

Transition of Saba Dance Performance from Traditional to Modern

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Abstract

The Saba dance is one of the most famous traditional dances that performed medical rituals and also symbolic of the animistic beliefs of the local community in Terengganu. However, this dance is no longer performed for medical ritual purposes, but it is still performed for entertainment for the local community. The objective of this study is to explain the structure of traditional and modern Saba dance rituals. This study was carried out using qualitative methods through an ethnographic approach. Interview techniques and participatory observation with key informants were carried out to complete the data collection process related to Saba dance. Data and information are also obtained through the study of documents and libraries. The findings of the study show that there have been changes to the structure of Saba dance performances compared to previous performance structures, especially from the point of view of ritual procedures, equipment and dancers' clothing. The growing influence of Islam in the local community is one of the factors that led to the change. Medical rituals that used to be performed with the ceremony of summoning ethereal beings are no longer practiced by the community today because it is considered superstitious. Changes to the structure of the performance are also made to ensure that it is always relevant and in line with societal changes so that it can be performed more actively and traditional dances of high cultural value, such as the Saba dance, can be maintained and preserved as best they can.

History

The Saba dance is a performance of dance and song associated with specific events in the local community of Kampung Kuala Jengal once upon a time. For example, when there is an outbreak of disease in the local community, the Saba dance will be performed. This happens because they still hold fast to the power of supernatural beings such as jinn and *dewa*

kayangan. In addition, they also consider that if a person falls ill, it must be caused by the phenomenon of ethereal beings. As such, they called upon jinns and gods from heaven to treat the disease (National Department of Culture and Arts Terengganu, 2022).

This Saba dance is believed to have been created in 1718. The name Saba dance was initially taken from the word Saba. Saba is the name of a manufactured tree made from young coconut shoots. According to the Terengganu State Arts and Culture Department Portal (2022), the history of the Saba dance was introduced in Kampung Kuala Jengal because this village has various plants that can be used as medicine. According to Jazmina et. al (2016), the performance art created by the ancestors is closely related to their daily activities and activities, especially economic activities of self-sufficiency. This dance practices medical rituals by using certain plants such as *jitong (buah pinang)*, *lancang (mayang pinang)*, *selamba kuning (sirih)* and so on (Kipli, 2016).

According to Nazri (1998), this Saba dance was introduced by a female shaman, Che Mek Comot or Tok Bomoh Comot. He is said to be from Paka district, Terengganu. This Saba dance was then taught by Che Mek Comot to his student named Tengku Yem. Next, Tengku Yem introduced this Saba dance more widely to the residents of Kampung Kuala Jengal. Then, the knowledge of the medical ritual of the Saba dance was passed down to two residents of Kampung Kuala Jengal, namely Che Wan Muda Dewa and Che Wan Deraman, or his real name, Che Wan Abdul Rahman. Then it began to expand widely in 1850.

Next, Che Wan Noor Saidi Binti Che Wan Abdul Rahman, who is also known as Makzah, began to be active in Saba dance performances in 1972. From then on, she only involved herself as a dancer. However, after receiving his father's statement, she has been responsible for performing every Saba dance performance. She is also the sole heir to her father, Che Wan Abdul Rahman, who used to be a shaman and Saba dance leader.

Objectives and Study Area

The Saba dance, which was first introduced in 1718, has undergone many changes due to the passage of time. Even so, this Saba dance is still presented to the public today. However, various changes have occurred especially in the structures of the current performance when compared to the previous performance. Therefore, the objective of this study is to explain the structure of traditional and modern Saba dance rituals. The area chosen to be the study area is Kampung Kuala Jengal, Dungun, Terengganu. According to history, this Saba Dance was first performed and introduced here. This leader who is skilled in Saba dance can also be interviewed in this village. The materials used in this dance are also easy to find in this village because of the wealth of the environment.

