



## PRESERVING THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF CHILDREN'S ORAL STORIES

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**Abstract--**This article describes the existing phenomenon that preserves the collective memory of children's oral stories. One of the Minangkabau children's oral stories that still survive and are widely known is the story of Malin Kundang. In contrast, many other children's oral stories have disappeared from the memory of their owners. Considering that children's oral stories contain positive values for the next generation, this condition should not happen. The study compared a "well-preserved" oral story to other endangered children's oral stories. The study collects data from literature studies, interviews, and distributing questionnaires. Then, the collected data are compared by considering the collective memories of the stories. The story of Malin Kundang survives in the collective memory because it has been transformed into various forms. Most of the Minangkabau children's oral stories, apart from the Malin Kundang, are kept only in the public's memory. The story is not transferred to various creativities; therefore, it is hardly known by children today. The transformations of the Malin Kundang's story can inspire the preservation of other children's oral stories to not disappear from the collective memory even though the active heir has died.

**Keywords :** Preservation; collective memory; children's oral stories; transformation, creativity.

### INTRODUCTION

Minangkabau stories are generally oral tradition and have almost disappeared in society, as experienced by other traditional cultures marginalized by modernization. Minangkabau culture is an oral culture. Laws, norms, philosophy, and everything are written orally (Anwar, 1995). However, the oral culture has experienced "erosion," like children's oral stories disappear from the community's collective memory. Children who do not know oral stories and community members over 60 years old can no longer convey oral stories that they have heard and enjoyed as a child (Gayatri, 2020). The phenomenon of inheritance of children's oral stories like this is very concerning, especially for children in the future. In addition, the influence of entertainment media that is increasingly varied makes them more distant from oral stories. The marginalization of the oral storytelling tradition for children in Minangkabau (*mandongeng*) is thought to have occurred after the entry of television media into rural areas in the 1970s. Finally, the community gradually abandoned the practice of storytelling (Udasmoro et al., 2012). With the shifting of entertainment media in the family and community environment, oral stories are neglected and no longer in demand. However, the reality is different in the Minangkabau oral story of Malin Kundang, which is still stored in the memory of various groups. This story is known by people from Minangkabau and outside Minangkabau (Junus, 2011).

Traditional oral stories should be kept and preserved in the people's memory should be prevented from happening, considering the many cultural values, messages, information, can be revealed from an oral story (Sarumpaet, 2010; Mursini, 2011). For example, children's oral stories contain still relevant messages (Bunanta, 1998; Mursini, 2011). The oral stories rich in education should always be and continue to be conveyed, considering that children love stories (fairy tales) (Musfiroh, 2008). However, many oral stories have been lost from people's memory. The elders said that the story was no longer told, considering that the world of storytelling has long been abandoned and children were busy with modern entertainment, such as the children's film Upin



and Ipin (Gayatri, 2020). Judging from the history and patterns of life of the Minangkabau community, the world tells stories that positively impact the character of the younger generation. It is proven by the number of leaders, intellectuals, writers, or freedom fighters from Minangkabau, especially before and after independence (Bahar, 2015; Abidin, 2016). These figures come from the world of education, religion, socio-culture, literature, economy, and others (Chaniago, 2010). Considering the number of intellectuals and leaders from Minangkabau, a foreign writer initially suspected that the only ethnic groups in Indonesia were Javanese and Minangkabau because these two ethnicities often appeared (Hadler, 2008).

These characters from Minangkabau live close to the tradition of storytelling. There is a tradition of sleeping in the surau for boys, girls sleeping together with older women, and living in the lapau. All these institutions foster a tradition of storytelling. Seeing the many positive values in the practice of storytelling and oral stories that exist in people's memory can be transformed into various creativity so that future generations can enjoy the story. The media progress should not be justified as the distraction of the traditional oral narratives. Oral stories will survive if they are transformed into various creativity (Rubin, 1995).

However, the transformation of Minangkabau children's oral stories is minimal, including converting them into written form. The continuity of the said story to the written form is not significant. It is typical for oral and written cultures to occur, considering that written, oral stories are the initial stage of oral documentation (Ahlstrom, 1966; Teeuw, 2003: 33). The minimal documentation of children's oral stories certainly affects the emergence of new inspiration from oral stories. It has decreased in number due to changes in the lifestyle of the voters.

