

## THE FUTURE OF LAMONGAN TRADITIONAL THEATRE

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### ABSTRACT

Traditional theatre is divided into three regions namely North Lamongan and West Lamongan. This division has a distribution of types of traditional theater performances that live and develop into parts of the Lamongan community. North Lamongan is a heritage of *Sunan Drajat* which has survived to this day, and the *Kyai Song-Song Krucil* Puppet as a traditional theater inherited from *Sunan Drajat* is currently the 13th generation of *Sunan Drajat*, and South Lamongan consists of the almost extinct art of *Sandur*, because this performance is not performed again even though the performer and the device for this performance are still maintained. However, there is no preservation of the show. Furthermore, the *Gemblak Dor* show, which is a traditional theater performance originating from Ngimbang Lamongan, is growing very rapidly because almost all of the Ngimbang area of art is performed and even groups of *Gemblak Dor*, and *Wayang Tengul* art have emerged in Ngimbang, Slaharwotan region. In this study the author analyzes the development of traditional theater arts in regional divisions, traditional theater actors, traditional theater performances, the role of traditional theater performances and generations of traditional theater performers. This results in a fundamental perspective related to the spectrum of the development of traditional theater, so that it can be seen the future of the traditional theater of Lamongan in the present and the future. The effort to preserve is an authentic effort so that traditional art is maintained.

**Keywords:** *traditional theater, Lamongan, future.*

### INTRODUCTION

Modern Indonesian theatre flourished in the area of trade city where the central government of the Netherlands was located. This theatre was profane so it was only for aesthetic and entertainment needs. This theatre emerged from the people who relied their lives on services, trades, government and other activities. Therefore, the contents of this theatre closely related with the city's life. Art performance was required to be relatively concise, planned, neatly packed, entertaining, and autonomous. Furthermore, the show was held in a special theater, the audience must

pay, and the surrounding areas were fulfilled with billboards.

Before this type of "theatre" developed in Indonesia at least in the beginning of 17th century in the Dutch-European community in Batavia and other big cities, and in the late of 19th century in urban environment, the Indonesian traditional theatre had already long developed. The basis of traditional theater, as well as other types of traditional arts was based on agrarian society. Agricultural life that was related to soil, water, production, fertility, prosperity, pests and drought gived theater aesthetic

underpinnings. Having a close relationship with life-cycle (seasons, sun and stars) that made the fundamental base of traditional theatre was based on religion and belief.

Indonesian traditional theatre was considered sacred and had a lot of rituals. The time of the performance was selected based on their traditional count and beliefs. The results, art performance could not be presented according to the will of the audience or the organizer of the spectacle. Each type of theater had its own actors/players. Theater was not autonomous, it was bound by a belief system. The opportunity of its art depended on the actors. Traditional theater required an understanding of religion, as its basis. Understanding traditional Indonesian theater was not simple because of its complex aesthetic base. Historically, the traditional Indonesian theatre consists of theater with Indonesian genuine religion, theater based on Hindu-Buddhist religions, and theater with Islamic religious basis. The first can be included as primitive theater and the second is classical theater. However, this classical theater only limited to the theater in a palace. In rural areas theatre was also developed as the combination of primitive and classical theatre.

Understanding traditional theater based on its religious elements is quite complicated. The fact will be found that the most ancient religious elements in Indonesia (animism and dynamism) will continue to appear in small or large quantities, in religions which were then adopted in Indonesia. Based on an understanding of genuine religion. Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic, the elements of a theater can be known the basic aesthetic. This does not mean that all traditional theaters are sacred. There is also a profane nature, when the religious function has been forgotten by people, or because the basis of the religion is no longer compatible with the new religion but the aesthetic element is still popular. Lamongan as the closest area to *Majapahit*, the trade center and the spread of Islam had those elements. The religious system of Animism-Dynamism, Hindu-Buddhism, and Islam. Besides that, sacred and profane

performances were born in the Lamongan area with the distribution of two regions of South Lamongan and North Lamongan.

D. Djajakusuma divides traditional theater into two categories, namely theater people and puppet theater. Each theater group was divided into palace theater (*teater istana*) and village theater (*teater rakyat*). Human theater and puppet theatre in the palace are well-known after the kingdoms exist and religions came into Indonesia. While human theater and puppet theatre in rural areas still based on Indonesian original religion.