Problem Statement

This Saba dance is still performed to the community today, especially in the Terengganu Arts and Culture Department. However, it is less actively performed than in the past. Therefore, it makes the Malaysian and local communities no longer recognize this Saba Dance. The various structures in this dance need to be clearly known. The Saba dance is now performed only for entertainment purposes. Medical rituals are no longer implemented and continue because the rituals are believed to be nonsense. Today's society no longer believes in such medical rituals. This is in contrast to the ancient society that welcomed the Malay medical rituals performed in this Saba Dance performance (Umi, 2017). Therefore, it is inevitable that many of the structures found in this dance have changed and are different from the past.

Next, traditional performances, including the Saba Dance, are fading among the local community because the community, especially the younger generation, no longer practices medical rituals. The majority of them now only rely on modern medical methods. In addition, the involvement of the local community, especially young people who are interested in engaging in traditional dances like this, is very limited (Sahar et. al, 2020). Many local young people also migrate to the city to study and work. Things like this make traditional ceremonies like this difficult to find a cover to present to the next generation (Faezah et. al, 2018). As such, the once complex structure of the Saba dance has become increasingly simplified because the current generation is less skilled in continuing the original structure of the past.

Documentation of the structures of the Saba Dance is very limited and rare. Traditional dances like this are also rarely revealed by the media and newspapers (Samsudin, 2011). This will make it difficult for the younger generation to clearly recognize and get information about this Saba Dance performance. Therefore, this study chooses to study the ritual structures of the Saba Dance so that it can be documented and allow the community to get exposure and information about this study easily. In addition, this study was also carried out so that it can be used as an effort to introduce and redevelop the dance heritage that is increasingly losing its place in society's life today. Cultural heritage like this is very important to be maintained for the future because it has its values.

Research Methodology

This study is qualitative. The fieldwork carried out by the researcher in this study uses an ethnographic approach in Kuala Jengal, Dungun, Terengganu. This data and information is obtained from 8 individuals who have been selected by the researcher as informants. They were chosen because they have extensive knowledge about the study and are able to help the researcher in collecting authentic data. From the 8 informants who have been selected, the researcher has chosen the main singer, who is also the inheritor of this Saba dance, to be the key informant in collecting data. In obtaining data to make this study successful, the researcher has chosen appropriate techniques such as participatory observation and interviews. First of all, the researcher's participation observation technique is the main and most important technique in obtaining primary data. This can be seen when the researcher often spends time with the informants in order to obtain good data. In implementing this participatory observation technique as well, the researcher has involved himself in activities related to Saba Dance, such as learning dance moves during dance practice and so on. With this technique, the researcher can observe well whatever information is desired in detail about the structures found in the Saba Dance to meet the needs and achieve the objectives of the study. Information and data obtained by the researcher from informants through interview techniques, participation observation techniques, and also data obtained from documents related to the Saba Dance were then analyzed using Nvivo Plus software to produce a complete and detailed picture of the study of Saba Dance Rituals in Malay Medicine in Hulu Dungun, Terengganu. Through Nvivo Plus software, the data and information analyzed will go through the process of transcription, organization, conditioning, coding, theme, demonstration of reliability and validity, and reports.

Table 1

Number of Informants

No.	Informants	Total of Informants
1.	Saba Dance’s Singer	2
2.	JPKK Kampung Kuala Jengal	1
3.	JKKN Officer	1
4.	Kampung Kula Jengal Villagers	1
5.	Dungun Cultural Association Officer	2
6.	Terengganu State Museum Officer	1
TOTAL		8



Figure 1: Interview with key informant
Source: Field Study (2022)

Traditional Performance Procedures

The results of the study found that the Saba dance ritual that was performed once upon a time functions as a medical ritual capable of curing patients suffering from depression, being interrupted by spirits, lacking in sanity, affected by man-made and diseases that are related to the phenomena of spirits. This ritual is held for three days and three nights in a special room. Usually, the best special space to perform this ritual is in the patient's own home. Informants IR1 and IR2 affirmed that (in Dungun, Terengganu dialect):

“Dulu masa ayoh saya yang buat ritual persembahan ni, kebanyakannya buat untuk perubatanlah. Orang-orang kampung hok rasa kena gangguan, ada yang kurang waras, keluarga dia mari mintak tolong berubat dengan ayoh saya ni. Pastu kalau nok berubat, biasanya ambik masa tiga hari tiga malam lah kita buat dekat rumah pesakit tu sendiri”

