

Witchcraft of *Saluang Sirompak*: Music of Broken Hearts in the Taeh Baruah Minangkabau Community



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ABSTRACT

Saluang Sirompak is a type of music with spiritual power in Taeh Baruah, Payakumbuh District, Lima Puluh Koto Regency, Minangkabau, West Sumatra. *Saluang Sirompak* is a show aimed at witchcraft, a woman who has insulted a man who wants to propose her. This witchcraft activity is known as *Basirompak*. The problem that was revealed was how the music of *Saluang Sirompak* affected women's mental disorders. The ethnographic method was used in this study - the data were obtained through observation and interviews with actors or musicians *Saluang Sirompak*. The analysis was carried out by paying attention to the function of music and the organology of the musical instruments as a power-producing tone that can affect mental disorders for women who are the target victims. The conclusion that can be drawn is that witchcraft in *Basirompak* activities can distinguish what is right and what is wrong; If the women were not mistaken, they would not be victims of *Basirompak's* activities.

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1. Introduction

Saluang Sirompak is part of the culture of the Taeh Baruah village children, Payakumbuh District. *Sirompak* comes from the word *rompak*, which means to break (*dobrak*), rob, loot, or take by force. This is a form of magical ritual ceremony performed by a *sirompak pawang* to conquer the heart of a woman who has insulted a man. The background of the legend of *Saluang Sirompak* in Taeh Baruah is the beginning of the unrequited love story of a poor young man with skin disease (leprosy) named Simbabau. Simbabau fell in love with a rich and beautiful girl named Puti Losuang Batu. The great desire to have Puti Losuang Batu, so one-day Simbabau ventured to express his wish. However, Simbabau was rejected by Puti Losuang Batu, and what happened was he was even scolded with dirty, low, offensive, and insulting words so that it was unbearable. With the incidents of throwing dirty, low, despicable, and insulting words, with feelings of shame and deep disappointment, Simbabau left Puti Losuang Batu without a definite direction and purpose.

Without realizing it, the night was approaching, and Simbabau began to vent all his frustration by reciting mantras in his chanted heart. These *mantras* are in the form of summoning spirits or devils that are roaming around him—Simbabau after reciting mantras repeatedly without realizing it until he is unconscious (trance). In a trance situation, Simbabau managed to collaborate with spirits and demons who heard the inner screams, then entered into a consensus. Spirits who are invited to cooperate can influence or conquer the feelings and thoughts of Puti Losuang Batu. Puti Losuang Batu is unconsciously not like a normal human being. The story shows that love and music are two inseparable things. However, the *Saluang Sirompak* phenomenon is different; the melody from the instrument has a negative effect because it injures women. Why? Because this is related to the story above, namely when a man loves a woman, but his love is rejected, and what he receives is

humiliation, the man chooses to use music to take revenge. Music, in this case, is used for magical functions or is called witchcraft [1] [2]. Adinkrah has reviewed the use of music as witchcraft. The research was conducted in Ghana, West Africa. Adinkrah investigates the role of music in the acquisition, dissemination, and preservation of the ideology of *Akan* magic in Ghana, West Africa. Adinkrah's research addresses the problem of representation of magic in upper-class life and gospel music. Adinkrah took three examples of songs, critical analysis of the song lyrics, Adinkrah described the songs on the audio cassette purchased in Ghana, Adinkrah then translated them into English from the *Akan* language; the conclusion was that the Ghanaian beliefs about witches showed that music plays a supportive role in strengthening and spreading or transmitting magic belief [3].

Music as witchcraft is also used in analyzing the issue of social power in the political situation in America. The article written by Morris discusses the problem of typical American music culture; according to Morris, the music of the younger generation contains political power without having to be involved in certain political situations. Morris's research shows that music plays a magical role in many societies, music as witchcraft can turn individualism into anti-sociality, isolation into destruction, desire to violence. The conclusion of Morris's research shows that America is still possessed by the idea of music for magic [4]. Research conducted by Conrad never discussed this issue, but more on the issue of music and clinical effects. Conrad revealed that if music is a force that can slowly build up the individual soul, the power of music can also destroy illusions [5]. According to Conrad, music comes from magical acts that are not bound by natural paths. The evolution of music as therapy began as a critical element of healing in a mystical or ritual context. Today, Conrad argues, music is seen as an adjunct to overcome some of the environmental anonymity and deindividuation. According to Conrad, it is beneficial physiological effects of music, but music also has the potential to be detrimental because it is a disagreement with personal preferences. Music and hypnosis were also Marra's topics of discussion. Marra saw music and magic in the football game events. According to Marra, musical performances in soccer matches have a role in increasing sonic power as a trigger for causal relationships between events. For Marra, music serves as an axis of communication that connects the physical realm with the mystical or intangible dimension. Marra argues, if music is present in the middle of a match, fans who attend the music are believed to change the course of the match, disrupt the mood, the body, and, ultimately, the result.

