

The Concept of Zonation of Sapangka and Luak-lareh in the Performance of Ulu Ambek in Pariaman Minangkabau

Asril^{1*} Aduoktoza Royylendes² Dafit Saputra¹

1.Karawitan Department, Faculty of Performing Arts ISI Padangpanjang

2.Dance Department, Faculty of Performing Arts ISI Padangpanjang

Abstract

The concept of *sapangka* and *luak-lareh* refers to the grouping of contestants and the division of territory in the performance of *ulu ambek*. The *sapangka* is the host organizing the performance, and consists of several *ulu ambek* communities from a number of different *nagari* (villages). The *ulu ambek* communities of the *sapangka* are joined by the social, cultural, and regional bonds of a *lareh*. *Lareh* is the name given to a traditional government area controlled by *ninik mamak* (traditional elders), based on the territorial division that underlies the zonation in an *ulu ambek* performance. *Luak-lareh* refers to the *ulu ambek* contestants who come from *lareh* outside the *lareh sapangka* (host zonation). The goal of this research is to describe, discuss, and analyze the division and work method of *ulu ambek* performance in the zonation system of *sapangka* and *luak-lareh*. The research results show that the zonation of *sapangka* and *luak-lareh* has been established over a long period of time, based on social, cultural and emotional bonds between *nagari*, so that the performance of *ulu ambek* is well arranged in a system that has been preserved until the present day.

Keywords: sapangka, lareh, luak-lareh, zonation, and ulu ambek.

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1. Introduction

Ulu ambek is a customary ritual traditional art of the Pariaman community which has become a symbol of greatness for traditional leaders or headmen (*ninik mamak*) in Pariaman. The symbolization of greatness of the *ninik mamak* in the Pariaman community is expressed through the important attributes in *ulu ambek* performances, which represent this greatness both denotatively and connotatively (Astil Muchtar, 2015: xiii). An *ulu ambek* performance is an exhibition performed by a pair of *ulu ambek* players in the form of an “attack” (*ulua*) and “rebuttal” (*ambek*), without any direct physical contact (Asril Muchtar, 2011a). *Ulu ambek* is a type of martial art which is based on Minangkabau silat. At every event of an *ulu ambek* performance, tens of *ulu ambek* players take part. They include the *sapangka* (host community) and other invited communities from outside the area. The *ulu ambek sapangka* community consists of several *ulu ambek* communities that belong to the same area, or *lareh*. The invited communities are known as *luak-lareh* groups. The areas designated as the *sapangka* and *luak-lareh* are made up of a number of *nagari* (villages), bound by common historical, customary/cultural, social and emotional ties.

The bonds that form the *sapangka* and *luak-lareh* communities define the zonation of territory in *ulu ambek*. Zonation is the division of territory into a number of sections in accordance with the function and objectives of its management (KBBI, 2014: 1572). There are currently five active areas of *lareh* zonation: Lareh Duo Kali Sabaleh, Lareh Anam Lingkuang, Lareh VII Koto, Lareh Lubuk Aluang, and Lareh Nan Sabarih. There are also a number of other inactive *lareh* zonation areas, such as Lareh Aia Pampan, Lareh V Koto, and Lareh XII Koto.

The zonation of *sapangka* and *luak-lareh* in the performance of *ulu ambek* determines the locus of the contest and is a unique phenomenon in this traditional art of Pariaman, Minangkabau. Traditional elders of the Pariaman community have designated the *sapangka* and *luak-lareh* territories along with the division and work mechanism of the performance of *ulu ambek* in a system. This is an interesting phenomenon to study in order to reveal the traditional, cultural, social, and emotional bonds between different *nagari*, to establish the *ulu ambek* zonation that has become a customary conventional rule in the Pariaman community.