Memory is a structured system capable of recording facts about the world and knowledge to direct its behavior. Memory does not function in a vacuum, but requires a medium to be trained, shared, and transmitted (Erll, 2011; Plate and Anneke Smelik, 2013). Memory is a message stored in the human brain, and each individual has a different ability to keep a memory. Before getting to know the alphabet system, rote memorization was the only way to secure oral creations (narratives, death songs, long myths, and others) (Teeuw, 1994). However, human memory is fragile and has limitations in storing experiences or memories. Memories will be quickly forgotten so that equipment is needed to preserve memories. Therefore, a series of devices for storing the memory was produced (Jones, 2007).

Memory storage devices changed made of bone, clay, and stone records, carved stelae (inscriptions), and later in the form of chronicles (history), maps, drawings, photographs, phonographs, and other recording technologies. Finally, a memory storage device using a computerized system. All memory storage devices offer increased capacity, and each new technology acts more efficiently to store human memory (Jones, 2007).

Oral tradition is a cultural activity that relies on the strength of one's memory in every storytelling. One is capable of spontaneously telling a story for hours on end. This method is a surprising activity for groups who rely on writing (Rubin, 1995; Ong, 2013). Given the limited capacity of human memory and stories that are easily lost along with the death of the active heir of a tradition, memory storage media is needed. Likewise, a person's physical condition also affects the resilience of the memory (Ahmadi, 2009). Some memories are personal, and some are collective. Personal memory is a memory that is experienced personally, while collective memory is a memory influenced by culture (Erll, 2011; Faruk, 2020).

Oral stories are a form of the cultural product of collective memory conveyed by a storyteller. The author of this oral story is unknown (Dananjaja, 1984; Finnegan, 1992). This anonymous nature makes community groups feel that the story belongs to their group so that a storyteller is considered to be voicing the thoughts of a community group. All people think they have and are allowed to tell stories to vary (Teeuw, 1994). No one can claim a story that belongs to him, and the stories told are accurate and complete. In addition, the variety of stories because the story is told is very dependent on the narrator, the audience, and it can also be the atmosphere



when the show takes place (Vansina, 1985; Finnegan, 1992).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research is descriptive. The method is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Primary data were obtained by interviews, questionnaires, observation, and documentation. This interview was conducted with the regular openers, policymakers, and children who were executed randomly. Policymakers serve in government agencies in the fields of education, preservation, or documentation of culture. The policymakers were interviewed to see the activities that have been carried out by the agencies they hold to preserve children's stories. The same way is also done to filter and find children's stories that they know and remember as a child.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Memories on Oral Stories**

In delivering oral stories, it is done by relying on memory endurance so that oral stories are not as stable as written ones. However, the plot, rhythm, general character of the characters in the story are described with specific formulas so that the characters, mentioning place names and other aspects, remain stable. The words conveyed are not the same, but the way they are told does not affect the basic story (Lord, 1991; Taum, 2011). Although the story changes, the same motive is maintained. This motif is a prominent element of a story. Usually, this motif is not different from everyday life (Danandjaja, 1984). This motif is always remembered in memory, even though it is expressed differently and repeated. This form and method of repetition by Lord (1991) is called a formula. The formulaic way will make it easier for the storyteller when telling the story and make it easier to store and display what is stored in his memory. This formula is also found in the narrative of Malay literature which is called schematic composition (Sweeney, 1980). The formulaic system is used by storytellers, especially before they are familiar with writing. This method is similar to memorizing stories, but this memorization is not rigid and flexible (Teeuw, 1994). Whenever a narrator or speaker of an oral narrative poem performs, they recreate a new and spontaneously so that the story is constantly changing. This method is also found in children's stories. The changes seen in children's stories are also followed by social changes when the story is told (Gayatri, 2020).