The main functions of traditional theater, both puppets and human theatre in native religious communities are:

1. Summoning magical powers.
2. Inviting protective spirits to be present in the ceremony.
3. Calling good spirits to cast out evil spirits.
4. Memorial to the ancestors by performing heroism.
5. Ceremonial equipment in connection with commemoration of the stages of a person's life
6. Ceremonial supplies for certain times in the time cycle.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

It is difficult to distinguish which traditional theatre originated from native religion (Animism, Monotheism, Fetishism, Dynamism) and which came from Hindu-Buddhist era and which one from Islamic religion. Based on the past form, human traditional theater developed in Ngimbang area to Modo, a development area of *Majapahit* folk theater. Even today, it has become a hypothesis that *ludruk* began in the South Lamongan region. Another thing that made the theater develop was trade and government that bring villagers to the city and carried this art tradition. Folk theater was born in the midst of the people and still closely links to traditional and religious ceremonies. It means art performance only held in connection with certain ceremonies, such as circumcision, marriage, salvation, etc. Yet, the purpose of this traditional art was for

entertainment. The location can be anywhere, such as in the yard, garden, village hall, in the field, *pendapa* land and so on. The future of Lamongan traditional theater starts from two areas of Lamongan, namely Ngimbang district to Modo district and the South Lamongan area of Paciran to Brondong. There are two forms of traditional theatre i.e. sacred and profane theatre.

### **Tradisional Theatre of the Northern Lamongan Region**

#### **Krucil Kyai Song-Song Puppets and Its Sacred Values.**

The *krucil* puppet in Lamongan is called "*Kyai Songsong*". *Kyai Songsong* is made of wood which has a unique story behind it. Pieces of wood were found floating in the middle of Java Sea between Bawean and Java. The wood is carried by thousands of fish that go against the current, when the ocean currents go south, it moves north. Then the wood is found by fishermen, and put on a boat. The fish that had swam with the wood jumped into the fishing boat too. There was one of the crew on the boat burning incense, begging and praying that the fish returned to the sea but the wooden chunks remained on the boat. After that the fish had returned to the ocean. But something strange happened, a fishing boat without wind, without sails, without a driving machine, moved aside on the island of Java at the border between Banjar Anyar and Banjar Wati.

At that time there happened to be an old man on the seafront, so the wood was handed over to the old man, the old man was a preacher *Sabdo Suling*, some said *Sudho Suling*. Prince *Sabdo Suling* is a relative of *Sunan Giri*, assigned to the area to spread the religion of Islam. The wood that he got earlier, was put on the edge of the horse stable. *Gamel*, the person who takes care of horses, the horse owned by Prince *Sabdho Suling* named "*Ra Temo*". The grass that will be given to the horse usually has to be smoothed first and mixed with *dedeg*, and the wood was used as a base to smooth the grass but, when it will smooth the sap of grass that

comes out of the wood like human blood, therefore *gamel* tells the prince *Sabdho* distilled that event. Finally, the wood must not be used and made a puppet by the flute *Sabdho* prince named "*Kyai Songsong*", when the puppet is finished making, the set of puppets is handed over to *Mbah Mayang Madu*. He is the father-in-law of *Sunan Drajat*, then the puppet was handed over to his son named "*Banyu*", after receiving the puppet *Sunan Drajat* ordered *Banyu* to spread Islam in the southern Bengawan Solo area with the *Songong* puppet media.

*Banyu* finally settled in setalan Bengawan Solo, in Sungai Geneng village. In the area and its surrounding *Banyu* staged puppet plays for Islamic religious scholars. Up to 12 puppets are passed down to their children and grandchildren. The 12th descendant is Ki Sudikno Dono Pranoto. Ki Sudikno still settled in the Geneng River or now called Karanggeneng until 1983 when Sudikno moved to Moro village, now in Lamongan. Initially the *krucil* puppet was still stored in Karangeneng at his brother's house, Ki Sudikno, but after that there were no heirs who could take care of the puppet, finally the puppet was inherited from Ki Sudikno. Until now the puppet is still being responded to at the Kyai Ghofur cottage. Kyai Ghofur preserves the things used to spread Islam in the past.