2. Method

The collection of data related to the concept of zonation of *sapangka* and *luak-lareh* in the performance of *ulu ambek*, and the division of its zonation, was carried out in all existing areas of *lareh* zonation, specifically in *lareh* that are still active in *ulu ambek* performance. In each *lareh*, information was gathered about all the *nagari* belonging to the particular *lareh* as well as the *nagari* that participate in *ulu ambek* performances. This mapping and grouping of *nagari* to establish the areas of zonation of *sapangka* and *luak-lareh* was an important step because not all *nagari* in a particular *lareh* zonation are involved in *ulu ambek* performance. A field study was undertaken to obtain data about the territory of a *sapangka* community and *lareh*, which is also *luak-lareh* for communities in other areas. Data was also collected about the specific role, function, and status of each *nagari* or *ulu ambek* group in a *sapangka* community, as well as the general role, function, and status of each *sapangka*

and *luak-lareh* in the *ulu ambek* performance system. It was essential for the researchers to visit each zonation area of *sapangka* and *luak-lareh* in order to observe directly which groups are part of the *sapangka* and which groups belong to the *luak-lareh*. As Schechner explains, in performance research, the involvement of the researcher in every event of performance is vital (Schechner, 2013). In connection with the present context of *ulu ambek* performance, due to the fact that the research was carried out during the covid-19 pandemic, not many of the *nagari* were holding any *ulu ambek* performances. In addition to concerns about exposure to the corona virus, local leaders and those wishing to host an *ulu ambek* performance had difficulty obtaining government permission to hold a performance. *Ulu ambek* performances involve the gathering of large numbers of people over a period of 3-4 days, and would therefore have a potentially large impact on the spread of the corona virus within the community.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. *Sapangka* and *Lareh*

In the context of *ulu ambek*, the discussion about the concepts of *sapangka* and *lareh* show that the two concepts are closely related, since they both have a traditional work mechanism that is associated with other areas of zonation. Every *sapangka* is in a particular *lareh*; every *lareh* has several *nagari* which can function as *sapangka*. The work mechanism applied in the event of an *ulu ambek* performance, for the *nagari* that belong to a particular *lareh* and are designated or offer themselves to become the *sapangka*, is agreed upon in consensus by the entire *ulu ambek* community in the particular *lareh*.

Sapangka

The general meaning of *sapangka* is the host or the party organizing an activity or event. This definition applies universally and is understood extensively in the Minangkabau community. In the context of *ulu ambek*, *sapangka* refers to the party organizing or hosting an *ulu ambek* performance. This party is the *nagari* and the different elements of society within the *nagari*. These elements include the *ninik mamak*, leaders of the *nagari* and *korong* (hamlet), community figures, religious leaders, and young people. The *ninik mamak* play an important role in the performance of *ulu ambek* because *ulu ambek* is a traditional ritual performance that symbolizes the greatness of the *ninik mamak*. An *ulu ambek* performance is an expression of appreciation and respect for the *ninik mamak* as the holders of tradition. As stated in the traditional Pariaman phrase, *ulu ambek* is: “*suntiang ninik mamak, pamainan nan mudo-mudo*” (the crown or greatness of the *ninik mamak*, but performed by young people). *Ulu ambek* is performed by young people, with rules of etiquette that honor the greatness of the *ninik mamak* (Asril Muchtar, 2010).

In practice, the active role of the *ninik mamak* in the performance of *ulu ambek* is carried out by the *kapalo mudo*, or the person in charge of organizing all the activities related to *ulu ambek* involving young people in the community. In the context of *ulu ambek*, the *kapalo mudo* serves as the representative or extension of the *ninik mamak*, by performing the traditional *ulu ambek* ritual. This means that everything associated with *ulu ambek*, from the preparations to the accessories, and other supporting elements of the performance, the invitations, organization of the performance until its completion, is carried out by the *kapalo mudo* with the assistance of young people from the community and those active in the *ulu ambek* community. Everything the *kapalo mudo* does must be with the permission and approval of the *ninik mamak*. The *kapalo mudo* is one of the customary leaders who is influential in the community, especially in connection with the traditional activities and customs that prevail in a *nagari*. The *ninik mamak* watch every stage of the activity carefully to make sure nothing will impair the authority and greatness of the *ninik mamak*, including both the *ninik mamak* from their own *nagari* and those who are invited as *ulu ambek* guests from *luak-lareh*. The *ninik mamak* encourage the *ulu ambek* players to perform with elegance and to their best ability to preserve the good image of the *nagari*. The basic principles that must be upheld in *ulu ambek*, as mentioned by Yulinis (2015: 267), are: *tageh*, a balance between power, gentleness, ingenuity, vivacity, and flexibility in play; and *bataratik*, behaving with courtesy. Asril Muchtar (2015) explains further that there is a need for vigilance and caution; *ulu ambek* has wisely taught values of sportiveness, vigilance, respect, and politeness to the *ulu ambek* players.