The transmission of oral stories from one narrator to another is called transmission. Transmissions as a whole do not recall words from the narrative of the story, but they remember the same meaning, character, and form (Rubin, 1995). By adhering to the same plot, character, and place, the oral story is transformed into various formats to survive for generations to come. Unfortunately, the transformation may not be carried out optimally. Some stories still survive, but some stories are not remembered and have been lost to society (Ahimsya-Putra, 2011; Ong, 2013). The transformation of the story is as easy to do as switching from oral to written form. However, there are very few transcriptions of oral stories for children. Research conducted by Gayatri et al. has transcribed several Minangkabau children's stories by providing illustrations to attract children's interest to read them (Srimulyati, Satya G., and Yuhandri, 2020).

The phenomenon of using the internet in the early twenty-first century is a communication tool that is relatively high in society. This media is also used by collectors of oral stories to spread stories in all directions and can be accessed anywhere. Verbal reports are found in non-literate communities in rural areas; they are even found in digital media in urban areas. This situation brings a plus to transmitting a more comprehensive and well-documented oral story.

An opinion states that transferring the show to the internet media will not result in communication and social contact among the community. On the other hand, internet media is quite broad in scope, including for future generations. The internet can store a lot of data and information about traditional stories and be easily accessed depending on who likes it. Internet



media should not break the chain of transmission but instead help spread and document it because the internet is a means of cultural production and is used every day (Blank, 2009).

### **Minangkabau Oral Story Collective Memory Condition**

Traditional oral stories which are transformed into existing media will be enjoyed and able to survive until now. The work has been modified with a new culture and environment. If the traditional work does not adapt to different conditions, the work will be lost and abandoned by the supportive community (Esten, 1993). Classic works that should not be changed, perhaps to maintain their sacredness. It can be noted that so many traditional works are not submitted and are no longer known by the public (Ahimsya-Putra, 2011). The same thing also happened to the oral stories of Minangkabau children. The stories are only stored in memory and are not transferred to any other form. Finally, those stories are lost because of the swift modernization in society, and society's civilization has undergone many changes.

The above condition is reinforced by Sunarti (2013: 77) because he did not find Minangkabau children's stories in notable magazines for children even though they were published in the 1940s. The existence of Minangkabau children's stories is quite alarming, including the use of the Minangkabau language. The younger generation uses the Minangkabau language to communicate with their parents or friends, which is decreasing, and they switch to using Indonesian (Marnita, 2015).

Minangkabau children's stories are less liked because parts of the story contradict the teachings of Islam, such as elements of animism, dynamism, and illogical events (Junus, 1984; Djamaris, 2001). In the view of Islam, elements of animism, energy, or belief in inanimate objects are prohibited (Dobbin, 2008: 185; Abidin, 2016). In addition, children's stories are also considered events that have occurred, or conversely view stories as just fairy tales and do not have to be believed by the community to be true (Ahimsya-Putra, 2009: 77). Therefore, the desire to tell stories to children is decreasing, so that the tradition of storytelling is falling.

The existence of minimal Minangkabau children's stories is assumed due to the dualistic attitude of using the Minangkabau language with the Malay language. This phenomenon also impacts the low public interest in saving children's stories in the Minangkabau language. Minangkabau children's novels have been neglected in academic studies, production, and transmission to other media. Minangkabau children's stories that lack documentation makes academics pay little attention to making Minangkabau children's stories the object of study.

The lost oral story is still dominant in oral form and has not been widely transcribed into written form. Transcription of oral stories from memory into written format is a common and easy way to store oral stories (Ahlstrom, 1966; Rubin, 1995). However, the transcription of the story has not been maximally carried out. It can be seen from the 22 answers to the questionnaire given to the public that only 9.1% often read Minangkabau stories, while 45.5% had read, and 45.5% had never read them. From this answer, it can be seen that oral stories in written form are rarely found in the community. If the stories have been transcribed, it is easier to be accessed. Shown below are the percentages who read once but not often and never read at all.