Here the music becomes magic; music becomes mutual trust between fans and players, activated through good rituals. Marra concluded that music was a crucial feature in this process [6]. Pegg writes about the relationship between music and shamanism in Western Mongolia. Pegg considers research on folk beliefs and shamanism and activities surrounding the performance of the Western Mongolian epic and the power of epic texts, musical instruments (*tovshuur*), and poetry as new to him. Pegg sees religious syncretism in the text - the object of communist bowling - and the worship of epic heroes as gods. According to Pegg, his research contributes to debates on oral and textual traditions by considering the ritual performance of epic texts. This research shows that music and shamanism activities have become a continuous tradition; these traditions are related to matters of power and give each other influence. This article shows the direction of discussion about music, shamanism, and hypnosis [7]. The description of the research results above is a reference for this research because the above topics lead to issues of music, witchcraft, or shamanism. The problem, which is the focus of the analysis in this research, is how *Saluang Sirompak* is used in the shamanic tradition. This research chose the research location in Taeh Baruah Village because Taeh Baruah Village is the only place that has *Saluang Sirompak* music used in performances, and this activity is called *Basirompak*. *Basirompak* is a cultural event.

The cultural event in question is a woman's fault for saying inappropriate words so that men are hurt. Based on this feeling of hurt, the man asked for help from the perpetrator of *Basirompak* so that the woman was made mentally ill or crazy. *Basirompak* also involved several supporters apart from the *Saluang Sirompak* instrument, namely *gasiang tangkurak*, *pantun/dendang*, recitation of Al Quran verses, a series of offerings, and a unique *tanjuang/Tanjung* performance venue. Based on this description, this study aims to reveal how *Saluang Sirompak* is used as a medium to disturb women's souls—here, music functions as a means of conveying mystical and witchcraft messages. Dessen has previously revealed the function of music as a witchcraft transformation. According to Dessen, ascension is a radically diverse type of extensive group improvisation with the idea of music as a process of witchcraft transformation. This phenomenon shows that music is an artificial abstraction of a ritual where the cultural complex is a part. The potential value of applying this radical empirical approach is used to study music and magical powers [8]. The issue of negative sentiment in the

Saluang Sirompak case is the keyword in this study because it is related to the negative response from men to women. Music and emotion towards women excessively produce negative attitudes. In this study, it can produce a shamanic tradition by making the play *Saluang Sirompak* as the medium. This study intends to reveal how the shamanic tradition using *Saluang Sirompak* can occur, is this tradition still being practiced at this time? Alternatively, is there a criticism of the tradition in today's contemporary era. Approximately the direction this research will lead there.

2. Method

This study focuses on the phenomenon of the spirituality of the *Saluang Sirompak* in Taeh Baruah, Minangkabau. Applying the scientific method in research practice requires a research design that follows the conditions and is balanced with the research to be carried out. The research design starts with the researcher's interest in the object under study; after the interest, the researcher looks for supporting data. In this study, an instrument in the form of an interview guide was used [9]. The interview technique used was free interviews and guided interviews. In Figure 1 is the situation when the researcher takes data from a *Saluang Sirompak* player named Sayute. The researcher wore a dark blue shirt and trousers with Sayute. The interview stage was carried out very. Sayuti provided information about the functions of *Saluang Sirompak* in various positions, and especially the information extracted was the function of *Saluang Sirompak* as a medium of witchcraft.



Fig. 1. A researcher with Sayute in the Process of Collecting *Saluang Sirompak* Data

Hockey states that in free interviews, informants are given the flexibility to answer various questions without any binding provisions that can lead to an informant's rigidity [10]. Selection of sources/informants prioritized *Basirompak* perpetrators, community leaders, village caregivers, traditional leaders, religious leaders, victim-witnesses, petitioner witnesses, and several people who knew in detail about *Basirompak's* activities in Taeh Baruah. Data analysis was carried out by systematically compiling various observations, interviews, and documents. The analysis is descriptive qualitative in nature and lasts throughout the study with steps, namely data reduction, data presentation, data interpretation, and concluding [11].

