



# Minangkabau Collective's Riddles: Format and Social Function

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**Abstract.** This article examines the text of the riddles as a form of Minangkabau collective oral tradition in West Sumatra, Indonesia. This article is focused on the study of the structure (format) of the riddles text and its social function for the supporting community. This research is a qualitative research. Based on tracing the motifs and social function formats in riddles collected from the Minangkabau community in West Sumatra, data on social formats and functions were obtained. Data was also collected through interviews with informants to obtain information about social functions. The results showed that the Minangkabau riddles consisted of descriptive elements (questions) and answers, both contradictory and non-conflicting. Minangkabau riddles text has a function as entertainment and a test of social intelligence. Oral tradition texts (traditional questions) of Minangkabau collective riddles also function as social projections as intangible cultural heritage; as a means to create legal social institutions and institutions; as a means to sharpen intelligence, and improve social relations.

**Keywords:** format · social function · riddles · Minangkabau collective · West Sumatra

## 1 Introduction

One of the Indonesian ethnic groups in Indonesia is Minangkabau. Minangkabau has a variety of arts, languages, culinary and various types of oral traditions as cultural products. In this context, the Minangkabau ethnic group contributes to the development of Indonesian national culture. One form of oral tradition that is still developing in Minangkabau society is riddles (traditional questions). The Minangkabau community has a tradition of speaking and asking questions in the oral tradition of question and answer (riddle). This tradition is carried out in a friendly, relaxed and intimate occasion. In addition, this riddle tradition is also used for certain purposes and occasions. This oral tradition is known as takok taki. Many researches related to riddles have been done by previous researchers. This oral tradition exists in every ethnic group and sub-ethnic of the nation. This causes this oral tradition has been studied by every ethnic and sub-ethnic for various purposes. So is the case with the Minangkabau people who have this enigmatic tradition. Most of the research conducted on Minangkabau riddles only examines certain parts of the riddles text. In addition, there are also several international

studies on the oral tradition of Minangkabau riddles. Previous studies have studied many aspects of linguistics in the study of stylistics and semantic aspects. Meanwhile, students carry out research by examining some riddles texts with the aim of completing the study, such as the studies conducted by [1]; [2]; [3]; and [4]. Some of these researchers conducted research in various areas in West Sumatra, for example in Padangpariaman, Agam, Pesisir Selatan, and Pesisir Selatan Regencies. In addition, there is also research in the Kuantan Sengingi area, Riau province. The researcher assumes that research on Minangkabau riddles that specifically examines by comparing riddles in land areas as the main area and coastal areas as supporting areas does not yet exist. A foreign researcher [5] has examined the oral tradition of Minangkabau traditional collective questions (riddles). Chadwick conducted linguistic research on the metaphorical and symbolic subjects and predicates found in Minangkabau riddles. In addition, van Hasselt (1881) has also carried out research on Minangkabau riddles. Several Minangkabau riddles texts were documented by Van Hasselt. From 1877 to 1879, he was in charge of the Central Sumatra Expedition, which went to the central part of Sumatra Island (Jambi, West Sumatra, South Sumatra) and, where the Minangkabau people lived) to carry out a variety of investigations there. In a book titled *De Talen en Letterkunde van Midden-Sumatra*, one of them looked at the oral tradition of the Minangkabau riddles. (Brill, EJ, 1881). The purpose of this research is to define Minangkabau riddle texts' format and social function. The oral tradition of riddles in West Sumatra's mainland and coastal regions is the focus of this study. Minangkabau ponders life philosophy, concepts, behavior, perceptions, and human-related issues incessantly. The format and social function of the Minangkabau's riddles texts, both on land and in coastal areas, can be used to comprehend the various Minangkabau riddles values. What's more, this study is likewise to get a depiction of the social way of behaving of the Minangkabau people group contained in riddles on the central area and shore of Minangkabau.