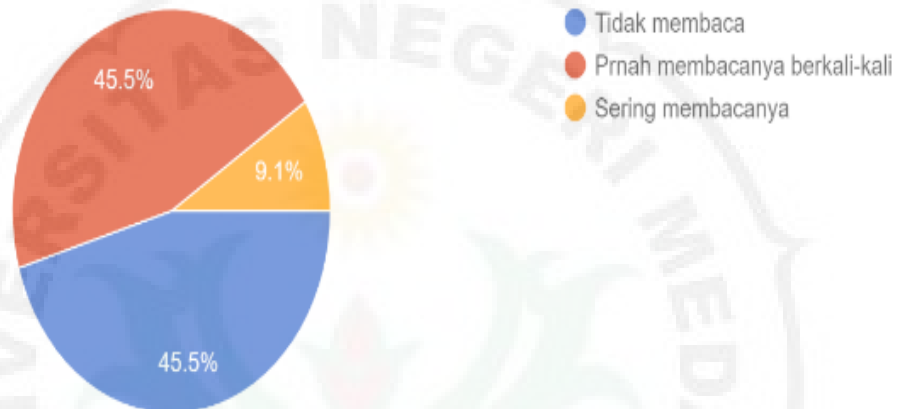




Table 1. Comparison of the percentage of informants who read children's stories with those who did not read.

Apakah Anda pernah membaca carito Anak Minangkabau dalam bentuk tertulis?

22 responses



Text in picture:

Have you ever read Minangkabau children's stories in written form?

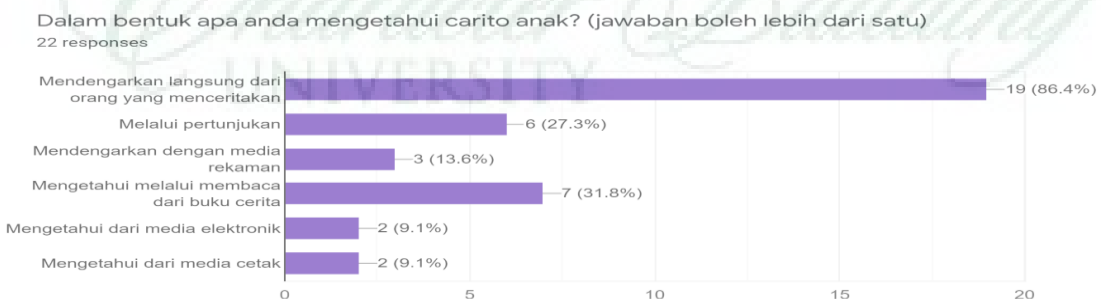
Blue : Don't read

Red : Read it more than once

Orange : Reading it often

The above conditions are strengthened by the answers of the informants in their process of knowing a story. They answered that 86.4% listened to the story directly from the person who delivered it. They may hear from oral storytelling either done by parents or people in their environment. Apart from oral storytelling, informants know stories from performances, recordings, electronic media, and others. All of the answers are less than 14%. Their dominant knowledge of the story is orally by listening directly to the person who tells the story. From the table below, it can be seen a comparison of the way informants obtained the story.

Table 2. How Informants get the story



In what form do you know children's stories? (the answer can be more than one)

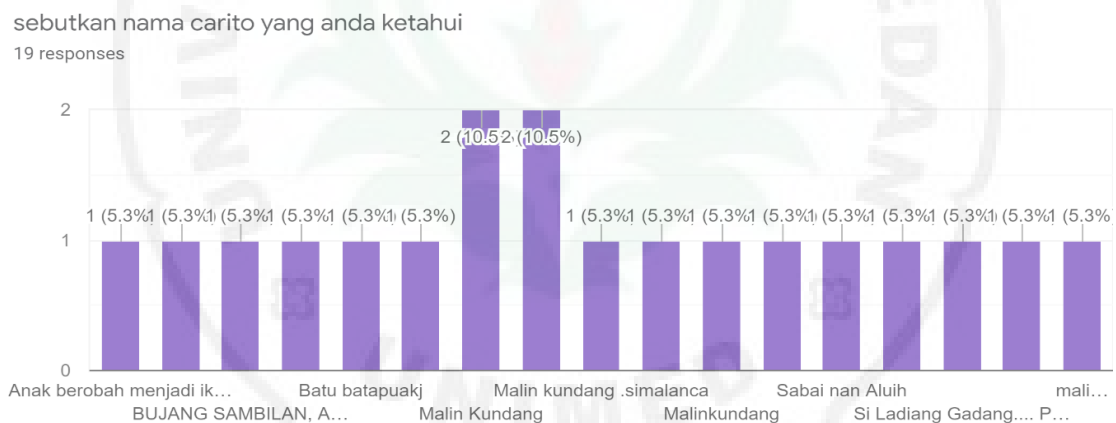


From top to bottom;