(IR1)

“Saya ingat masa saya kecik-kecik dulu memang ritual tarian Saba ni buat untuk berubat orang lah. Memang orang kampung caye (percaya) ke mende tu”
(IR2)

The ritual performance of the Saba dance in ancient times is divided into three stages, which are preparation before the ritual, during the ritual, and after the ritual is carried out. These three stages must be done perfectly to ensure that this medical ritual is successfully carried out to treat the patient. In each of these stages, all participants need to play their respective roles well so that unwanted things do not happen.

i) Before the Ritual

Before a Saba dance performance is held, some preparations need to be made by the participants, including Peduang (shaman), dancers, and musicians. One of the most important is providing the necessary equipment in the Saba dance ritual. According to Ernita (2012), equipment such as young coconut shoots should be prepared by the Peduang and his helpers, known as Cenayang, to produce Saba trees. The Saba tree made from young coconut shoots is the most important ingredient in this performance. In addition, the Peduang should prepare medicinal materials such as calun leaves, *mayang pinang*, *kemenyan* (incense), and others to produce *kapal ayah* and *timba tasik*. After the materials have been successfully collected, all preparations must be done at the patient's home, including carving and decorating the Saba tree, *timba tasik*, and *kapal ayah*.

In addition, the special room chosen to carry out the ritual must be neatly decorated first to ensure that the ritual can run smoothly. The Saba tree that has been prepared must be erected in the middle of the special space. This space will also be enchanted by using *bertabik* songs to ensure that there are no outside elements and disturbances that come to cause chaos when the ritual performance is in progress. The *bertabik* song is considered a mantra that can become the wall of the special space (Terengganu State Department of Arts and Culture, 2022). Informant IR1 also explained (in Terengganu dialect)

“Ruang yang kita nok buat persembahan tu kita kena pagor dulu dengan lagu bertabik. Kita nyanyi lagu bertabik sebagai ayat pendindinglah supaya takdok makhluk halus atau anasir luor mari kaca majlis masa majlis tengoh berlangsung”
(IR1)



Figure 2: Saba Tree

Source: Terengganu State Museum Ethnology Center (2021)

ii) During the Ritual

The performance ritual was started by the Peduang, who had the role of communicating with Dewa Muda di Awan (the Young God in the Clouds) (a supernatural being) to request permission to use the Saba tree grove for performance purposes. All incantations will also be read once again by Peduang to drive away ghosts, guardians, goblins, and subtle creatures that are considered to bring disaster and plague. When the *serapah* spell ceremony goes on, various natural materials are used by the *Peduang* such as *kemenyan* (incense), *beras kuning* and healing water (Noor, 2001).

After receiving permission from Dewa Muda di Awan (the Young God in the Clouds), the main musical instrument of the Saba dance, the *Anak Umbang*, began to be played and accompanied by other musical instruments, such as the *Seruling Gading* (Ivory Flute) and *Rebana* (Tambourine). These musical instruments are played continuously throughout the ritual process of this performance. After that, the greeting ceremony started immediately. This ceremony usually takes about ten minutes. A *bertabik* song is sung by Peduang to mark the official start of the Saba dance performance ritual. This *bertabik* song is also known as the song of Dewa Muda di Awan (the Young God in the Clouds), which is considered a mantra to ask for protection from heavenly beings so that the performance can run smoothly without being disturbed by jinn or evil spirits. According to the IR1 informant, Dewa Awang Muda di Awan, the head of the gods in heaven, will come down to earth when the song of greetings is sung. Informant IR1 stated (in Terengganu dialect):

“Masa kita nyanyi lagu bertabik tu, orang dulu-dulu percaya la masa ni Dewa Muda di Awan turun ke alam nyata ni untuk tolong Peduang rawat pesakit”

(IR1)

At the same time, Peduang and Dewa Muda di Awan will interact and communicate with each other before starting the medical ritual. The interaction occurs by only using body

language or sung dialogue that only Peduang understands. In this process, Dewa Muda di Awan helps Peduang identify the cause of the disease, the type of disease, and the medicine that can cure the disease. Besides Dewa Muda di Awan, supernatural beings from heaven also take turns helping Peduang (Zaleha, 1988).