Other elements of the community, such as local leaders and community figures, or ‘intellectuals’, along with religious leaders, each play a specific role in accordance with their position in the *ulu ambek* tradition. The intellectuals and religious leaders take their place inside the performance arena, seated on top of the *laga-laga* (stage) with the *ninik mamak*, to oversee the implementation of the *ulu ambek* performance. They preside over the whole *ulu ambek* performance until the end, to ensure it stays on the right track. Meanwhile, the young people under the control of the *kapalo mudo* have the task of performing the *ulu ambek* in their capacity as the *sapangka*, in competition against other *ulu ambek* players from *luak-lareh*.

The *nagari* that is acting as the *sapangka* cannot simply organize the entire *ulu ambek* performance by itself. It joins together with other *nagari* in the same *lareh*. The other *nagari* join together and act as the *sapangka* to face up against the invited *ulu ambek* players. They share the same social, cultural, and emotional responsibilities.

The social, cultural, and emotional connection between all the different *nagari* in a particular *lareh* is a longstanding tradition in the context of *ulu ambek*. This is stressed by Zulkifli Tajun, the *kapalo mudo* in the village of Marunggi Kurai Taji, and an active member of the *ulu ambek* community: “If there is a mistake that leads to an accident in relation to the *ulu ambek* tradition, the sense of shame is borne together by all the *nagari* in a single *lareh*” (interview, 8 November 2020 in Marunggi Kurai Taji).

Lareh

In the Minangkabau language, the word *lareh* is often pronounced as ‘*laras*’, or alternatively it may be written as ‘*laras*’ but pronounced as ‘*lareh*’. For example, *laras koto piliang* is more often pronounced by the Minangkabau people as *lareh koto piliang*. Despite the difference in pronunciation, *lareh*, or *laras*, has the same meaning. Bapayuang (2015) in the Minangkabau dictionary ‘Kamus Baso Minangkabau’, writes that *lareh* means: *laras*; an original term for territorial division. Meanwhile, the word *lareh* is not found in the Indonesian dictionary, Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, but one of the meanings listed for the word *laras* is the same as the definition of *lareh*. “*Laras* means a district in Minangkabau, the basis of the traditional government system” (KBBI, 2014: 791).

The word *lareh*, or *laras*, does not always refer to an area or district. The most prominent meaning of the word *lareh* is in fact related to the government system followed by all *nagari* in Minangkabau. This meaning of *lareh* is used in the terms *Lareh Bodi Caniago* and *Lareh Koto Piliang*. *Lareh Koto Piliang* was initiated by Datuk Ketumanggungan, while *Lareh Bodi Caniago* was initiated by Datuk Perpatih Nan Sabatang, and the two *lareh* together are referred to as *lareh nan duo*. These two *lareh* have differences in their government systems. Koto Piliang is more aristocratic in nature while Bodi Caniago is democratic (Navis, 1984). A number of other writers have also expressed a similar view to Navis. They include Amir Sjarifuddin Tj.A (2011), Hadler (2010), Zubir (2010), Kemal (2009), Dobbin (2008), Graves (2007), Kato (2005), and Mansoer, et al. (1970). The reason for mentioning this is only for the purpose of comparison. The meaning of *lareh* as used in this article will be explained below.

Lareh, or *laras*, according to the definition in the Minangkabau and Indonesian dictionaries, Kamus Baso Minangkabau and KBBI, is the division of a territory or district, and this is the definition of *lareh* used in this article. Essentially, the meaning of *lareh* is the affiliation of two or more *nagari* due to economic or political reasons and for ease of control by the Dutch. According to Gusti Asnan (2007: 86-87, 96): “The formation of a ‘*kelarasan*’ system was a policy of the Dutch colonial government. The Dutch colonial government frequently initiated change in the models and areas of control of the governmental system in Minangkabau during the time of its occupation. Administratively, *Inlandsche Bestuur*, or “the government of *urang awak* (Minangkabau people)” in the Residency of West Sumatra, was divided by the Dutch into two *Hoofdafdeelingen*, namely: *Hoofdafdeeling van Padang* and *Hoofdafdeeling van Minangkabau*. Each *Hoofdafdeeling* was divided further into a number of *Regentschap*, and each *Regentschap* was subdivided into a number of lower administrative units, namely: 1) *Kelurahan* or *Districten*, 2) *Nagari*, and 3) *Dusun* (Hamlet). A *Kelurahan* was headed by a *Kepala Laras*. The *Kepala Laras* was also sometimes referred to as *Tuanku Lareh* or *Angku Lareh*. Each *kelurahan* was divided into a number of *kenagarian* (*dorpen*), headed by a *Kepala Nagari* (*dorphoofd*), while the head of a *dusun* was known as the *pengulu*.