- Listen directly to the person telling the story (86,4%)
- From a show/performance (27.3%)
- Listen from recorded media (13.6%)
- Reading it from a story book (31.8%)
- Knowing from electronic media (9.1%)
- Knowing from printed/mass media (9.1%)

The titles of the stories known to the informants are the stories of Malin Kundang as many as eight people. Other story titles are Rawang Takuluak, Tuanku nan Biru, Bujang Sambilan, Bayang Sani, Cindua Mato, Siti Nurbaya, Kak Kancie, Kuburan Duo, Ikan Sakti Sungai Janiah, Pangeran Sati, Ngalau Si Bincik, Si Kancil, Si Pengembala Kerbau, Minang Kabau, Ikan Larangan Aia Janiah, and Batu Bangkai, The table below shows a comparison of the recalled stories.

Table 3. Stories remembered by informants



In general, the story of Malin Kundang is known by informants, including today's children who still see the level of Malin Kundang. This story has been transformed into various creatures to make the story of Malin Kundang survive in the community's collective memory, including people from outside Minangkabau. Various creativity from the story of Malin Kundang is packaged and repeated. Below, the invention that has been done to the level of Malin Kundang is described so that the collective memory can survive.

### Creativity Maintains the Collective Memory of Malin Kundang's Story

1. The story of Malin Kundang has been transferred into written form, especially for children. So that children are interested in reading it, the book is given illustrations. Below are some covers of children's books based on the story of Malin Kundang.

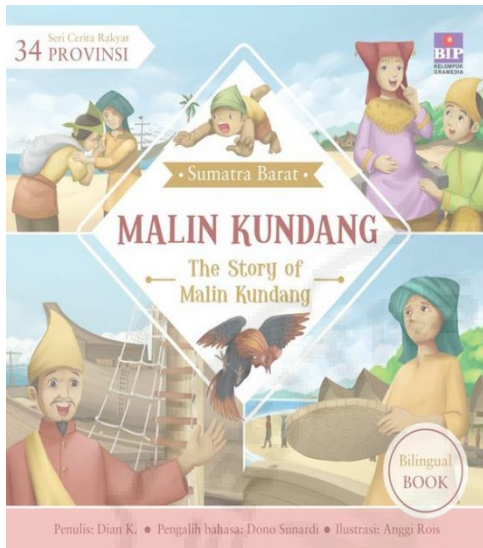


Photo 1 to 4 Book cover of Malin Kundang's story book.

The pictures were retrieved from

<https://www.google.com/search?q=buku+cerita+malin+kundang+bergambar&safe>. Retrieved June 1, 2021.

2. The transformation of Malin Kundang's story from oral to written in short stories. This short story was written by Navis in the Kompas daily on February 2, 1986, entitled Malin Kundang, his mother Durhaka (Navis, 1986). Navis's writing distorts the facts of the story that has been known to the public. People from oral stories present the character of Malin Kundang, who is disobedient and does not recognize his mother. Still, in this short story, the disobedient one is Malin Kundang's mother. After Navis's work was published, many reviews, studies, comments, and criticisms of this short story (Junus, 2011; Ronidin, 2011). All these comments made Malin Kundang's story even more well known.
3. The transformation of Malin Kundang's story into a poetry genre was carried out by Sapardi Djoko Damono. The poem entitled 'Malin Kundang' is one of the poems in 'There



is News What Today, Den Sastro.' This collection of poetry has been reprinted twice by the publisher PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama. In this poem, Sapardi presents the character Malin Kundang