After the *bertabik* song was sung, the Peduang began to smoke the musical instruments that would be played throughout the ritual using incense smoke. Among the musical instruments that are smoked include kerating bamboo (Anak Umbang), *Anggek Cerating* (tambourine) and also *Seruling Gading* (an ivory flute). The purpose of this ceremony is to ensure that the musical instruments can be played well throughout the ritual without any interference from any supernatural beings. Then, Peduang sang the song *Anak Burung Baniung*. When this song is sung, the dancers have to dance around the Saba tree in the middle of the ritual space in a counterclockwise direction. The audience can also dance and have fun together at this time. This has been stated by informant IR6 that (in Terengganu dialect):

“Dulu saya tengok masa persembahan tu Peduang letok alat muzik atas asap kemenyan dulu sebelum dia guna. Lepas pada tu Peduang nyanyi lagu Anak Burung Baniung. Masa nyanyi tu penari ramai-ramai ni keliling pokok Saba, lawan arah jam. Masa ni jugok la penonton joget sama-sama”

(IR6)



Figure 3: Music Instrument Smoked

Source: Terengganu State Department of Arts and Culture (2014)

In addition, songs such as *Anak Udang*, *Anak Tedung*, *Raja Budak*, *Nur Sakti*, and *Awang Kasim Gila* will be sung. Each song has a different mantra where it can cure certain diseases. When any of the songs are sung, the Peduang will start his medical ritual by giving greetings, and then he will smoke the medical materials that have been prepared before the ritual. After that, Peduang has to sprinkle medicinal materials such as *bunga kuning* (yellow flowers) and *bunga kembang* around the patient who wants to be treated. Then, Peduang started to get up and surround the patient while holding a calung leaf in one hand. Peduang use this *daun calung* (calung leaf) to hit the patient's body while reciting certain spells and mantras (Hashim, 1983).

At the climax of the Saba dance medical ritual, Peduang will remove all diseases by rolling *tepung tawar* (fresh flour) all over the patient's body from head to toe. At this time, the existing disease will be sucked into *tepung tawar* (the fresh flour). This *tepung tawar* (fresh flour) must also then be washed into the flowing river when the final medicinal process is carried out. After that, Peduang also has to go around the Saba tree while holding food and

medicinal ingredients known as *kapal ayah* and *lancang pilang*. At this time, as well, all the gods who are invoked will come down to earth together to heal the patient. Furthermore, musical instruments must be played non-stop to complete the medical ritual. Informant IR7 explained (in Terengganu dialect)

“Masa berubat tu biasanya Peduang buang penyakit dari badan pesakit guna tepung tawar. Dia golek-golek kat tubuh pesakit. Pastu tepung tawar ni kena buang kat sungai lah masa proses akhir berubat nok habis doh tu. Lepas sedut penyakit, Peduang kena keliling pokok Saba sambil bawak kapal ayoh dengan lancang pilang. Masa ni la dewa turun ke bumi ni. Alat muzik pun kena main tanpa henti”

(IR7)



Figure 4: Peduang Rolling *Tepung Tawar* on the Patient's Body
Source: Terengganu State Arts and Culture Department (2014)

In order to continue the medical ritual, Peduang must choose the fruits and flowers of *mayang pinang* (the inverted betel nut) or better known as *Puteri Darah Putih*, in the Saba language which will be given to the patient to be eaten as a cure for the disease. However, if there is no fruits and flowers of *mayang pinang* (the inverted betel nut), then this medical ritual is said to be unsuccessful and then Peduang will have to find a new *mayang pinang* (betel nut) to repeat this ritual process. In addition to the fruit or flower of *mayang pinang*, Peduang also gives a single *bertih*, to the patient to eat as a cure (Zaleha, 1988).

According to Noor (2001), before the medical ritual process ends, the *Anak Hujan* song needs to be sung to invoke the *Dewa Anak Hujan*. This deity is believed to play an important role in cleaning the remnants of the disease in the patient. When this song is performed, the male dancers will dance around the Saba tree while carrying the *kapal ayah* and make dance moves as if they are drawing water. In the medical context of the Saba dance, this act is done to scrape and remove all the diseases found in the patient and the area around the ritual.



