays, such as *Maulid Nabi*, *Isra' Miraj*, the first day of Muharram, *Nuzul Qur'an*, *Eid al-Fitr*, and *Eid al-Adha*. This tradition is also held by the *nagari* (village)

in the context of a *nagari* event known as Alek Nagari, or an event held individually, such as in marriage, circumcision, *khatmil Qur'an*, and so on.

Based on the explanation above, it is evident that this oral tradition has become a religious value. Therefore, the performance venue is also a place that is considered good, such as a mosque, *musholla* or *surau* (small mosque), and house. The organizers usually prepare a special place called *pale-pale* for the performance so that the performers who recite the *salawat* may sit and pray properly. Its shape is like a single bed made of wood, given a mattress and pillows to support the back. Some mattresses and pillows are also available for the audiences to sit and look at the show comfortably. Later, the show is usually held at night after the *isha* prayer until sometime before dawn. However, due to COVID-19, *Salawat Dulang* performances are often held from 9:00 pm to 11.00 pm or 2:00 am after midnight.

The *Salawat Dulang* performers, commonly called the *salawat* artists, are two people in one group. In one *Salawat Dulang* show, at least one group will perform. However, ideally, two groups come on stage because there is a part where the two groups ask each other and give answers related to problems in Islam. This act was awaited because it would determine the winning and losing groups. The group that is unable to answer questions from the opposing group will be considered a loser, and the group that can answer all questions from the opponent group is the winning group. However, this skill competition in *salawat* has not been found since the early 2000s. Currently, *salawat* groups display entertaining texts. *Salawat* groups are now trying to be creative through popular songs and make various music compositions in terms of both text and rhythm.

***Salawat Dulang* in Facing the COVID-19 Pandemic**

In mid-March 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak began to enter West Sumatra. Since then, various restrictions on social activities have been

imposed. Among regulations during the outbreak is the absence of multiple activities that involve many people. Consequently, Minangkabau has almost no oral tradition shows. Later, starting from mid-July 2020, social activities return to normal life according to the strict health protocol. Several social activities, including arts and culture performances, were re-organized with various adjustments. In connection with the oral tradition of *Salawat Dulang*, some changes and adjustments have also been made. The changes and adjustments in the practice of *Salawat Dulang* are described as follows:

Performance

In general, the *Salawat Dulang* show is still held in the Islamic religious holidays and in the usual time, that is at night from 9:00 pm up to 11.00 pm or 2:00 am after midnight. The show's location is still the same, namely at the mosque, *musholla* (small mosque), or home. However, several activities concerning *Salawat Dulang* during the pandemic were still organized by government agencies, such as the Cultural Values Preservation Center (Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya/ BPNB) of West Sumatra, the Provincial Cultural Service of West Sumatra, and the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. Activities organized by these agencies are held virtually.

The West Sumatra Cultural Service through the UPTD Taman Budaya is one of the agencies that hold virtual *Salawat Dulang*. On Wednesday, September 23, 2020, the show was held at 2:00 pm via zoom. The *Salawat Dulang* show was performed by two groups, namely the Sinar Barapi Group and the Bintang Arjuna Group. Each group performed for 45 minutes and only one appearance followed by a closing performance called a “compromise” where one group joins *salawat*.

In contrast to the usual *Salawat Dulang* performance, only a few people were present at the venue, including the organizing committee. At the same time, other audiences can enjoy through the zoom room. The atmosphere of an oral tradition held virtually is different because the audience and the performers do not meet directly. There is no fanfare or

cheers, not even the audiences' demand for songs usually present in live performances. In this situation, the performers' creativity is quite limited because, in essence, the direct attachment between the audiences and the performers is the source of inspiration for the text created.

