

The Aesthetic Diversity and Local Ideology

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1. Abstract

Diversity is a socio-cultural phenomenon lived by the people of the archipelago. In Indonesia, tolerance and harmony prevail in social, cultural, political and civic life. Discrimination was known when colonialism came to Indonesia and divided the society into three groups, namely Europeans, foreigners, and nationals or natives. This article focuses on the study of the performing arts, which are packaged according to aesthetic principles and represent ideology and local political dynamics. The three performing arts are *wayang*, *ludruk*, and *tayub*. The study looks at traditional arts with stories or plays that represent the history and ideology of the supporting community. Ethnographic data were obtained through literature sources and field research, observation, participation, and interviews with selected informants, i.e., artists, cultural experts, and local community leaders. Analyses were conducted from data provision to presentation of analysis results.

Keywords: *ludruk, representation of ideology, tayub, traditional art, wayang*

2. Introduction

Traditional art is an expression of beauty lived by people with their own traditional background and environment. Traditional art usually represents the local culture of the supporting community. The diversity of regions, community members, natural environment in the past that has not yet experienced human touch. The diversity of traditional arts developed in different regions shows the following points. Man is born free by nature and created equal and equal (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2014) in terms of dignity. Human beings cannot choose their parents, their environment, their time and their way of birth and life. Inequality arises because of constructs created by humans. However, children have the potential to grasp, absorb, and remember internalised traditions and culture, to inherit and live them. Throughout life, people face dynamics and innovations that require adaptation (Whittington, 2008; Hidayat et al., 2016).

First, the diversity of traditional artistic expressions represents the cultural sovereignty of the supporting community. Therefore, it must be preserved in its entirety, i.e., by supporting art practitioners, art promoters, art researchers, and academics in the field of art. Legally, this is reinforced in Indonesia by Law No. 5 of 2017 on the Promotion of Culture (Law, 2017), which provides the legal framework for all cultural activities in Indonesia. The mention of culture presupposes the value of beauty and nobility (Assembly, 2017).

Second, communities have different ways of sensing, interpreting, responding to, and taxonomizing their natural, social, and cultural environments. Responses can be adaptive, collaborative, exploratory, or confrontational. Adaptive and collaborative

responses are designed to protect each other to ensure sustainability, for example, in the management of forests, marine life, and other natural resources. Exploratory and confrontational are exhaustive, without being sustainable. This trend can be seen in several areas of natural resources, such as fishing with potassium and bombs, which are destructive and exhaustive, and hunting birds down to their eggs. In response to the symptoms of environmental degradation, the UN considers it necessary to recall and implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) programme (Štreimikienė & Kačerauskas, 2020; Lerario, 2022).

Third, diversity as a potential and expression of cultural freedom that can be realised through the priority recognition and respect of the right to life of every cultural community, including minorities (Rochali, 2021). In another view, particularly in Indonesia, cultural diversity is referred to as the beauty that adorns the beautiful garden of the archipelago (Bernata, 2021). This recognition and respect was ordered by the ancestors through an expression in the *Garuda Pancasila* sign *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. In addition to this motto, cultural freedom was also enshrined in law number 5 of 2015 about developing the culture which was operationally followed up by the provincial, regency, city governments by issuing regional laws.

The expression of beauty is related to the natural, social, and cultural environment of the supporting community (Macaryus & Anoegrajekti, 2016). In Central Java and Indonesia with a rural, agrarian cultural background, the Menampi dance is performed, expressing the processing of rice into rice, one of the steps being ginning. Around the Mahakam River in Kalimantan, there is the Mendulang dance, which shows people panning

for gold. In Bali, with its Hindu tradition, there is the Pendet dance as a welcome to the gods and goddesses. *Pendet* is then also used to greet people who are being honoured.



Gambar 1. Tari Pendet Bali sebagai penghormatan kepada
Dewa-Dewi

(Sumber: <https://id.theasianparent.com/tari-pendet>)

Meanwhile, politics can be said to be the art of realising collective welfare. Thus, politics aims to achieve shared prosperity. The differences between leaders are strategy as a way to achieve, ideology, and concepts or views on shared prosperity (Castellanos-Galindo et al., 2011; Darwis, 2015). The phenomenon of the goal of achieving shared prosperity is commonly made explicit through slogans, orations, artistic expressions, and verbal or nonverbal narratives (Wicaksono & Macaryus, 2020). The expression of this goal becomes the struggle of the political community offered to the public.