Nagari and *kelurahan* were subject to change depending on the political developments and policies of the Dutch colonial government. Asnan (2007: 100-101) writes:

“The Dutch could easily create and remove *nagari* and *kelurahan* based on the economic and political interests of the community. This included the fusion of a number of *kelurahan* or districts to form a new district known by the name of *kademangan*. A *kademangan* was headed by a *demang*, known in the Minangkabau community as *Angku Damang*. In the area of Pariaman, for example, two *kademangan* were established in 1913, namely *Kademangan Pariaman* and *Kademangan Ulakan*. Subsequently, in 1935, the Dutch colonial government changed the *kademangan* districts in Pariaman once again to become: 1) *Kademangan Lubuk Alung* with two *Asisten Demang*, namely the districts of *Lubuk Aluang* and *Kayu Tanam-VII Koto*; 2) *Kademangan Pariaman* with two *Asisten Demang*, namely the districts of *Pariaman* and *Sungai Limau*.”

By the end of the 19th century, 116 *kelurahan* had been established by the Dutch colonial government, 7 of which were in the *Afdeeling* of Pariaman (at the level of a Regency), namely: *Pariaman*, *Manggung*, *V Koto*, *Pilubang*, *Ulakan*, *VII Koto*, and *Kayu Tanam*. The *kelurahan* established by the Dutch in Pariaman were founded strongly on political and economic interests (Asnan, 2007). If the *kelurahan* formed by the Dutch were used as a point of departure for establishing the *lareh* districts of *ulu ambek*, it would not be appropriate, since the Dutch interests were quite different from the traditional and cultural interests of the Pariaman community. However, the basic principle of *lareh* being a combination of a number of *nagari* is also found in *lareh ulu ambek*. In relation to the *ulu ambek* tradition, there are eight *lareh* in Pariaman: 1) *Lareh Duo Kali Sabaleh*, 2) *Lareh Anam Lingkuang*, 3) *Lareh VII Koto*, 4) *Lareh Lubuak Aluang*, 5) *Lareh Nan Sabarih*, 6) *Lareh V Koto*, 7)

Lareh XII Koto, 8) Lareh Air Pampan. However, nowadays there are only five *lareh* still active in the performance of *ulu ambek*, namely: Lareh Duo Kali Sabaleh, Lareh Anam Lingkuang, Lareh VII Koto, Lareh Lubuak Aluang, and Lareh Nan Sabarih.

3.2. Luak-lareh

In the Minangkabau dictionary, Kamus Baso Minangkabau, written by Yus Magek Bapayuang (2015), the word *luak* means: a traditional administrative area governed by *ninik mamak*. In this case, the examples given of traditional administrative areas in Minangkabau are Luak Tanah, Luak Agam, and Luak 50 Koto. This dictionary does not include the word *luhak* as an alternative spelling with the same meaning as *luak*, which is why Bapayuang writes Luak Tanah Data, not Luhak Tanah Data. Nevertheless, the word '*luhak*' is also generally understood and used by the Minangkabau people, as in the example Luhak Tanah Data. This can be compared with the word *luak* in the Indonesian dictionary, Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, which is defined as district; *luhak*. The word *luak* has the same meaning as *luhak* (KBBI, 2014: 843, 845). *Luak*, according to Bapayuang (2015: 255), in addition to meaning district, has the additional meaning of 'reduced', 'decreased', and 'apart from'.