Another *Salawat Dulang* performance was held in the Cultural Sector Facilitation (Fasilitasi Bidang Kebudayaan/ FBK) 2020 from the Ministry of Education and Culture on November 14, 2020. The performance was broadcast live through social media, such as Youtube, Facebook, and Instagram, managed in such a way through massive socializations a few weeks before the event. Like the virtual show organized by the West Sumatra Cultural Park UPTD, only a few people attended the show; most were the organizing committees. At the same time, the audiences who joined through social media were quite a lot. In this setting, there is an interaction between the audiences that appear in the comments column of social media. The host then reads the comments so that the viewer can respond. However, the show's atmosphere, which can be captured and felt lively, differs from an exhibition held virtually, even though it has been well managed.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, several *nagari* (village) also held *Salawat Dulang* performances, such as when people were welcoming Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha in 2021. According to a *salawat* artist from the Sinar Barapi group (interview on July 8, 2021) named Jon Cakra, the performances before the Corona outbreak can be very numerous. In one week, he can even perform in various regions in West Sumatra. At that time, no restrictions and conditions were binding on the audiences or performers. However, only one show occurred in one week during the pandemic, even though the social restrictions have been regulated according to the government's health protocol. Sitting between the audiences must be spaced, as well as between the audiences and the performers. Audiences are required to wear masks, and in some places, performers are asked to wear face shields. The show's atmosphere is no longer lively and crowded because many people are afraid and avoid crowds.

However, in observing several *Salawat Dulang* performances during the pandemic, it appears that the public ignored the government's regulation. The *Salawat Dulang* show was held as usual before the pandemic. The audiences are not distancing themselves from one another and do not wear a mask. This fact is usually found when the show was held in an area far from the city center. It has happened, especially since the end of the Large Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) in West Sumatra.

Performers

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, *salawat* artists depended on their lives through *Salawat Dulang* activities. If in a week there is only one performance of *Salawat Dulang*, at least in a month they earn more than four million rupiahs. According to several informants, there is no set fee for the *Salawat Dulang* performers; the fee is given on the basis of appropriateness and decency. Sometimes, it is determined by negotiations between the show organizers and the performers. However, in Minangkabau customs and culture, this *Salawat Dulang* tradition is considered holy. The Minangkabau people put high respect for this oral tradition and its performers. Usually, the *salawat* performers will wear very polite clothes, the same habit as when going to the mosque. They always wear matching shirts, pants, and socks in one group. In addition, a black cap on the head is a must for *salawat* in every performance.

Even though the show was held virtually during the pandemic, the performance did not change. The hallmark of the *Salawat Dulang* performance in terms of appearance is still maintained. This virtual show affects the performers. It means the performers who depend on this art for their lives are also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the community began holding the show again, the quantity is still not as much as before the pandemic. Responding to this condition, one of the exciting efforts made by the *salawat* groups is by using social media. Jon Cakra, with the Sinar Barapi group, is one of the *salawat* performers who created a YouTube account to document and publish various existing *Salawat Dulang* performances.

The Youtube account in question is Sinar Barapi Chanel and currently has 5.72K followers. Although the account has been created since April 4, 2019, many videos was mainly uploaded in 2020, especially during the pandemic. Jon Cakra's activeness in uploading videos through Youtube has also provided additional income for the performers. In addition to uploading documentation of the performances, some of the uploaded videos are performances from other groups. He has also uploaded the documentation of the currently inactive Salawat group performances. According to Jon Cakra, this can attract the audiences' attention to the *salawat* groups that are less known.

Spoken Texts

The texts spoken in the oral tradition of *Salawat Dulang* generally contain the teachings of Islam. The teachings can be about 'aqidah, sharia, morals, and tarekat. *Aqidah* is teachings related to one's faith, namely the relationship between humans and Allah. *Sharia* is a stipulation in Islam that concerns the relationship between humans and humans. Meanwhile, morals are teachings related to a person's behavior, ethics, and manners (Nurdin, 2008). In addition to 'aqidah, sharia, and morals, the texts of *Salawat Dulang* also contain the teachings of tarekat. In particular, the instruction of the tarekat contained here is the Syattariah congregation's teachings.

According to Usman (2019), the term tarekat means the way and method used by Sufis in purifying themselves, drawing closer to Allah, and feeling His presence in the heart. At first, the tarekat was intended to refer to how the Sufis attempted to approach this individually, but then they taught their students separately or in groups. In the later development, the schools of tarekat came into being, which were attributed to the Sufis who pioneered them. One of them is the Syatariyah Order. In Minangkabau, this said tarekat was developed in West Sumatra by Syeh Burhanuddin in Ulakan Pariaman (Fathurahman, 2008).