The difference in strategy is implicitly to express personal or communal identity characteristics. Therefore, the term identity politics and various kinds of image strategies have emerged, which tend to get negative connotations. This article focuses on the dynamics of local ideologies expressed in the form of political strategies to achieve common goals.

3. Methods

This ethnographic research uses data from library and field sources. Literature data was obtained from written sources, namely news, articles, papers, research reports, and books that discuss the traditional arts of *wayang*, *ludruk*, and *tayub*. Field data was obtained through observation, participation, in-depth interviews, and clustered discussions (Cahyono, 2006). Observation and participation were conducted by observing art performances and involving oneself as part of the audience who occasionally responded to the ongoing performances (Spradley, 2016). In-depth interviews were conducted with selected informants, namely performers, audiences, cultural experts, and art centre managers. Clustered discussions were conducted with performers, cultural experts, local bureaucrats and art centre leaders (Sutopo, 2006; Anoegrajeki & Macaryus, 2018). Data were identified based on field notes from observation, participation, in-depth interviews, and clustered discussions. Data analysis was conducted starting from the data provision stage, data identification, data classification, and data interpretation (Sutopo, 2006). Identification and classification were determined based on the type of contribution to local political dynamics. Data interpretation was carried out by placing each data as part of and related to the others as a whole (Norris & Maier, 2014; Diko & Hollstein, 2023). The

placement of the relationship between the data as a whole is to obtain comprehensive conclusions.

4. Results and Discussion

Wayang, *ludruk*, and *tayub* are traditional arts that are still alive and in demand by their supporting communities. *Wayang* is an art to provide entertainment, education, and rituals. *Ludruk* is a traditional art that emphasises entertainment through jokes or buffoonery. *Tayub* is a traditional art that emphasises entertainment and social aspects. The discussion of the three is described in the following explanation.

4.1 Wayang

The traditional arts of *wayang*, *ludruk* and *tayub* are entertainment performances lived by their supporting communities for a long period of time. *Wayang* has experienced a wide distribution and has given rise to various versions of fission forms, characters, and story content. The diversity of versions is a cultural wealth that provides opportunities for researchers to conduct research and tracking to obtain prototypes of wayang and patterns of innovation and creation. In Javanese society, *wayang* is one of the most attractive performing arts. The plays performed tend to be relatively fixed, but the audience faithfully follows them. This shows that the audience has a comprehensive view of *wayang*. It is not only the new plays that are of interest, but also how in each performance the puppeteers present the story with new and interesting improvisations.

Traditional arts in various regions show links to local politics. In Pati, Central Java, there is the story of "Dalang Soponyono" with a shrine in Bakaran Wetan village, Juwana sub-district. Dalang Soponyono is believed to have played puppets at the wedding of Dewi Ruyung Wulan (daughter of Adipati Carangsoko) and Raden Jasari (son of Adipati Paranggarudo). Dewi Ruyung Wulan, who did not love Raden Jasari, asked for a puppet show with Dalang Soponyono. During the performance, Ki Dalang Soponyono with his magic turned off all the lights. In pitch darkness, Soponyono took away Dewi Ruyung Wulan along with her two younger siblings, Ambarwati and Ambarsari.

The legendary story of the puppeteer Soponyono became one of the plays of the traditional art of *ketoprak*, a type of traditional theatre popular in Javanese society. The play was once performed by the RRI Yogyakarta *ketoprak* group, one of the most popular *ketoprak* groups in Yogyakarta and Central Java. Currently, the *ketoprak* performance with the play "Dalang Soponyono" can be watched through the youtube link. Apart from being a *ketoprak* play, the story of Dalang Soponyono is also a song poem, composed by Sukron Suwondo and can be enjoyed through the youtube link. The diversity of these creative works is an indicator of the popularity and acceptance of the dalang's story in the supporting community.



Figure 2. Petilasan Ki Dalang Soponyono di Desa Bakaran, Juwana, Pati, Jawa tengah (Source: <https://www.detik.com/jateng/berita/d-6001889/kisah-dalang-soponyono-di-pati-gamelan-bunyi-sendiri-larangan-jual-nasi#:~:text=Petilasan%20Soponyono%20berada%20di%20kompleks,membutuhkan%20waktu%20sekitar%2028%20menit>).

The trail of Dalang Soponyono's story is in the form of a shrine in Bakaran Village, Juwana Subdistrict, Pati Regency, Central Java Province. The petilasan in the form of a stone is recognised as a place of meditation for Ki Dalang Soponyono, who had the power to bring spirits to accompany puppet shows. The trail is still visited by many pilgrims, especially puppeteers from various parts of Indonesia.