## 2 Methods

This study is qualitative in nature. The purpose of this study was to investigate the social function and format of Minangkabau riddle texts in West Sumatra Province's mainland and coastal regions. Two stages of data collection were used. Using a recording device, the first step in this research is to take a data inventory. The recorder is used to record the informant speaking directly. Transliteration into Indonesian was used to translate the recorded data's results into written form. The gathering of information about the speaker community's perspective, life philosophy, and life values is the second stage of this research. Through interviews and observations, the information about this storytelling environment was gathered.

## 3 Result and Discussion

As research subjects, a number of people who lived on the mainland and along the coast of Minangkabau in West Sumatra provided the riddles' text. Fifty Cities Regency, Regency of Tanah Datar, Pesisir Selatan, Padangpariaman, Agam, the City of Padang, Payakumbuh, Bukittinggi, and Pariaman are the administratively responsible regions

of Minangkabau, West Sumatra. The following table displays the transliteration and transcription of the oral tradition riddles that are the investigation subject along with the region of origin for each one.

Minangkabau riddles are a type of oral tradition that are kept secret. As a result, the original author of these West Sumatra Minangkabau riddles cannot be identified. As a consequence of this, the Minangkabau collective has these puzzles, and each member aims to transmit them to the subsequent generation.

From a variety of sources, minangkabau riddles are handed down through oral traditions. This actually aligns with the viewpoints of scholars of oral tradition, who maintain that the riddles oral tradition is the oral tradition that is most adaptable to the language or dialect of the speaker. Previous researchers have conducted a number of studies on riddles as a form of oral tradition, such as those by Van Hasselt (1881), Siegel (1979), Bakar, et al., and others (1981), Danandjaja in 1984, Chadwick in 1990, and Djamaris et al., 1993), Teeuw, Sedyawati, and Rusyana, all (2000).

There are two presentations for the riddles from Indonesian and international collectives, as well as the Minangkabau collective. The “question” is the first presentation, and the “answer” is the second (reference). As shown in Table 1, there is a direct correlation between the first and second exposure formats in the Minangkabau collective riddles that were gathered from land and coastal areas. The Minangkabau collective riddle format can be divided into two categories based on the findings of the theoretical studies-based analysis: 1) the way the first and second statements are linked in an opposite way; and, secondly, relationship structures between the first and second statements that are non-contradictory (i.e., non-contradictory).

The first explanation, which is descriptive, is interpreted as contradicting the second explanation, which is reference, if it refers to everyday reality, in traditional riddles. The format of the first presentation (P1) and the second presentation (P2) are depicted in the following data findings from Nagari Manggopoh in the Lubuk Basung District of the Agam Regency.

P1: *Binatang, binatang apo nan taruih maagiaahan aia minum sarato manyehatkan urang?* P2: *Jawi*

(P1: What is a animals always give people healthy drinking water? P2: Cow)

Both the first presentation’s riddles (P1) and the second presentation’s (P2) are in direct opposition to everyday reality. Naturally, humans (people) feed their domesticated animals or cows, not the other way around, in everyday life. In contrast, in the preceding riddles, animals—in this case cows—provide beverages for humans. The following riddles also contain clues that describe the opposite.

P1: *Daun nyo talatak didalam batang, buah nyo talatak di dalam daun, batang apo namonyo tu?* P2: *Batang Lomang.*

(P1: The leaves are located inside the stem, the fruit is located inside the leaf, what kind of stem is that? P2: Trunk Bamboo of Lomang)

The text of the riddles all follows the same pattern: the first explanation (P1), which is theoretically referred to as descriptive, and the second explanation (P2), which is referred to as the answer (referent), are considered to demonstrate a contradiction in comparison to the reality of daily life day. The texts of the Minangkabau riddles are categorized