**Figure 1.** Ki Sudikno shows *Krucil Kyai Song-Song* puppet. (Documentation: Author, 2019)

*Wayang Krucil Kyai Songsong* at a glance is similar to *wayang kulit*, but made of flat wood. In the hands are made of leather, so it's easy to move. His neck was covered with gold and on his head there was also a gold crown. There is a small “*keris*” on his waist that can be removed. *Wayang Kyai Songsong* still remains strong with special care. There are certain rituals that must be performed Ki Sudikno in caring for *Wayang Krucil Kyai Songsong*. Ki Sudikno is still actively masterminding, but not as often as before because Ki Sudikno now has a heart disease that requires him to rest, and his hearing is beginning to be disturbed. Nevertheless Ki Sudikno's art spirit did not go out so did the interest of puppet connoisseurs who still wanted Ki Sudikno to play a role, making Ki Sudikno still actively playing puppet.

Ki Sudikno had performed a special ritual in his youth, Ki Sudikno was told to charge. Ki Sudikno never stayed in a room without a window, not exposed to sunlight without eating and drinking for 3 days 3 nights. It is a tradition in his family for a puppeteer. Pakdikno's family adheres to the *kejawen* belief which still preserves special rituals that are believed to be able to have a good influence. The play, which was performed in the performance of *wayang krucil Kyai Songsong*, which was aimed at syi'ar of Islam, used the first episode of guardian *songo*. The first episode of *Wali Songo* is the guardian sent from Turkey. Sultan Muhammad, leader of the Turkey government at that time sent 9 people to convert people in the land of Java:

1. Syekh Maulana Malik Ibrahim from Turki
2. Maulana Malik Israil from Turki
3. Maulana Ishaq from South Rusia
4. Maulana Muhammad Al-Maghribi from Maroko
5. Maulana Ahmad Jumadil Kubro from Egypt
6. Maulana Hasanuddin from Palestine
7. Maulana Aliyuddin from Palestine
8. Syehk Subakir from Iran
9. Ali Akbar from Palestine

The people who were sent by Sultan Muhammad to made Javanese people become muslim had to be 9 persons. Therefore, when one of them dies, someone must replace him. Until a new name emerged as the guardian *songo* that we know today. The play that was performed in the puppet *krucil* was not only about *wali songo* episode 1, it was sometimes the wayang *krucil* also brought the play *Dhamar Wulan*, *Sawunggaling*, *Lutung Roughung*, *Diponegoro*, *Gendok*, *Panji Asmoro* wake up, *Umar Moyo* comedy play, *Umar Noro*, *Umar Amir*.

### Kentrung Traditional Theatre and Profane Values.

Before *kentrung* was famous throughout Indonesia, *kentrung* known as *Mocopat*. *Mocopat* itself is the father of H. Achmad Khusairi S.Pd. So before the art of *kentrung* was created, it was the first *mocopat* art, and in 1991 the name *mocopat* was changed by Khusairi to *kentrung*, the meaning of the word *kentrung* (*ngereken percoro isine juntrung*). *kentrung* sunan drajat arts with one player namely H. Achmad Khusairi S.Pd. the origin of the name itself *kentrung* from the sound on the musical instrument that rang *trung trung*. *Kentrung* art as a means of indictment and entertainment. *Kentrung Sunan Drajat* is still very popular, and Khusairi himself still has many invitations to play *kentrung*.



**Figure 2.** Retrieval of *Kentrung* Data with H. Achmad Khusairi. (Documentation: Author, 2019)

Almost every week Khusairi even plays his *kentrung*, when I go to his house he has packed up to leave, and the invitation received by H. Achmad khusairi S.Pd can get

out of town, and those who invited him include wedding celebrations, circumcision, birthdays, rules of departure and return of pilgrimage, commemoration of Islamic holidays commemorating the new year mas and hijri, almsgiving or cleansing the village, commemoration of seventeen august, haul *sunan sunan*, family haul, commemoration of the birth of an area or village. Those who invited were not only individuals, government agencies, but also non-governmental organizations. This speech theater perspective is a theater for entertainment or spectacle media. Islamic religious brought into the story when the actors play the theater. Forms of profane that do not keep up with the times make this show attractive to only a few peoples.