In lexical terms, the term *luak-lareh* consists of the words *luak* and *lareh*. In the context of the *ulu ambek* tradition, the words *luak* and *lareh* have a slightly different definition from that in the dictionary, as mentioned above, as well as a different meaning. The words *luak* and *lareh* may be joined together as *luak-lareh*, or simply as *lareh*, while the word *luak* itself is seldom used as in the definition of the Baso Minangkabau and KBBI dictionaries.

In the context of this article, the meaning of *luak-lareh* is the invited guests from other districts outside the area of the *sapangka*, as regulated according to a consensus of the *ninik mamak* of Pariaman. The *sapangka* area consists of a number of *nagari* that have historical, traditional, cultural, social, and emotional ties. Likewise, the *luak-lareh* consists of a number of *nagari* with similar historical, traditional, cultural, and emotional ties, in the same way as the *sapangka*. If this is connected with the meaning of the word *luak* in the Kamus Baso Minangkabau dictionary, specifically the alternative meaning 'apart from', in the context of *ulu ambek*, the word *luak* can be understood to mean 'apart from' *lareh*, and this is in fact the intended meaning in the context of the *ulu ambek* tradition.

The ties that bind together a *sapangka* or *luak-lareh* group are manifested in the zonation of territory in *ulu ambek*. Zonation is the division of territory into a number of sections in accordance with its function and objectives (KBBI, 2014: 1572). Every zonation of *lareh* can function as the *sapangka* and may also function as *luak-lareh*. When the *nagari* in a particular *lareh* become the *sapangka*, the other *lareh* will become the *luak-lareh*.

3.3. Sapangka and Luak-lareh pre-Performance

Together, the *sapangka* are responsible for deciding when the *ulu ambek* performance will take place, preparing or repairing the *laga-laga* (the special stage used for the *ulu ambek* performance), conveying their intentions to the *nagari* in the same *lareh*, inviting guests from *luak-lareh*, selecting the people who will perform the role of *janang* (the mediator for the performance), preparing the *ulu ambek* players, forming the *parik paga* (security team), and holding the *ulu ambek* performance. The responsibilities of the *sapangka* are not only borne by the *nagari* hosting the performance but are also shared by colleagues from other *nagari* in the same *lareh*. All the *nagari* in the *lareh* play an active part in the preparations to ensure that the *ulu ambek* performance runs smoothly, and they also put forward their *ulu ambek* players to perform in the role of *sapangka*, to compete against the *ulu ambek* players from *luak-lareh*. The *ninik mamak* carefully guide and supervise in detail every task carried out so that none of the traditional conventions and requirements are missed. The *ninik mamak* are there to offer suggestions and advice, and to accommodate requests about anything that needs to be done, especially in connection with the symbolization of their greatness. This is expressed in the traditional phrase, "*ka pai tampek batanyo, ka pulang tampek babarito*" (before going out or carrying out any task, first ask the *ninik mamak*, when a job is complete, report back to the *ninik mamak*).

The *kapalo mudo* has the extensive job of production and stage manager for the *ulu ambek* performance. Together with younger members of the community, he invites *ulu ambek* groups from *luak-lareh*. The *ulu ambek* groups from *luak-lareh* welcome the *kapalo mudo* in their own areas, and usually the *laga-laga* serves as the best place for the meeting. The *ulu ambek* communities from *luak-lareh* display courtesy and deference when receiving the invitation by welcoming the *kapalo mudo* to their *laga-laga*. This is a way of showing respect and positioning the matter in accordance with its cultural context. It also shows the high level of respect for the *ulu ambek* as a symbol of greatness of the *ninik mamak*. The *laga-laga* is deemed the appropriate place for anything associated with *ulu ambek*. The *ulu ambek* communities from *luak-lareh* hold discussions, in which they decide to accept the invitation from the *sapangka*, as long as all the circumstances are in their favor: they must receive permission from the *ninik mamak*, the *anak mudo* (*ulu ambek* players) must be ready and willing to perform,

health conditions must be met, and so on.