**Table 1.** Region, Origin's Region, and Text of Riddles

No.	Region	Origin's Region	Text of Riddles
1.	Mainland	Manggopoh, Kab.Agam	– <i>Binatang, binatang apo nan taruih maagiaahkan aia minum sarato manyehatkan urang? (Jawi)</i> – <i>Ditakan pusek e, tabulalang Mato e, apo tu kok iyio (Senter)</i>
2.	Mainland	Situjuah, Kab. 50 Kota	– <i>Kenek babaju, lah godang batilanjang, apo de? (Botuang)</i> – <i>Bajalan indak ponek, manunjuék indak ado salah, a kok yo de? (Jam)</i>
3.	Mainland	Bukik Batabuah, Kota Bukittinggi	– <i>Badanno bungkuak, matono tajam, makan sagalo nan ijau-ijau?apo namo no tu(Sabik)</i> – <i>Kakino 3, matono 4, pandai bacarito, apo tu kok iyo? (Urang nan alah gaek)</i> – <i>Ketek jadi kawan, lah gadang jadi lawan, apo namo no du? (api, Aia)</i>
4.	Mainland	Simalonggang Kab. Limapuluh Kota	– <i>Pucuek ka bawah ungek ka ateh, apo deh kok iyo? (Jangguk)</i> – <i>Daunnya talatak di dalam batang, buahnya talatak di dalam daun, batang a kok iyo tu? (Batang Lomang)</i>
5.	Mainland	Padang Tengah Sialang, Kab. Limapuluh Kota	– <i>Induak lolok, anak bagolek-golek, a kok iyo? (Batu giliang lado)</i> – <i>Induaknyo diughuk-ughuk, anaknyo dipijak-pijak, a kok iyo? (jonjang)</i>
6.	Mainland	Parit Antang, Bukittinggi	– <i>Awak lalok ano tagak, wak tagak ano lalok. Apo namo no. tu? (Tapak kaki)</i>
7.	Mainland	Koto Hiling, Kab. Tanah Datar	– <i>Kalau takona indak tabawok, kalau indak takona nyo tabawok, a kok yo? (Kaliki Konji)</i>
8.	Coastal	Kampung Jaruai, Bungus Teluk Kabung, Padang	– <i>Urang urang a nan nyo takuikkan dek binatang? (Urang-urangan di tengah sawah)</i>
9.	Coastal	Koto Nan Duo IV Koto Hilie, Kab. Pesisir Selatan	– <i>Kok duduak inyo sagadang kuciang, Kok malompek inyo sagadang gajah, a kok iyo? (Jalo laauk)</i> – <i>Diateh angek, dibawah puyuik, apo deh? (Lampu togok)</i>

(continued)

**Table 1.** (continued)

No.	Region	Origin's Region	Text of Riddles
10.	Coastal	Nagari Ulakan Tapakih, Kab. Padangpariaman	<p>–<i>Kalau dimasukkan kayu bisa duo puluah karek, kalau talua ciek indak tamuek di dalamnyo doh, apo tu? (Kotak api-api)</i></p> <p>–<i>Rimbo-rimbun ndak kayu aro rancak susun indak anak daro, Apo namo e tu?( Rumpun sarai)</i></p>
11.	Coastal	Pauah Kamba, Kab. Padangpariaman	– <i>Badan e ciek tunggak e banyak, apo namo e tu?(Sipasan)</i>
12.	Coastal	Lubuk Minturun, Padang	<p>–<i>“Sagadang-gadang batang, batang a nan gadang?” (batang aie)</i></p> <p>–<i>“Tigo petak, tigo panjuru, tigo ikua kumbang di dalam” apo tu?. (buah jarak)</i></p> <p>–<i>“Barampek manumbuak, baduo manapih, surang mahalau” apo tu?. (kabau sadang makan)</i></p>

as traditional question oral tradition riddles with contradictory formats based on the existing theory.

The non-conflicting riddles come next. Conventional riddles are those whose first explanation is descriptive and does not contradict the second explanation, namely reference, if it refers to everyday reality. Non-contradictory riddles are also known as non-contradictory questions. The first presentation (P1) and the subsequent statements (P2) do not contradict one another. As depicted in the table, these non-conflicting riddles can be found in the Manggopoh area of the Lubuk Basung subdistrict in the Agam regency and Situjuh Batua in Limapuluh Kota Regency.

P1: *Bajalan indak ponek, manunjuek indak ado nan salah. Apo kok iyo deh?* P2: *Jam (Jam tangan, jam dindiang)*

(P1: Walking is not tired, pointing is never wrong. What is it? P2: Clock (Watch).