Figure 5: Dancers Carrying *Kapal Ayah*

Source: Terengganu Museum Ethnology Center (2021)

In the final process, a *Melirah* song is sung to mark the end of the ritual process. *Melirah* or *Selirah* is a word from the Terengganu dialect that means finishing everything. The Peduang performs this ceremony by calling on *Dewa Muda di Awan* to come down and take the Saba tree and at the same time remove all the diseases that exist throughout the medical ritual process. Next, *Dewa Muda di Awan* entered Peduang's body and brought the Saba tree to dance. The Saba tree was held and then turned left and right at high speed until the tree broke. After that, the tree is squeezed until it is crushed. Peduang does this process to get rid of goblins and diseases found in patients. At the end of the process, the patient will recover from the disease he experienced. The disease may be completely cured, or it may also be partially cured (Yusof, 1983).

iii) After the Ritual

After completing all the medical ritual processes, Peduang, who is still possessed by *Dewa Muda di Awan*, needs to rub healing water on his face and whole body so that he regains consciousness. Then, Peduang will begin to perform the last ceremony to close the performance space. This ceremony is called closing the station. When the hall closing ceremony is performed, Peduang has to drop the Saba tree that was used and then clean the space by using a material called a *timba tasik*. The next day, materials used during the medical process, such as *lancang pilang*, *tepung tawar* (fresh flour), tobacco, *bertih*, *pinang* and *sirih*, will be washed into the river by the Peduang to signify that the disease has been removed. According to the belief of the people in the past, anyone who is recklessly take a *lancang pilang* with medicinal materials that have been washed into the river, then that person may be afflicted with misfortune such as illness, madness, or impotence, as stated by IR1 and IR2 (in Terengganu dialect)

“Lepas lancang pilang kita hanyutkan ke sungai tu, jangan ada sesiapa yang ambik. Sebab semua penyakit hok kita buang ada dalam tu. Kalau ada yang ambik, penyakit tu dapat ke dia lah pulok”

(IR1)

“Kalau kepercayaan orang dulu, memang dia larang siapa-siapa hok nok dekat dengan lancang pilang yang dihanyut ke sungai tu. Takut boleh penyakit”

(IR2)

Modern Performance Procedures

The performance of the Saba dance now is very different from the previous procedure. The latest structure of the Saba dance is only presented for entertainment purposes only. This is believed to be because the rituals found in the structure of the previous performance were pure nonsense. Society is now also no longer charitable with those superstitions, unlike previous societies that depended a lot on supernatural powers and gods from heaven in their lives. Therefore, the medical rituals found in the previous performance structure have been removed, and now they are replaced by the "Nong Sakti" theater, which revolves around the magic of the medical rituals performed by the goddess from heaven, but the medical rituals carried out are only for performance purposes only. According to Umi (2017), this theatrical element is included in the Saba dance performance as an effort to preserve the heritage of the traditional dance arts of the state of Terengganu. This effort was made possible with the cooperation of the Dungun District Cultural Association and the Arts Group of the National Department of Culture and Arts.

i) Before the Performance

Usually, every show that wants to be carried out and presented to the general public requires careful preparation before it starts. The same goes for this Saba dance performance. The participants must play their respective roles and cooperate in preparing the materials and equipment that will be used during the performance. Materials such as *pucuk kelapa* (coconut shoots), *mayang pinang* (betel nuts), *daun calung* (calung leaves) and *bertih* must be prepared the day before the performance. Preparations to produce and carve the Saba tree still remain until now. Such materials are still used today, but now they only serve as props to make the performance come alive and look just like the medical rituals held in the past. If the materials are difficult to obtain, they can be replaced with other plants similar to them (Ernita, 2012). Informants IR3 and IR8 stated (in Terengganu dialect)

“Kalau dulu senang je nak dapat bahan yang kita perlu untuk persembahan tarian ni. Tapi sekarang ni susah sikit sebab orang payah dah nak masuk hutan. Jadi kita ambik je mana-mana pokok yang nampak lebih kurang dengan bahan dulu.”

