

The Story of Jarupanta: A traditional Kerinci kunaung

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Kerinci is a mountainous region in western Jambi Province, Sumatra. This region is home to the Kerinci language, which is a group of highly divergent Malay varieties. The traditional villages in Kerinci have a rich oral tradition, which is unfortunately dying off. There has been limited documentation of Kerinci oral literature.

Previous studies have classified oral texts in Kerinci by genre. Karimi (1968), for example, uses the terms *dongeng* (legends, myths, fables), *cerita penggeli hati* (comedy), *cerita pelibur lara* (lit. 'stories that console'), and *cerita perumpamaan* (allegory), *cerita pelengah* (lit. 'stories to pass time') and *kunaung*. The term *kunaung* (a cognate of the Malay *konon* 'once upon a time, purportedly'), is an original Kerinci term adopted by Zakaria (1981), and refers to a story which is sung (at least in part) by a *tukang kunaung* (the reciter of the *kunaung*). According to Karimi (1968), the *kunaung* is characteristically long, taking as long as seven nights to perform.

This paper takes a closer look at the elements of the *kunaung* genre. We examine a *kunaung* recorded and transcribed by Heri Mudra during fieldwork in Tanjung Pauh Mudik (Kerinci) in 2007-2008 (funded by NSF grants BCS-0444649 and BCS-0643743). We present the main elements of the story, including main characters, setting, plot, and moral themes. Additionally we look at the *kunaung*'s poetic structure, including characteristic syntactic structures, sung melodies, the phonological 'rhyming'. Thirdly, we discuss the setting in which the story is told and its social function.

References:

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