In both the first exposure (P1) and the second exposure (P2), the riddles appear to be compatible with everyday life or in no way in conflict with it. It is common for people and other living things to become exhausted from constant walking on a daily basis. In the riddles, it is also said that people will make mistakes when expressing their thoughts or ideas. P1 is the first explanation, and it is descriptive. It describes a running object that never gets tired. It also describes a thing that always points in the right direction. The second explanation, P2, says that the thing is a clock—a watch. The same kinds of riddles with the same structure or format are presented here (non-conflicting riddles).

P1: *Ditakan pusek e, tabulalang Mato e, apo namo e tu?* P2: *Senter*

(P1: Pressed in the center, wide-eyed, what is that? P2: Flashlight)

Data with the same form were also found in Jorong Koto, Tanah Datar Regency, Juruai Bungus Barat, Padang, Koto Nan Duo IV Koto Hilieh Anakan Pesisir Selatan Regency, and in Nagari Ladang Nagari Pauah Kamba, Padangpariaman Regency.

The same pattern can be seen in the text of the aforementioned riddles. The first explanation (P1), which is referred to as a descriptive term, and the more explanation (P2), which is referred to as a reference, are deemed to demonstrate that they do not contradict one another when compared to the actual circumstances of everyday life.-day. The Minangkabau collective oral tradition's riddle texts follow this pattern and are arranged in non-conflicting formats or structures.

It is possible to formulate the social function of the Minangkabau riddles text in the mainland and coastal areas of West Sumatra today on the basis of the information obtained through interviews with informants. Seven informants came from each of the mainland and coastal regions, making a total of 14 people who were selected intentionally. The following can be said about the social function of the Minangkabau riddles text based on what the informants said.

### **Intelligence Test**

According to almost all of the informants, the Minangkabau group's takok-taki, a show with riddle-based questions and answers, was held in a casual and intimate setting in their spare time. Activities such as riding rigs are *batakok-taki* (guessing) can back up the connection between group socialization and society. The Bakhri informant, who is 62 years old and lives in Nagari Pauah Kamba, Nan Sabaris Padangpariaman, claims that riddles activities test a person's "intelligence" for a social purpose. The same information that was provided by other informants also lends support to this viewpoint. For instance, informant Sanimar, 58 years old and residing in Sungai Lingkuang, Lubuk Basung, Agam, and informant Jarana, 59 years old and residing in Nagari Bukik batabuah, Agam, both concurred that solving riddles tests a person's intelligence. They also say that, in reality, a lot of P1 (first exposure) questions can't be answered by a person's intelligence or reasoning. They can typically respond with the second explanation (P2) or with the comprehension and intelligence of someone who responds word for word to the first presentation (P1) made by the questioner after hearing the first explanation (P1).

*P1: Merah basirabuk di lua, putieh di dalam nan dimakan, apo kok iyo de? P2: Buah rambutan*

(P1: Red stringy on the outside, white on the inside which is eaten, what is it? P2: Rambutan)

*P1: Diambuangan ka ateh ijau warnanyo, jatuah ka bawah merah warnanyo, apo kok iyo tu de? P2: Buah jambu biji*

(P1: Throws red in color, falls down turns red, what's that? P2: Guava)

The riddles text can be seen as a test of one's intelligence or comprehension. Experience, insight, and intelligent logic are required to respond to these two questions. Because the answers to these traditional questions can only be obtained through additional insight and experience, the text of the riddle above serves as a test of one's intelligence. Only those who have eaten can effectively respond to that question rambutan and the guava. Someone who has previously been asked this question can also provide an answer.

The informant also stated that the most intriguing aspect is that the questioner (P1) will immediately request an answer from the respondent (through P2), and it does not take long to locate the appropriate response. Respondent P2 will directly ask applicant P1 and insist on “angek or cold” (hot or cold). The term “cold” denotes that the person providing the response already knows the answer, while the term “angek” denotes that the answer will soon be discovered. A light and intimate atmosphere is spontaneously created, regardless of whether the response is “cold” or “angek.” If applicant P1’s response is the word “cold,” applicant P2 will explain what that actually means. During the exercise, the questioner (P1) can change positions. It’s possible that the person who asked the question first (P1) will be asked to respond. They take on different roles.