The *ulu ambek* communities from each *luak-lareh* area arrive at the village of the *sapangka* based on a prior agreement. There is no commitment for all the groups to arrive at the venue at the same time. In general the teams arrive after midnight. When an *ulu ambek* team from one particular *luak-lareh* arrives at the performance venue, before entering the arena, the players yell out a part of the *dampeang* melody: the musical accompaniment for the *ulu ambek*. The purpose of this is to announce their arrival. Their yells and the *dampeang* are welcomed by the *sapangka* by responding with their own *dampeang* yells, before receiving them in the appropriate customary manner. This happens every time a different *ulu ambek* community arrives. As the invited guests from *luak-lareh* arrive, they are placed in aisles to the left and right, and behind the *laga-laga*, according to the traditional rules that apply. This means that each invited *luak-lareh* group has its own particular seating area in the *laga-laga*, based on an agreement established by the *ninik mamak* and *ulu ambek* elders.

3.4. *Sapangka* and *Luak-lareh* in a Performance Context

The *ulu ambek luak-lareh* groups that arrived earlier in the night are requested respectfully by the *kapalo mudo sapangka* to present a performance of *randai ulu ambek* (a section of the *ulu ambek* performance). This also applies to the other *ulu ambek* groups, all of which are asked to perform *randai ulu ambek*. The main *ulu ambek* performance (a contest between a pair of *ulu ambek* players) takes place the following day, from late morning until evening. For the *ulu ambek luak-lareh* communities, the *ulu ambek* performance is based on negotiations that take place on the *laga-laga*, involving the *ninik mamak* and all the main elements related to the *ulu ambek* performance. The *ulu ambek* communities that arrive earlier and have teenage *ulu ambek* players are given priority to perform first. The teenage *ulu ambek* players are given the opportunity to perform first to motivate them and also so that they will be able to watch the subsequent performances by adult groups. For all *ulu ambek* communities, these teenagers are the cadres who will continue to become future *ulu ambek* players.



Figure 1. Every *ulu ambek* player who is about to perform must first greet the elders and other *ulu ambek* players from his own *lareh* community who are seated in the aisles. When he enters the *laga-laga* stage, the player also greets all the *ninik mamak*, religious leaders, and intellectuals seated on the *laga-laga* in the same way. (Photo: Asril Muchtar)

At every *ulu ambek* performance, the contestants competing consist only of the *ulu ambek* teams from the *sapangka* group and the *luak-lareh*. Out of all the active *lareh* zonations, one functions as the *sapangka* and the others are the opponents or *luak-lareh*. In the *ulu ambek* tradition, there has never been an *ulu ambek* performance in which the competing pairs are both from the *luak-lareh* community or both from the *sapangka* community. The performance will always be between *ulu ambek sapangka* players and *ulu ambek* players from *luak-lareh*. For example, if *nagari* Tandikek and other *nagari* in the Lareh VII Koto zonation are the *sapangka*, their opponents will be *ulu ambek* groups from *nagari* in the zonations of Lareh Duo Kali Sabaleh, Lareh Anam Lingkuang, Lareh Lubuak Aluang, and Lareh Nan Sabarih. Hence, there are clearly defined boundaries in the zonations between the *sapangka* and *luak-lareh* in the performance of *ulu ambek*. This is illustrated in the diagram below.

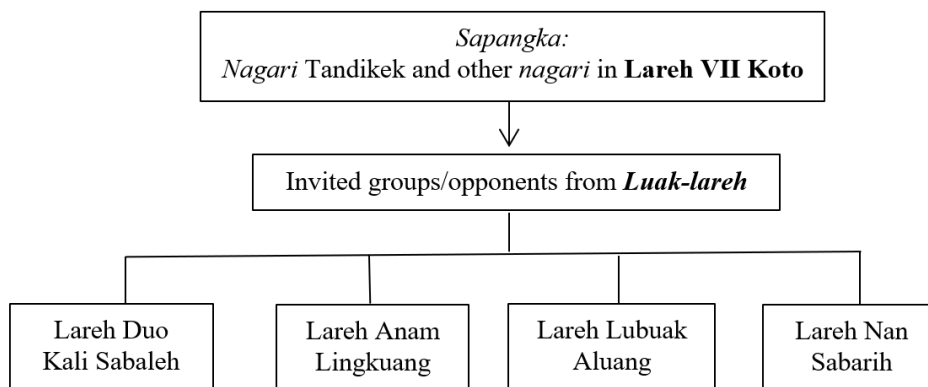


Figure 2. Diagram showing *sapangka* and *luak-lareh* in an *ulu ambek* performance.