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Women in Minangkabau Culture

There is a custom that gives its color to Kabupaten Lima Puluh Kota in the daily life of teenagers. In the afternoon, you can see young women dressed up neatly to be attractive to the eye. This is not something that is prohibited by the parents or local customary leaders. Parents advised their children not to stay locked up at home. Women usually travel not far from the location where they live and travel with their female friends.

In contrast to men, who are more aggressive, energetic, potential, and free to move. Thus men are more fortunate in taking advantage of time in the afternoon than women. This activity usually occurs around 3.30 pm to 6.30 pm, or after the Asr prayer, and ends before the Maghrib prayer. One form of cultural event is behavior, which is the initial main idea to determine whether *Basirompak* can be carried out or not. The behavior in question is a pattern of the behavior of a young woman in interacting with the community in her environment, especially towards men. The customs in

Minangkabau (including the Payakumbuh area) have guided the entire community in socializing. This is related to a traditional saying, which was pronounced by Dt. Rajo Penghulu: *Nan tuo dihormati, nan ketek dikasihi, samo gadang baik bakawan, di nan baik bahimbauan, di nan buruak bahambauan*, meaning: parents are respected, the little ones are loved, the same age is invited to be friends, about good news is conveyed, if a disaster comes to mutual help. In this proverb, the position of the youth is in the *samo gadang bawo bakawan* [12]. According to this view, adolescents have mutual respect, respect for the opinions of others, instill the nature of togetherness that is highly demanded in everyday life.

It is a must for Minangkabau adolescents to practice/implement the meaning of the saying, *bajalan paliharokan kaki, bakato paliharokan lidah, kaki tataruang inai padahannyo, lidah tataruang ameh padahannyo*. That is, walking, nurturing feet, saying nurture the tongue, must be brave enough to bear the consequences of one's actions or promises. There are three categories of women [13], *simarewan*, *mambang tali awan*, and *parampuan*. *Simarewan* can be defined as the type of woman who has a bad character. These traits are reflected in his daily behavior patterns, such as greedy like to have something more than necessary like to take the face, another mouth in his heart, lack of courtesy, lack of opinion, and do things that are not justified by custom and religion. The category of *mambang tali awan* is a woman who is proud, arrogant, big-mouthed, likes to visit, has no shame, does not have feelings as a woman, and likes to play one another. Whereas in the category of *parampuan*, it is a female figure who has good character and is always polite to others. In Minangkabau society, women's groups who can portray the community's views as praiseworthy women are also often dubbed as *Bundo Kandung* [14].

3.2. Men and Rejected Love

Erianto, a *Gasiang Tangkurak* player, told his experience that a man was suffering from hurt feelings against a woman who had insulted him, and rejected the man's love roughly. This incident made a young man come to the *Sirompak* perpetrator to ask for help because of the pain he was enduring. Here, dialogue or negotiation takes place between the young man and the perpetrator, which, in essence, is conveying hurt against a teenage woman who insulted her and explaining the characteristics/identity of the woman. If there has been an agreement between the two parties, then the first requirement for the perpetrator of *Sirompak* is to ask for a picture of the woman's face in question. For this facial image, the young man usually gives a portrait/photo because, in witchcraft and the fluency of *Basirompak*, it will be easier to remember or imagine the face of the target that will be transformed through *Simambau Hitam* in the *Sirompak* activity. Concerning the costs required, the young man left a sufficient amount of money to meet *Basirompak's* initial needs. The Perpetrator gave an overview of the initial needs as the requirements he did, and the number of personnel who would be directly involved in the time frame provided. The total cost required during the activity will be conveyed by the perpetrator, after the women who will be targeted (as victims) in the *Basirompak* activity. However, it is possible that as long as the activities are carried out, they will come and pay off the required costs. Table 1 is the stage of implementing *Basirompak* until the process affects the victims.