4. The story of Malin Kundang has also been written by Udin (1996) into lyrical prose. This article is entitled *Rebab Pesisir Selatan: Malin Kundang*. The story of Malin Kundang was delivered in the form of the Rabab Pasisir performance.
5. Wisran Hadi has transformed Malin Kundang's story into a drama script. This Malin Kundang drama script does not provide information about disobedient children but reveals customary conflicts in the Minangkabau community. Disputes arose because of changes and developments of the times. In addition, this manuscript by Wisran combines the story of Malin Kundang with Kaba Malin Duano and Kaba Puti Bungsu (Musfeptial, 2007).
6. Malin Kundang's story had also been adopted into a soap opera (sinetron). It was aired on SCTV television from Tuesday, January 11, 2005 to Tuesday, July 25, 2006, which comprises 81 episodes. This soap opera is quite popular among the public—as many as 73% like it.  
(<https://www.google.com/search?q=malin+kundang+pelakon&safe=strict&ei=dLi0YJNxxqmu2g>).
7. Malin Kundang's story has also been transformed into a dance performance. Choreographer Eri Mefri created a traditional dance entitled Malin Kundang, Pinyangek Siso Api, or Honey Bee (Wanteha, 2018). There are also works in the form of Malin Kundang Ballet (Efrida, 2013). From the title given, it can be seen that the works departed from the story of Malin Kundang. Below is a banner created by Malin Kundang's story and the dance performance



Photo 5 and 6 Banners and photos of the Pinyangek Siso Api show or the Honey Bee from Malin Kundang

<http://m.valora.co.id/berita/9672/irwan-prayitno-nilai-kisah-malin-kundang-tak-sesuai-budaya-minang.html>.

Retrieved 28 October 2018

8. *Malin Kundang's* story is also materialized in the form of a figure. This statue is placed in the *setting* of *Malin Kundang's* story, namely Air Manis Beach, Padang city. The figure is made to resemble a person lying face down with his ship. This location is a tourist area in the city of Padang. The figure is placed in tourist attractions so that it is often visited,





making the story of *Malin Kundang* still conveyed and popular. Tourists will indirectly share the story of *Malin Kundang*, maybe before, during, or after visiting this figures' location. Below is the figure of Malin Kundang on Air Manis Beach.



Photo 7. Malin Kundang Stone at Air Manis Beach, Padang City. The statue is taken from the site [https://travel.detik.com/dtravelers\\_stories/u-229775/place-melihat-penampakan-malin-kundang-dari-close/1](https://travel.detik.com/dtravelers_stories/u-229775/place-melihat-penampakan-malin-kundang-dari-close/1). Retrieved by December 20, 2018.

### **Preserving Collective Memory for Minangkabau Children's Stories**

Some of the activities above have proven effective in preserving the community's collective memory, such as the story of Malin Kundang. This creativity and transformation can be adopted for other Minangkabau stories or can be developed in different ways.

Inheriting and storing memories of traditional values to future generations is a serious issue considering that the globalized world has changed the way people interact, including the way oral stories are told. Globalization makes complex and multi-aspect changes such as economic, political, cultural, environmental, and military aspects (Fairclough, 2006). Interaction in the oral tradition teaches and invites children to send, receive, and store messages from parents or from one generation to the next (Jirata, 2013).

In addition to the activities above, other activities can also be carried out so that collective memory can survive in a community. Stories are saved by utilizing advances in science and technology. Computerized systems are capable of storing large amounts of data. Do not think that technology eliminates tradition; instead, technology is crucial in transmitting stories to future generations. For example, it is easier to reach far-reaching communication with the internet media to penetrate countries and cultures (Blank, 2009). A story using internet media such as collecting information or sending songs to others using MP3 players, iPods, and Macintosh computers is straightforward to do. Utilizing this technology is not only easier but also more accurate (McDowell, 1999).

Modernization of traditional culture is carried out by transforming and utilizing technology (Esten, 1992; Rosidi, 1995). Modernization uses technology and science to maintain traditional culture by not imitating elements of Western civilization as a whole and adapting to the times. Modernization brings progress and reform changes in the composition and changing society from static to dynamic, from traditional to rational, from feudal to the populist community (Kemal, 2005: 157).

Memory plays a vital role in various areas of social practice (Erll, 2011), including how to store memory. The technique of keeping memory, especially for oral stories, must be done with social contact. Before someone can tell a story, they first learn, remember, and learn to tell a story. All these activities are carried out through social contacts, such as watching a show. The more people watch the show, the easier it is for them to remember, store, and tell stories (Rubin, 1995). The Minangkabau proverb states that on the way to the *pasa jalan dek batampuah*, *lanca kaji dek*



ba ulang (practice makes it perfect) (Panghulu, 1978). That is, all knowledge is easily and quickly owned if it is repeated often.