Based on one version of the oral history of this Dulang Salawat tradition, Syeh Burhanuddin is said to be the first to develop the teachings

of the Syattariah Order. *Tarekat* teaching texts are played to the accompaniment of the beat of the fingers and hands on the Dulang (Meigalia, 2019). In subsequent developments, the text containing the teachings of the Tarekat Syattariah is still present in the text that the Salawat performers sing until now. However, based on previous research, the Salawat performer is not necessarily a member of the Syattariah *Tarekat* organization. The following is an excerpt from the text *Salawat Dulang* sung by the Arjuna Minang Group about the nature of life and body.

Spoken text:

*Jikalau kito mangaji akikat nyaonyo tubuah
Lah nyato sakabek jangan disangko duo alamat
Kok disangko duo lah nyato sasek
Baapo bana cincin jo jari
Baapo bana lilin jo api
Bagarak cincin dek jari*

Meaning:

If we study the nature of life and body
It is a real bundle, do not expect two addresses
Like a ring on a finger
Like a candle with fire
Moving the ring because of the finger

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the texts are related to Islamic teachings. After the pandemic, the teachings of *aqidah*, *sharia*, morals, and *tarekat* are still present in every *Salawat Dulang* show. One of them is in an excerpt from the text sung by Sinar Barapi Group in a live streaming performance on November 14, 2020.

Spoken text:

*Lai wahai sudaro lai handai de tolan
Ndeh jiko lai sungguh lai sayang di badan
Patuik sembahyang lah kito rusuhkan
Bia aka singkek de pikiran kurang
Indak mangapo ei indak beruang
Asa lai tantu di paham sembahyang
Kepeang dicari ka untuak urang
Elok batampuah lah jalan nan terang
De jalan nan lurus kan ado terbantang*

*Aratinyo jalan lah de wahai sahabat,
Yaitu rukun lai sarato syarat
Yaitunyo jalan lah urang syariat
Siapo manampuah lah de tantu salamaik
Siapo maninggakan lai tantu lah sasek*

Meaning:

O dear brothers/sisters and friends
If you really love your body
It is worth praying that we worry about
Even if short-sighted thoughts are lacking
It is okay no money
As long as you understand prayers (shalat)
Money is sought for people
Well, take the bright path
There is a straight path stretched out
It means to walk, my friend
That is the pillars and conditions
That is the way of the sharia
Who goes through is safe
Whoever leaves must have gone astray

The quote above is a teaching about the commandment of *shalat* (prayers) in Islam. Every Muslim must carry out the prayers to survive. This teaching will also be found in the period before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, some parts of the text appeared only after the COVID-19 pandemic; that is, the text deals with the pandemic itself. The *salawat* performers mentioned various problems regarding the pandemic, as shown on November 14, 2020. The following is an excerpt.

Spoken text:

*Semenjak virus Corona
Banyak yang jadi sengsara
Balaki jo babini pun ditunda
Semua karena Corona
Seniman kini menganga
Semua job batal kesadanya
Mengojek tak ada pun sewa
Semua karena corona
Corona virus corona ...
Awalnya dari Wuhan
Negeri yang tiada ber-Tuhan
Halal tak dibedakan
Semua hewan dimakan*

*Entah ini cobaan
Atau ini hukuman
Yang datang dari Tuhan
Sebagai teguran
Gara-gara virus Corona
Banyak yang jadi sengsara
Dari ketek sampai nan tua
Semua jadi merana*

Meaning:

Since the Coronavirus
Many are miserable
The wedding has been postponed
All because of Corona
Artists are now gaping
All jobs cancel everything
There is no rent even for motorcycle taxis
All because of Corona
Coronavirus oh Corona
Originally from Wuhan
Land without God
Halal is indistinguishable
All animals are eaten
I do not know if this is a test
Or this is a punishment
That comes from God
As a warning
Because of the Coronavirus
Many are miserable
From small to old
Everything is so miserable

The text above provides an overview of the misery experienced by the community due to Corona. The artists themselves canceled their artwork. In addition, the *salawat* also added information that the virus came from Wuhan. Next, the *Salawat Dulang* video uploaded by the Cultural Values Preservation Agency of West Sumatra with the title "Kalamany Together with West Sumatra BPNB - Shalawat Dulang" also found texts related to Corona. Here is the quote:

Spoken text:

*Wahai sagalo nan tuo sagalo nan mudo
Sagalo dunsanak jo sudaro
Nan gadang jo nan ketek
Nan tuo jo nan mudo*