Table 1. *Basirompak* process in *Saluang Sirompak* witchcraft

Applicant	Music Performance in <i>Basirompak</i>	Target / victim
Requesting the <i>Basirompak</i> perpetrators so that <i>Basirompak</i> can be implemented	<i>Basirompak</i> implementation process	If guilty, then the victim is successful in witchcraft; if it turns out to be innocent, then the target as the victim will not experience any influence
The applicant submitted the next process to the <i>Basirompak</i> Actors	<i>Basirompak</i> perpetrators surrender to God	If the woman's level of error was severe before <i>Basirompak</i> ended, the victim had gone crazy
The responsibility is already in the hands of <i>Basirompak</i>	Responsibility is felt to the afterlife	Responsibilities of the world and the hereafter

Basirompak perpetrators are *Basirompak* executors who get orders from applicants who expect *Basirompak* to be carried out, if from the targeted party there is no element of error, the *Basirompak* process will never get the influence of the *Basirompak* process. Still, if the target victim has a mistake

fatal, the victim will feel the power of the *Basirompak* process. In the *Basirompak* process, the *Basirompak* actors submit to God's will. The responsibility of *Basirompak* perpetrators is borne in the afterlife. In contrast, for the applicant, the fault is accepted by the *Basirompak* perpetrators. For victims of responsibility for their actions, they are taken as punishment in the world and the hereafter. In *Saluang Sirompak* witchcraft, the economy is borne by the applicant, by negotiating (an agreed agreement) between the applicant and the perpetrator. The amount of economy that is borne by the applicant is solely for the needs of the offerings and the *Basirompak* process.

Meanwhile, the perpetrator did not get any money from the results of the agreement. The perpetrator only carried out orders from the *Penghulu*, responsible for carrying out *Basirompak*, even though there was never a penny in return. The *Penghulu* did not take the money earmarked for offerings in *Basirompak* because, in the agreement, there was no wage for the *Penghulu* and other actors. Another case with the *Saluang Sirompak* performance, which is intended for entertainment, will be negotiations about the pay. On this occasion, *Sirompak* actors get money, according to the size of the response from consumers. In performance intended for entertainment, there is no element of witchcraft, such as the *Basirompak* incident, which was used to use guilty women. The differences between the performances used for the *Saluang Sirompak* witchcraft, and those for entertainment, are:

- For *Basirompak*'s needs, negotiations between consumers and *Basirompak* actors are limited to finding a fund agreement to realize the offerings needed by the Actors.
- Entertainment needs a negotiation for an agreement on "wages," because in serving entertainment needs, the actor does not only use part of the offerings in his performance. The result of this negotiation, consumers can provide a down payment as a sign, and after the show is over, the completeness of the negotiated funds is 100% fulfilled.

In reality, after *Basirompak* was implemented, men did not marry the women who were used because the conditions of women who had been exposed to *Basirompak* became crazy and would never recover. Healing can be done by smart people, or to *Basirompak* perpetrators. Especially for the healing from *Basirompak*, there is a special message that must be heeded, namely that the victim should never listen to *Saluang Sirompak*. The woman can recover naturally when she is over 40 years old (stepping on menopause), or after not of productive age (fertile period), but if she does not hear *Saluang Sirompak*, because it is still crazy, Erianto emphasized that this is indeed not to be married, even though the marriage or marriage of both parties will not last long, for the next few days or months the man will divorce her.

3.3. *Saluang Sirompak*

The making of the *Saluang Sirompak* instrument involves a unique ritual. The process of ritual is a simple step, the requirements must be met, and nothing should be left behind. The best bamboo is the main requirement in making *Saluang Sirompak*; giving power lies in the process of cultivating and giving holes in the tone. After the actors cut the bamboo according to the length of the *Saluang Sirompak*, then the hole distance is determined as a symbol of the residing of the spirits, which are planned to master the tones contained in the *Saluang Sirompak* hole. The spiritual power of the *Saluang Sirompak* notes can be achieved through the unnatural stages of death events to be utilized in the cultivation of the five holes of the *Saluang Sirompak* tone. Each hole is made based on certain death events. The function of each sound or tone produced by a syringe is also supported by the presence of soundhole watchers consisting of the spirits of the deceased and genie, each of which produces a sound or tone that has high spiritual power and can easily affect the victim. The function of the notes produced from each of the holes and gaps can affect the following.

- First Hole.

The first hole inhabited by the spirit of a suicidal person and a genie named *Simambau Hitam* was used by *Basirompak* as a medium to darken or close the eyes of the victim's heart. This is intended so that the victim no longer has controlled emotions because genie *Simambau Hitam* has shut him down. The heartbeat cannot beat regularly; the irregular heartbeat will affect the heart's emotions that are difficult to control.