### **Entertainment**

The second social function of riddles is to entertain one another. As per source Alinur, who is 58 years of age and lives in Nagari Situjuh Batua, Lima Puluh Kota Rule, and witness Jaswirman, 65 years of age and lives in Jambak Kanagarian Town, Kapeh Panji Jaya Talaok, Bayang Area, Pesisir Selatan Regime, the details of P1 and P2 will really bring about something else funny for the sake of being funny. There are times when the answer (P2) is something that no one expected. When they receive an answer, the person being asked (P1) will be perplexed. (P2) When the questioner gives the correct answer, the answer will entertain both the questioner and the answerer equally if it contradicts all of the previous answerers’ responses. The questioner frequently makes it difficult for the answerer to determine the correct answer. Situations like this one create an atmosphere of entertainment because the questioner and the answerer switch roles frequently and vice versa. The text of the following riddles demonstrates this.

*P1: Sa godang-godang batang, batang a nan paliang godang? P2: Batang aie*  
(P1: As big as the stem, which stem is the biggest? P2: River)

The aforementioned of Minangkabau riddles actually asks about the largest “trunk.” In actuality, the Minangkabau word “trunk” has multiple meanings. The word “trunk” first refers to a tree’s woody trunk that grows upward. River is a synonym for the word “stem.” The Minangkabau people refer to the river by using the term “trunk.” Answerers who may concentrate solely on the meaning of the word “tree” might mention a large and tall banyan tree or another type. After you were told you were wrong and the questioner said that the biggest “stem” in question was a river, the humor and fun atmosphere started.

Table 2 provides a summary of the research findings based on the explanation provided above, namely the study of the format and social function of Minangkabau collective text riddles as the intangible cultural heritage of the Minangkabau collective land and coast of West Sumatra.

The results of the study in the form of the social structure and function of the Minangkabau riddles oral tradition text in the mainland and coastal areas of West Sumatra can be used as a complement and additional research to the Minangkabau riddles studies that have been carried out by previous researchers. The results of this study provide the possibility for other researchers to conduct research by making other types of oral traditions as objects of research because Minangkabau has various types of oral traditions that are still alive and developing in society. As a product of national culture,

**Table 2.** Format and Social Functions of Riddle’s Minangkabau Collective Land and Coastal Areas of West Sumatra

Format	Social Function	
	To Test Intelligence	Entertainment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Descriptive format that functions as a question (P1);</li> <li>– Referent as the answer (P2)</li> </ul>	Media to show of the intelligence	Collective togetherness media refreshing collective social relations and fostering a family atmosphere

inventory, preservation, and research on various types of oral traditions as a manifestation of the thoughts, philosophies, and views of human life individually and collectively in Indonesia, needs to be continuously developed. Oral tradition is a cultural document in oral form containing thoughts, feelings, and important information about various aspects of life at a time that has existed, is currently happening, and is a reflection of the future of a society and or a nation. This is in line with what was stated by Goodenough (1981), Siegel (1979), Barthes (2003), Navis (2002), Dundes (2005), Hadi (2002), Sedyawati (2007), and Kaivola (2018). Researches on various forms of oral tradition will be felt better if they are carried out as soon as possible. This is done to maintain the original text and avoid the influence of other cultures and the influence of the progress of information technology. The development of foreign cultures and the development of information technology will also have a direct or indirect influence on the culture of the people who own and support oral traditions.

#### 4 Conclusion

As a form of Minangkabau oral tradition, the riddles text consists of two parts, namely the description part (descriptive), and the second part is the answer (referent). There are two relationships to the two parts, the opposite and not the opposite relationship. Speakers of Minangkabau collective riddles oral tradition texts often use metaphorical and figurative language in their language characters. The values, philosophy of life, attitudes, and behavior of the Minangkabau society are all depicted through this language pattern. As a result, the Minangkabau people’s knowledge of how to live their lives is reflected in the collective riddle texts that were passed down orally in West Sumatra. An intangible cultural heritage that is very valuable as a legacy of Minangkabau local wisdom passed down through oral tradition.

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