Children listen to oral stories comfortably and quietly from well-known storytellers or with people who have relationships, both blood and social. This is especially applicable to young children. With emotional closeness, the values or messages in the story are easily conveyed (Musfiroh, 2008). On the part of the narrator, the story is told in an easy, agile, and fluent way because it uses formulaic techniques. They do not memorize the story but simply use a formula scheme that has been patterned in their memory (Sweeney, 1980; Lord, 1991). The formulaic technique also serves to strengthen and make it easier to save the story. The storyteller simply remembers the existing schemes so that the story is conveyed smoothly. The story is also easy to adapt according to the circumstances of the show's time (Finnegan, 1992).

Restoring collective memories in children's stories in Minangkabau can be done by reviving the storytelling tradition. The atmosphere and environment, as well as institutions to activate the tradition of storytelling, must be rebuilt. In the past, a boy in Minangkabau, before having a wife, slept in a surau (Naim, 1985). At the surau, they listen to stories together (Hadler, 2008), while traditional girls listen to stories in the Rumah Gadang. In the Rumah Gadang, the story is told by the grandmother or mother's sister. In addition, the tradition of storytelling can also be obtained in lapau (Gayatri, 2020). Lapau has the same function as a shop, namely to buy and sell daily necessities or a place to sell food. In lapau, buyers are provided with a seat (Bod, 2017). They sit while drinking or taking a break to talk about various issues (Mardoni, 2017). One of the activities they do is storytelling. The story material submitted is filtered first spontaneously because people who come to the lapau come from various circles and professions (Bod, 2017). Position, social status, and position in society make the narrator pay attention to the interlocutor and the environment and sit in the lapau.

Inheriting Minangkabau children's stories is continued and introduced to future generations considering that there is awareness from various circles so that Minangkabau children's stories are maintained. In line with the inheritance carried out by cultural observers of different other traditional values. They carry out various creations so that this marginalized cultural asset is brought to life by utilizing technology. So many oral traditions are still alive; a few have been "saved" in the form of tape recorders, transcriptions, and video recordings (audio-visual). In some well-established countries, traditional culture is recorded and then disseminated through print media in books (Rosidi, 1995). Dundes stated that to avoid hostility to technology, consider technology a loyal friend. Technology does not eliminate traditional values but makes it a source of inspiration for future generations, such as using the internet to make communication easier (Blank, 2009).

The world of education is an official institution to evoke stories. The teaching materials and learning atmosphere are filled with story material selected according to the subjects given. Indonesian language class, local content, or arts are suitable to be filled with stories. The world of education provides a vast space so that children's stories can be sustainable and social interaction is possible in schools. It turns out that policymakers have not carried out this method in the world of education in West Sumatra. Such as local content subjects that have been taught since 1995, have not included children's oral stories (Gayatri, 2008).

## CONCLUSION

The children oral stories from Minangkabau have been disappearing from the collective memory of the community. However, the story of Malin Kundang undergoes different and unique preservations. Until now, it is still remembered not only from Minangkabau, but also from outside Minangkabau. The story of Malin Kundang can survive in the community's collective memory because it has been transformed into various creations. Every time a new artwork appears, it will



remind the original story.

The transformation that has been made to the story of Malin Kundang can be an inspiration for other children's oral stories so that the community's collective memory is maintained. The more often the story is repeated, even though the media used is different, the story remains sustainable. Given the limited human memory storage device, memory storage is diverted according to advances in technology and information. Today's computerized system is very suitable for storing stories because it has a lot of capacity, and if it is disseminated, it has a far and broader reach.

Maintaining the collective memory of children's stories requires social contact. Therefore, the storytelling tradition that used to exist in Minangkabau society needs to be revived. With the practice of storytelling, social interaction automatically builds. The storytelling tradition that has existed in Minangkabau society is living in the surau, social procedures in the Rumah Gadang, and socializing in the lapau. All these institutions strengthen social interaction, and in these institutions, the ability to tell stories is also developed. In addition, the relevant formal institution to maintain collective memory is in the world of education.

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