- Second Hole

The second hole is inhabited by the spirit of a mother who died during childbirth and the genie *Simambau Merah (Sirah)*. The death of a mother who dies during childbirth causes deep

sadness on the part of the family and the spirit concerned. The role of genie *Simambau Merah* gave the feeling that the victim was just angry, uncontrollably, so she became crazy.

- Third Hole

The third hole is inhabited by the spirit of the murder victim and the genie *Simambau Tungga*. The death of someone who was killed is considered something that can kill someone's heart against others. The effect on the victims of *Basirompak* is that they will have no concern for others, angry emotions, and feelings of wanting to kill. *Basirompak* perpetrators thought that genie *Simambau Tungga* was very good at controlling the emotions of a person's soul. The role of genie *Simambau Tungga* is as a center for the goals to be victims so that there are not many victims or targets other than the intended victim. The combination of the influence of the spirit of the murder victim confuses the heart of the victim and the control of the victim's emotions by genie *Simambau Tungga*.

- Fourth Hole

The fourth hole is inhabited by the spirit of a champion who died due to a fight with another champion and genie *Simambau Barantai*. According to the *Basirompak* doer, the mind, emotions, and conditions at the time of a fight are wholly controlled by the genie who penetrates the realm of the mind and regulates his emotions. Genie *Simambau Barantai* is used as a stalker who will follow where the victim steps. Genie *Simambau Barantai* must accompany another genie when it is difficult to find the whereabouts of victims.

- Fifth Hole

The fifth hole is inhabited by the spirits of people who died due to natural accidents (drowning or drowning) and the white genie *Simambau*. The white *Simambau* genie is used to protect the *Basirompak* perpetrator and the person who asks for help from the *Basirompak* perpetrator. A form of protection is potential victims who protect and know of an attack from *Basirompak's* activities. Usually, the potential victim who feels that *Basirompak's* activities will come to the *Basirompak* perpetrator to protect himself cannot be penetrated by spirituality attacks carried out by genie ordered by *Basirompak* perpetrators. From this protection, there will be a quarrel between the genie from the protector of the potential victim and the genie, who was sent in the *Basirompak* process. To see the visual form of *Saluang Sirompak*, it can be seen in [Figure 2](#).



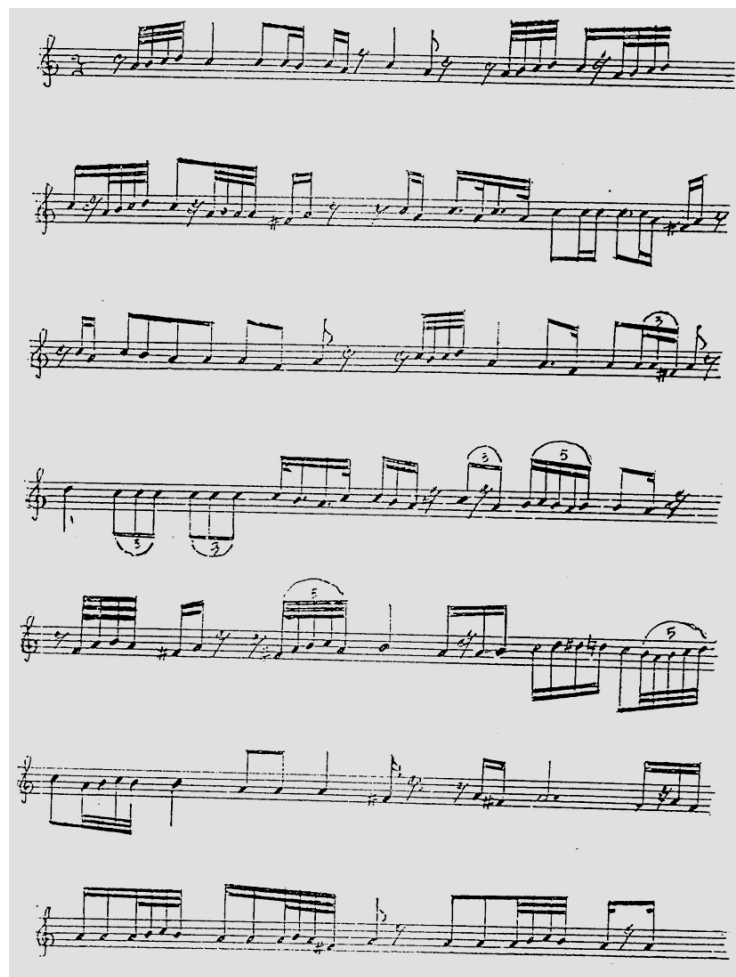
Fig. 2. *Saluang Sirompak*

The tone produced by each hole depends on how hard or soft the blow is. Each hole has two tonal sounds when the blowing is different; for example, for medium blowing with the holes closed, all produce a tone sound A + 40 mph or a tone La + 40 mph or 440.40 Hz, then when blown hard, will