## **Traditional Theatre in South Lamongan Region**

### **Sacred Perpectic *Sandhur* to Profan**

*Sandhur* is one of the popular traditional arts which is still alive and maintained and is believed to have magical powers by the Yungyang village community. According to W.J.S Poerwariaoatmojo, *sandhur* is a clown or a joke. It is clear that *sandhur* has "a function as entertainment for the community especially the Yung Yang village community". *Sandhur* is one of the rare traditional arts, even said to be almost extinct, considering the duration of the art performance had decreased rapidly. *Sandhur* is actually not only found in Lamongan but also in other areas such as Bojonegoro, Probolinggo, Pamekasan, Surabaya, Tuban. *Sandhur* art is an art whose terminology is taken from anonym *sandhur*: "*isane tandur*", which means after planting. In other words, the art of *sandhur* is one of the forms of art expression of the agrarian society. In addition *sandhur* talks about the picture of the life of a farmer in his agrarian life.

Before this art is performed, ritual ceremonies are usually held first. The event is an initial part of the show, by purifying all forms of performance devices such as *jaran kepeng*, *cemeti*, and all the musical

instruments: *Kendang*, *Jidor*, *Cimplungan*, *Tamborin*, and Javanese gamelan such as *Kenong*, *Kempol*, *Gambang Kayu*, *Saron Demung*, as well as other devices. This cleaning activity was done in 7 days before the show, in a place that is considered sacred such as in *punden*. Before the performance, the ritual process begins with the burning of incense by a *sandhur* leader. The mantra was given in the process to give spells to the tools used in *sandhur* performance, such as *Barong*, *Jaran Kepang*, *Pecut* and other tools. Then proceed with various *tembang* such as *Kembang Lombok*, *Kembang Ganggeng*, etc, which serves to ask for the help of the spirits for the success of the art performance.

*Sandhur* art besides dance also uses dialogue in Javanese language and *tembang*. This *sandhur* performance begins with a prologue conducted by Wiyogo (*panjak / gamelan* batter) as the narrator, continued with the *jaranan* dance scene. After *jaranan* dance, it is continued with a scene called frontman, a scene that contained jokes. After the frontman scene then enters the main *sandhur* event. This traditional story depicted the life of the farming community, starting from opening the land, planting period, maintaining the plants and finally harvesting and continuing to the worship or ritual of the Prosperity Goddess, as an expression of gratitude for the almighty. Then the characters in the *sandhur* art at the performance included: *Jasmirah*, *Balong*, *Pethak*, *Jasmani*, *Pak Empang*, *Nyai Asil*, *Lithi*, Mr. *Calak*, and a Pimp. This figure is an absolute figure of *Sandhur Bromo Buoyo* performance in Yung Yang village, Kecamatan Modo Kabupaten Lamongan.

At the opening ceremony of the *Sandhur* performance, a prologue was started, which was carried out by one of *Sandhur*'s crew members, a synopsis of the story to be performed. Followed by the introduction of the names of the players, musicians, or *wiyogo*, and the names of the characters in the *sandhur* story as well as some sort of *kirap* i.e. the characters in the show going around the arena. *Sandhur* in Yung Yang Village



Modo District had risen in 1992 when Sandhur was founded in Yung Yang village less than 50 years ago, with the name "*Sandhur Budi Doyo*". This development lasted only for two years, then broke up again. then stood "*SANDHUR BROMO BUDOYO*". YungYang Village, Modo District, Lamongan Regency had arranged the management of the Organization well, as it should be with permanent members of approximately 30 members. Headed by Mr. Ngatiman.

The story of the *sandhur* tells about a wanderer looking for his work, which was played by *Balong* and *Pethak* figures. In their wandering, the two figures met a farmer named Mr. *Empang* and they are adopted as his child. Followed by opening land, planting, until the harvest process interspersed with *khitanan* rituals on *Pethak* figures and marriages to *Balong* figures and the appearance of *tayub* dance. More clearly the essence of the *sandhur* art illustrates the activities of the agrarian community.



**Figure 3.** *Sandhur Budi Doyo's* performance. (Documentation: Author, 2018)

Before the performance began, all dancers were make up outside the arena, precisely in the backstage while chanting mantra and using pawing offerings (*Pimps Sandhur*) invoking the almighty power (Allah SWT) to bring forth spirits (mystical elements) in order to have successful performances. In the arena the performance was also held offerings and recitation of mantras to get a mystical occult which was called by *Sandhur* crew *DHANYANG*. The elements of this mystical mystic among others

are intended to: 1) Safety for the players in each performance, 2) Grudge (Attraction) so that the audience feels at home until the performance is finished, 3) Help find traditional healing facilities (magical) if there are sick people who are difficult to treat properly.