(IR3)

“Kadang-kadang sekarang ni pokok yang ada dekat-dekat kita ni pun, kita ambik je. Senang. Kalau kita nampak pokok yang boleh guna untuk prop, kita ambik terus. Daun pokok nyor (kelapa) pun kita ambik biasanya untuk ganti daun calun”

(IR8)

In addition to the preparation of materials to produce props, jewelry, and clothing for the participants also need to be prepared in advance because the process may take time and be quite complicated. The clothing and jewelry of the participants are considered important to attract the attention of the audience and visitors who come. In addition, the participants should also ensure that they are prepared for dance moves, singing lyrics, theatrical dialogues,

and so on so that the performance can run smoothly. The stage chosen to perform will also be carefully decorated by skilled individuals. Next, the props and musical instruments that will be used throughout the performance must be arranged on the stage before the performance begins.

ii) During the Performance

According to Umi (2017), Peduang started the performance by singing the song Muda di Awan while being accompanied by the friction of Anak Umbang's musical instruments along with other musical tunes. After the singing was finished, Nong Sakti theater started. This theater is performed to give an idea of how the medical rituals that were carried out by the local community started once upon a time. This theater tells the story of three princess sisters who live in heaven: Puteri Sulong, Puteri Tengah, and Puteri Bongsu. At the beginning of this play, the three princesses wanted to go down to the real world to comfort their hearts. Then they conveyed that wish to Petala Guru, who has the power to take care of the Princess and God in heaven. After getting permission from Petala Guru, the three princesses came down to earth with a kite given by Petala Guru to play and have fun in the real world.

Then, the Nong Sakti theater continued with the scene of Princess Bongsu's Kite being stolen by a monkey. At this time, the three princesses were called to return to heaven. Unfortunately, Puteri Bongsu could not return to heaven because her Kite was lost. Princess Bongsu was left alone in the jungle and immediately turned into a normal human known as Derma Wangi. After that, a character named Ku Yeng appeared. Ku Yeng is a good-natured fisherman, polite in speaking, and so on. However, he was unlucky to have a skin disease. When Ku Yeng was in the forest, he found the Kite Cloth belonging to Derma Wangi. On the way back from the forest, he met Derma Wangi and invited Derma Wangi to his house to sleep. IR4 also said (in Terengganu dialect):

“Dalam teater ni cerita dia sepatutnya ada tiga orang puteri dari kayangan hok (yang) turun ke bumi sebab nok bermain. Tapi lepastu Puteri Bongsu dokleh (tidak boleh) balik ke kayangan lepas dipanggil sebab kain layang ajaib dia hilang, monyet yang curi kononnya. Jadi tinggallah Puteri Bongsu ni di hutan, bertukar jadi manusia biasa. Kemudian ada seorang pemuda nama Ku Yeng yang jumpa kain puteri tu. Pemuda ni ada penyakit kulit katanya. Masa di hutan jumpa dengan Derma Wangi, dia rasa nok tolong Derma Wangi tu. Dia ajak gi rumah dia lah”

(IR4)

Derma Wangi stayed at Ku Yeng's house for quite some time. Having lived together for a long time, Ku Yeng is destined to fall in love with Derma Wangi, who is gentle and has a very charming appearance. Unfortunately, they cannot be together because Derma Wangi is a princess from heaven. Saba's dance theater does not just stop here. There is also a character named Awang Muda Lingah who has magical knowledge and a handsome personality. Awang Muda Lingah had a dream of meeting Derma Wangi, and then he told two of his servants, Si Duning and Si Jalok, to find the princess. These two servants tried hard to find the princess everywhere, including all the market in the whole village (Umi, 2017).