*Inok jo ramuangkan kini di dalam dado
Virus corona kini lah tibo
Pataguah iman nan di dalam dado
Hiduik jo mati sakali sajo
Sungguah dek baitu andak simak jo dangakan
Jagolah diri kanalah Tuhan
Sayangi diri jagolah malah badan
Kana malah parintah atau anjuran
Supayo virus jangan indak lah tamakan
Mungkin iko lahnyo teguran dari Tuhan
Tuhan iyolah manyapo ka sagalo insan*

Meaning:

O all old and young
All relatives
The big and the small
The old and the young
Think and ponder in your chest
Coronavirus is here now
Strengthen the faith that is in the chest
Live and die once
That is why you should listen and listen
Take care, remember God
Love yourself; take care of your body
Remember orders or suggestions
So that the virus is not eaten
Maybe this is a warning from God
God wants to greet everyone

Based on the two text quotes above, it seems that the existence of Corona, which has caused a lot of misery for humans, is mentioned as something that comes from God. It can be a warning or a punishment. Likewise, the *Salawat Dulang* tradition performers view the presence of this virus in a religious context. In addition, through the *Salawat Dulang* text, the performer also educates listeners to comply with the health protocol. Here is an excerpt from the text.

Spoken text:

*Walaupun di saat kini di maso COVID lah kini nanko
COVID iyo sambilan baleh kan itu nan namonyo
Di maso virus Corona itu nan ndeh namonyo
Lah tapaso lai mengikuti aturan protokol alah kesehatannyo
Bagitulah dek acara online nan dibuek pulo
Ondeh yo mamakai masker lai kamano-mano*

*Cuci lah nyo tongan rajin pulo lah dek nyo kito
Ondeh tapi lah usah lupu lah ndeh lai cuci lah juo mungko
Lai jago lah dek nyo jarak dek sasamo-samo kito
Itu iyo himbauan nan itu manjago kito*

Meaning:

Even at this time of COVID

COVID-19 name

In the time of the Coronavirus, that is his name

Forced to follow health protocol rules

That is how online events are made anyway

Wearing a mask everywhere

Wash our hands diligently too

But do not forget to wash your face

Keep the distance between us

That is an appeal to take care of us

Audience

The *Salawat Dulang* performance, as in other oral traditions, will be lively because of the involvement of audiences. The *texts* are also created spontaneously during the performance due to the interaction between audiences and performers. The audiences' laughter and cheers made the performers more creative with the texts. Sometimes performers can perform for almost one hour in a *satanggalak* (one group performs *Salawat*. In one show, a group can perform two or three steps).

The audience who attended the *Salawat Dulang* show came from various backgrounds and ages. Generally, those who attend and become spectators in the front are people from around the show's location. However, there are also audiences from other areas and usually follow because they are *Salawat Dulang* fanatics. Meanwhile, the community around the show's site will attend because of the sense of togetherness among community members. If the *nagari* celebrations are absent, there will be a feeling of not being considered part of the community.

The average audience will last until 11.00 pm, especially children and women. However, some audiences stay until the show is over. Primarily, if the show is held in a mosque or prayer room, the group of mothers would not leave until dawn. They can lie down while listening to the *salawat's* speech. Likewise, the event committee will last until the event is over.

During the COVID period, the audience who came to the show location was not much as in the pre-covid period. There are restrictions concerning social distancing between the audiences. This distancing makes the *Salawat Dulang* show no longer as lively as before. However, this condition does not apply to all *Salawat Dulang* performances. When the show is held far from the city, such as the *Salawat Dulang* show on August 8, 2021, at Sumagek Malalo, Batipuah Tanah Datar, the audience can still be categorized as crowded. The average viewer is male, sitting not too far apart and not wearing a mask. While the women sat in the house doing various activities while listening to the *salawat*.

The show's atmosphere and the limited audience can be seen when the show is held online. The audiences present at the show's location are usually the organizing committees. The rest of the audience interacts via social media or whatever medium broadcasts the show.