Nevertheless, in certain cases two *lareh* may join together to act as the *sapangka*. For example, Lareh Duo Kali Sabaleh could join with Lareh Anam Lingkuang to be the *sapangka*. This may occur because at the present time, in Lareh Duo Kali Sabaleh there are only two *nagari* participating actively in *ulu ambek* activities, namely Kapalo Hilalang and Sicincin. There are actually five *nagari* in this *lareh* but the other three *nagari* do not have any *ulu ambek* players so the total number of *ulu ambek* players is not enough to compete against the *ulu ambek* players from *luak-lareh*, and this is why they request the assistance of Lareh Anam Lingkuang. In addition, there are very close social, cultural, and kinship ties between Lareh Duo Kali Sabaleh and Lareh Anam Lingkuang, so emotionally and customarily, the two *lareh* lend each other their *ulu ambek* players to join together and form a *sapangka*.

Ulu ambek performances are directed by a *janang*, who guides and regulates the performance. Each performance lasts about 7-10 minutes. The players take up their position, with the *sapangka* player at the front and the invited player, or *alek* standing inside. The *ulu ambek sapangka* player has the role of making the first attack, while the role of the *luak-lareh* player is to rebut or block the attack. The first movement performed by both players is a display of deference and apology to all those present. This is compulsory for all *ulu ambek* players. As they listen to the text and the *dampeang* melody, the music that accompanies the *ulu ambek* performance, they continue to move cautiously, waiting for a certain code or text, at which moment they immediately take up their position and become involved in the performance, interacting without any direct contact. About half way through the performance, the *janang* instructs the *ulu ambek* players to switch position so that the *ulu ambek sapangka* becomes the blocker and the *ulu ambek luak-lareh* becomes the attacker. Throughout the duration of the performance, the *janang* closely observes both *ulu ambek* players. If one of them begins to play too roughly or to endanger his opponent, the *janang* gives a warning, by uttering the words “*elok-elok main*” (please play nicely).



Figure 3. An example of the *ulu ambek sapangka* player performing the first role as the ‘*pe-ulua*’ (attacker). (Photo: Asril Muchtar).



Figure 4. An *ulu ambek* performance taking place at night appears more visually artistic and aesthetic from the aspect of the audience. (Photo: Asril Muchtar)

The *ulu ambek* players who perform, both from the *sapangka* group and the *luak-lareh* community, take heed of the calls and warnings of the *janang*. If the play starts to become dangerous, the *janang* has the right to stop the performance. The *janang* is given the mandate by the *ninik mamak* to lead and direct the *ulu ambek* performance with a high sense of authority and responsibility. If chaos or confusion arises as a result of the *janang*'s negligence, that particular *janang* will not be used again in future performances.

4. Conclusion

Zonation of the *sapangka*, *lareh*, and *luak lareh* in the tradition of *ulu ambek* performance is a standard concept that has been implemented since long ago. The *sapangka* is the host who organizes an event of *ulu ambek* performance together with the *nagari* that belong to the same *lareh* and are bound to each other by common responsibilities and social, cultural, and emotional or spiritual ties. The zonation of the *sapangka* is the joint territory of a number of *nagari*, known as a *lareh*. The zonation of the *sapangka* is the zonation of the *lareh*. The *luak-lareh* zonation is a concept referring to the location outside the *sapangka* territory which becomes the opponent. The *luak-lareh* zonation will emerge by itself whenever a particular *lareh* holds an *ulu ambek* performance. Every *lareh* can be the *sapangka*, and will instead become the *luak-lareh* when not acting as the *sapangka*. The real zonation is in fact the *lareh*, namely Lareh Dua Kali Sabaleh, Lareh Anam Lingkuang, Lareh VII Koto, Lareh Lubuak Lubuak Aluang, Lareh Nan Sabarih, Lareh V Koto, Lareh Aia Pampan, and Lareh XII Koto. There is no particular *lareh* that is specifically designated as *luak-lareh*. This zonation will appear when one of the *lareh* becomes the *sapangka*. The zonation of the *sapangka*, *lareh*, and *luak-lareh* has been established for a long period of time, based on social, cultural, and emotional bonds between *nagari*, which means the performance of *ulu ambek* is well arranged in a system that has been preserved until the present day.

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