### **Wayang Thengul Perpectic Profane**

*Wayang thengul* comes from Bojonegoro. The entry of *wayang thengul* into Lamongan was brought by a puppeteer named Umar who came from Cepu. In 1970 this art began to be brought into Lamongan, Ngimbang District, Slaharwotan, by singing in a crowded people. Before Umar pursue this *thengul* puppet art with busking. He brought to Lamongan because Umar had married a Lamongan person. As the art of *wayang thengul* goes on in Lamongan, there is also a figure who was asked for cooperation by Umar to make *wayang thengul*. The figure referred to as Saewo, resides in Slaharwotan Village, RT 001 RW 01 Wotan Hamlet, Ngimbang District, Lamongan. He finally produced *wayang thengul* and learned to play it until he became a puppeteer *thengul* since 1980. At that time also the role of Umar in *wayang thengul* had begun to run down to Saewo. Saewo continued this art until now.



**Figure 4.** The *Thengul Slahar Wotan Puppet* Color. (Documentation: Author, 2019)

Art performance can be a source of income. This *thengul* puppet, if sold per puppet, can be valued at a minimum of Rp. 100,000 One box or one person consists of 60 *wayang thengul*. This *thengul* puppet is played on a white screen made of cloth with a

hole in the middle as the performance space. This screen is called screen color. *Wayang thengul* is played accompanied by Javanese gamelan. *Gamelan* arrangement is located behind the puppeteer.

*Thengul* puppets were first staged in the village of Slaharwotan, Ngimbang District, Lamongan, which until now this art is still purely original without acculturation and remains based and most fertile in that location. the first *thengul* puppet in Lamongan was Umar. He is the one who brought the art of *wayang thengul* into Lamongan. Umar came from Cepu and married a Lamongan woman who finally settled in Lamongan and preserved the art of *wayang thengul* in Lamongan. The next figure is Saewo. Originally from Slaharwotan Village RT 001 RW 01 Wotan Hamlet, Ngimbang District, South Lamongan. He used to be Umar's partner in making *thengul* puppets. But as the process went on, he also learned about this puppet and eventually became the successor to Umar as a puppeteer *thengul* as well as a producer of *wayang thengul*.

Actually there are also many *wayang thengul* figures or *dhalang wayang thengul* in South Lamongan, but the character and skill of playing *wayang thengul* are actually in Umar and Saewo. Because he considered other puppeteers to leave and his habit of playing *wayang kulit*, not *wayang thengul* who brought it with a different treatment. Nowadays both Umar and Saewo are no longer making *wayang thengul* as their sources of life. But still holding fast all the elements of *wayang thengul* if there is a performance of *wayang thengul* at any time needed. Therefore, this art is endangered of extinct because there is no successor.



**Figure 5.** The form of *Thengul* puppet performance. (Documentation: Author, 2019)

Puppet characters are usually adapted to the story raised and each character has its own characteristics or characters. In addition to the character's character shape, each character's voice is also different. Like other puppets, the ability of the puppeteer to play stories and the sound of the puppet is the most important element in a puppet show. Because in general, that's where the measurement of the quality and ability of puppeteers. In the show, *Wayang Thengul* is also accompanied by *Sinden* and Javanese *gamelan* music accompaniment with *slendro* barrel which is the hallmark of East Java *gamelan*. There is no standard in playing *wayang thengul*. Almost the same as other puppets, there is an opening, *suluk*, enter the segment or story and then the closing.

## CONCLUSION

The development of the traditional theater in Lamongan was influenced by religious elements, from animism to dynamism, Hinduism, Buddhism, to the spread of Islam which gave cultural and artistic influence in Lamongan. The form of the performance is also in accordance with the religious elements that influence it, while the regeneration of traditional Lamongan theater experiences difficulties, because the traditional theater arts practitioners of old Lamongan do not provide experience to the younger generation or their descendants to learn and develop the arts. Artists *kenstrung*, *Wayang Krucil Kyai Song-Song*, Puppet *Tengul*, and *Sandhur* only focus on today's conditions, so there is no regeneration efforts to find the successor, their children for

example do not have the concern to continue the future of this traditional Lamongan theater.

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