Existence of *Salawat Dulang* during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The survival and continuation of social practice (tradition) in society reflect the meaning of the social practice for the supportive community (Sulkarnaen, 2017). At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in West Sumatra, the survival and continuation of the *Salawat Dulang* tradition were one of the worrying things. As explained earlier, almost no performances were held; as a result, the *salawat* groups had no income at that time. However, along with various adjustments in people's lives to live side by side with COVID-19, the tradition of *Salawat Dulang* is again being displayed. This fact shows that this oral tradition has been meaningful for the Minangkabau people.

Salawat Dulang is a performance that is part of the Islamic religious celebration ceremony in Minangkabau. For the Minangkabau people, religion is an inseparable part of adat. It is summarized in a popular phrase "*adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah.*" The customs and culture of the Minangkabau people have a basis, namely *syarak* (*shara'*) or religion. The religion that is guided is Islam with the book of

Allah (the Qur'an). Although customs and religion in Minangkabau have a seemingly contradictory relationship, in practice, customs and religion reinforce each other, as explained by Tono et al. (2019), Aziz et al. (2020) and Muslim (2017). Therefore, in various religious matters (Islam), the Minangkabau people will fight for and defend themselves. Likewise, if the processions, traditions, and habits developed from generation to generation do not conflict with religious teachings, they will maintain them, as seen in *Salawat Dulang*.

Further, in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, the government's efforts to defend it did not receive any opposition from the public. It is evidenced by the start of holding *Salawat Dulang* performances by the community. Although the quantity has decreased, the show's quality has not reduced, seen through the creativity of the Salawat in creating texts and songs inspired by the pandemic. As a tradition passed down from generation to generation, the *Salawat Dulang* tradition has not lost its audience despite the pandemic. Since the beginning of 2021, audiences have started to watch the show. Basically, many Minangkabau people living in the administrative area of West Sumatra do not really care about or even think about the existence of COVID-19. As Aprison and Melani (2021) explained, in the Minangkabau community, there has even been a rejection of various government policies and the MUI's decision to limit worship activities to prevent the spread of COVID. This rejection is also related to the efforts of the Minangkabau people to uphold religion because religion is the foundation of various aspects of life.

The public's indifference to the pandemic with the background of much information also makes multiple matters related to the Islamic religion undisturbed. Worship activities since the end of PSBB (Large Scale Social Restrictions) in July 2020 can be said to continue. Children still go to the *surau* (small mosque) every day to learn the Qur'an. This learning activity still takes place face to face even though learning activities in schools are carried out online. Congregational prayers continue to be held even though the PPKM (Enforcement of Restrictions on Community

Activities) has been implemented since mid-June 2021. Therefore, religious celebrations are still being held, especially in areas far from the city center. During these celebrations, people also performed the *Salawat Dulang* performance.

In general, efforts to maintain this tradition are not only carried out by the community. The government, through related agencies, has also made various efforts so that the *Salawat Dulang* performance and other traditions are not lost. Based on the observations that have been made, the government's actions are not only related to efforts to maintain tradition. The government is also trying to use performing arts such as *Salawat Dulang* to convey public information. In the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government also uses traditional performing arts to get news and information about the Coronavirus. Among them can be seen in the *Salawat Dulang* performance in which messages can be found so that people obey the health protocol and maintain a healthy lifestyle, for this case, performing arts function to convey public information (Pala, 2020).

Conclusion

This current study aims to explain various things that happened to the oral tradition in Minangkabau amid the COVID-19 pandemic, especially *Salawat Dulang*. The study has found that *Salawat Dulang* has been one of the essential oral traditions in Minangkabau and is now in danger due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, *Salawat Dulang* survived and continued amid the pandemic because it has implemented various forms of changes and adjustments. The changes and adjustments are visible in terms of performance, performers, spoken texts, and audience.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Salawat Dulang* performances usually involve social media. Through such media, *salawat* performers upload much documentation of their performances. Later, the spoken texts in *Salawat Dulang* contain the teachings of Islam, such as *'aqidah*, sharia, morals, and tarekat, and various problems regarding the pandemic. In this case, the *salawat* performers see the conditions related to the

COVID-19 pandemic as a source of inspiration in creating the spoken texts. There are very few audiences attending the live performances, and they must strictly adhere to health protocols. However, when the show is held far from the city, the audience can still be crowded. These findings imply the important role of all the performers, the community, and the government in proposing efforts to preserve this oral tradition. This togetherness shows that this oral tradition is still meaningful and functional in the life of the Minangkabau people.[w]

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