After working hard to find Derma Wangi, Si Duning and Si Jalok finally found out that the princess was with Ku Yeng, and this matter was reported to Awang Muda Lingah. When Awang Muda Lingah found out that the woman he was looking for was with Ku Yeng, he was furious because Ku Yeng was his enemy. At the same time, Derma Wangi was upset to see the state

of Ku Yeng, who was suffering more and more from her skin disease. However, he was powerless to cure the disease because his magic had disappeared along with his lost Kite. The apprehension of Derma Wangi's heart was then felt by Petala Guru. Next, Petala Guru sent Nong's *dondang* (cloth) to the real world and called for Derma Wangi to cure Ku Yeng's illness by using Nong's *dondang*. At the same time, the medical rituals performed once upon a time will be clearly shown to the audience. All the materials that were prepared before the performance, were used by Derma Wangi to cure Ku Yeng. The dance movement around the Saba tree is also performed at this time. IR5 also explains (in Terengganu dialect):

“Ku Yeng dengan Derma Wangi jatuh cinta. Tapi malangnya dokleh bersama sebab Derma Wangi ni puteri dari kayangan. Tapi ada pulok Awang Muda Lingai yang nok cari Derma Wangi. Dia ni musuh kepada Ku Yeng. Masa tu jugok lah Derma Wangi rasa kesian tengok Ku Yeng makin teruk sakit kulit dia. Pastu (selepas itu) Petala Guru dari kayangan dapat rasa Derma Wangi ni mintak pertolongan. Pastu dia hantar kain ajaib untuk ubatkan Ku Yeng. Lepas tu lah dia buat perubatan dengan tarian Saba tu”

(IR5)

While treating Ku Yeng, Derma Wangi was so surprised to see the *Kain Layang* (Kite Cloth) that she had been looking for all this time found on Ku Yeng's body. With the magic of Kain Layang and Dondang Nong, Ku Yeng's skin disease was completely recovered. However, the angry Awang Muda Lingah came to attack Ku Yeng sometime later. Ku Yeng tried his best to defend Derma Wangi so that it would not be confiscated by Awang Muda Lingah. Because there was a great fight between Ku Yeng and Awang Muda Lingah, Derma Wangi felt so scared and remembered the message once given by Petala Guru that this real world is full of evil and cruelty.

At the end of this Saba dance theatre performance, Derma Wangi, who is afraid of the cruelty of the real world, decides to return to heaven as Puteri Bongsu. Before returning to heaven, Puteri Bongsu told Ku Yeng that if anyone needed help to cure an illness, then call her by the name "Nong Sakti" (Umi, 2017).

iii) After the Performance

After the Nong Sakti theatre performance in the Saba dance, the song Melirah is sung as a sign that the performance has come to an end. This is the same as what the Peduang did during the medical ritual of the Saba dance once upon a time. However, the ceremony to close the hall, as done in the previous performance, is no longer continued. The closing ceremony was replaced by a dance by all the participants at the end of the performance. In addition, the performance space also no longer needs to be cleaned with lake buckets and father's vessels because they were only applied in medical rituals in the past. IR4 states (in Terengganu dialect):

“Lagu melirah ni sama macam persembahan dululah, kita nyanyi sebagai tanda nak habis dah persembahan tu. Tapi beza sekarang ni takdok dah upacara tutup balai sebab ganti dengan upacara tarian semua peserta teater. Sekarang ni pun dok perlu doh nak bersih ruang persembahan guna timba tasik dengan kapal ayah sebab dok guna doh.”

(IR4)

Conclusion

Based on the research that has been carried out, it is clear that the medical rituals performed in the past are different compared to the current performance. Some previous performance structures were changed, and some structures were eliminated because they were considered unsuitable for performance in this era. Some of the changes made to the Saba dance performance are to ensure that it is always relevant to be presented to the general public. If seen more clearly, the implementation of medical rituals that used to be an important structure in this Saba dance performance was eliminated because it was considered to have superstitious elements. This is because of the difference in community beliefs before and now. The former society was more influenced by the practices of ignorance. In addition to changes in the structure of the performance, some equipment and materials needed during the performance have also changed. Various equipment and materials that were complementary to the previous performance are no longer needed. This is because some of the necessary materials are difficult to obtain nowadays. In the past, the materials needed for the performance depended more on natural resources, which are very difficult to obtain today. Although medical rituals are no longer performed in the Saba dance performance, all medical ritual procedures are still shown in the "Nong Sakti" Theater so that the community can now know all the practices and beliefs of their ancestors.

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