produce the same tone with a distance of one octave higher approx—880.40 Hz. From the arrangement of the holes that exist with moderate blowing produces notes *A* + 40 mph, *C* 1 none + 40 mph, *D* 1 none + 5 mph, *E* 1 none - 35 mph, *F* 1 none + 20 mph, and *Fis* 1 none + 5 mph. for more details, the technique of covering and the resulting tone is explained as follows.

- All closed holes produce a tone of *A* + 40 mph or *A La* + 40 mph or 440.40 Hz or 440 Hz over 40 mph.
- The first (bottom) open hole produces the tone *C* 1 none + 40 mph or *Do* 1 none + 40 mph or 523.65 Hz or 523 Hz over 65 mph.
- The second open hole produces a tone *D* 1 none + 5 mph or tone *Re* 1 none + 5 mph 587.38 Hz or 587 Hz over 38 mph.
- The third open hole produces a tone of *E* 1 none - 35 mph or tone *Mi* 1 none - 35 mph 658.91 Hz or 658 Hz over 91 mph.
- The fourth open hole produces a tone of *F* 1 none + 20 mph or a tone of *Fa* 1 none + 20 mph 698.66 Hz or 698 Hz over 66 mph.
- The fifth open all holes produce the tone *Fis* 1 none + 5 mph or tone *Fis* 1 none + 5 mph or 740.04 Hz or 740 Hz over 0.4 mph.

For loud blasts, all the notes produced are the same as those produced with moderate puffs, but the result is an octave higher. The *Saluang Sirompak* notation can be seen in the *Dendang* melody in the *Imbauan* section, as seen in the notation in [Figure 3](#).



The following notation is on the next page.

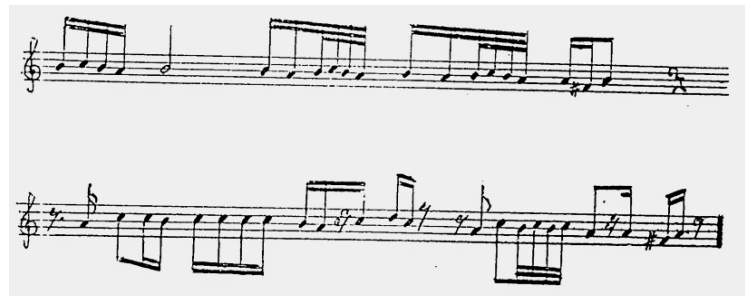


Fig. 3. *Dendang* Melody Notation on *Saluang Siropak Imbauan* Section

The *Saluang Siropak* musical performance, called *Basiropak*, is a means of taking a man's grudge against the woman who has insulted him. Before the *Basiropak* activity took place, there was a dialogue between the *Basiropak* perpetrators and the petitioner. At this stage, there would be a discussion process regarding the appropriateness of the target to become a victim. If women are deemed fit to be attacked, *Basiropak* will be held, but if it turns out that the target is not worthy of being the target and the victim, then a witchcraft reversal will occur. Women who were previously targeted as victims cannot be penetrated because of their innocence, the impact of the recklessness committed by the male applicant. Witchcraft from *Basiropak's* activities will target the male party as the applicant.

4. Conclusion

The target victims of the *Saluang Siropak* performance in the *Basiropak* activities were only for women. Witchcraft using *Saluang Siropak* has an unfortunate effect on the victim or a woman. Witchcraft in *Basiropak* activities can determine what is right and wrong; if women were not mistaken, they would not have become victims of witchcraft from *Basiropak's* activities. Besides functioning for witchcraft, the performance of *Saluang Siropak* in its function as entertainment also still has magic power (for those who are victims). In the *Saluang Siropak* performance and the *Basiropak* ritual, this ritual has standard rules that must not be violated, such as the recitation of mantras, the location of the way, the time of execution, the offerings, and the equipment used. *Saluang Siropak* is placed in the witchcraft procession against women. In subsequent developments, the *Saluang Siropak* dish shifted slightly from the previous one, which was used for witchcraft purposes now also serves as entertainment.

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