Local political dynamics can also be seen in the messages conveyed through dialogue between characters in *wayang kulit* (leather puppet) shows. During the New Order period, many development messages were delivered by puppeteers who sided with the government. During the New Order period, critical behaviour towards state policies tended to be placed as a threat to the state and the rulers at that time. This revealed the dynamics

of cultural politics (Mulyana, 2022), which used traditional arts as a medium to maintain leadership (Darwis, 2015; Jones, 2013).

Post-New Order, *wayang* continues to develop and dynamise in line with the cultural development of its supporting communities. The development of digital technology and triggered by the emergence of the covid-19 pandemic that changed the order of life, resulted in various creations of traditional art actors including *wayang* to continue to survive. Online performances became one of the response models during the pandemic. The late puppeteer Ki Seno Nugroho during the pandemic received online responses that were held in the *pendapa* (the hall of his house) and broadcast live streaming. This was done to limit the number of crowds, which was recommended to be avoided. Many similar responses were also conducted by Ki Bayu Aji from Solo. The phenomenon of online responses has changed the *wayang* performance ecosystem.

Watching a *wayang kulit* show, which is held in live streaming or offline, tends to be a medium for information and socialisation of the responders' policies. Responses by new village heads tend to invite the community to fight to advance the village. Responses in the campus environment inform the excellence of the campus and invite all academicians to strive to realise the vision and mission of the university. On the other hand, puppet responses also have the potential to present public figures in certain puppet characters. For example, the opportunistic character Sengkuni has the opportunity to express the anger of the community through the character Durmogati or other characters.

4.2 Ludruk

Ludruk is a traditional art form of entertainment. *Ludruk* developed in the East Java region, especially Surabaya. However, nowadays *ludruk* groups are also developing in various cities outside Surabaya. This art that combines comedy, song, and acting is still in demand by the supporting community. In the traditional art of *ludruk*, messages of opportunity are conveyed through dialogue between actors and songs formulated in the form of Javanese classical poetry called *parikan*. The arrangement of chant and rhyme has similarities with Malay classical poetry, *pantun* and *syair*. Thus, *ludruk* artists are required to have the expertise to create humour, dance movements, and vocals with *parikan*-formatted poetry.

In Surabaya, there was Cak Gondo Durasim who fought through the traditional art of *ludruk*. During the Japanese occupation, he delivered criticism through *parikans*. The content of *parikan* was also a strategy to educate the public. One of the most widely known couplets is as follows.

<i>Ngisor penerop, ndhuwur</i>	'under a tent, over a pegeon coop'
<i>pagupon</i>	' <i>pagupon</i> is a pigeon coop'
<i>Pagupon omahe dara</i>	'I was poor under Japanese
<i>Awak mlarat dijajah nipon</i>	colonisation'
<i>Melok Nipon tambah sengsara</i>	'joining Japan was even more
	miserable'



Figure 3. Cak Gondo Durasim's grave in Surabaya

(Source:

<https://www.kompasiana.com/mawan.sidarta/552c96446ea834cf778b45b8/nyekar-di-pusara-gondo-durasim-surabaya>)

The *ludruk* artist Cak Gondo Durasim places traditional art as a medium of entertainment, struggle, awareness, and education conveyed through plays, dialogues, and song verses. Awareness and education are directed so that people understand that they are poor and colonized. Therefore, people need to fight for welfare and independence.



Figure 4: Function of *Ludruk* Traditional Art

The three functions seen through the traces (the heroism of Cak Gondo Durasim) and the dynamic steps of the art tradition continue to move and grow in line with the social, cultural, political context, and the common goals aspired to. *Ludruk* performances in campus tend to allude to various phenomena of the campus world, such as publication problems, research, service, rector policies, lecturer characters, and campus environmental conditions. In addition, campuses such as Surabaya State University have *ludruk* groups, such as the one held on Saturday, 19 August 2023 in the framework of the 59th anniversary, with the play "Babad Surabaya".

For example, the play "Nyi Blorong" tells the story of a young man who is poor and wants to become rich by asking for help from *Nyi Blorong*, a spirit being who can help provide wealth. The luxuries of life in the world can be achieved, but after death must become an eternal servant of Nyi Blorong. In addition, there are also taboos that must be avoided by the young man.

Nyi Blorong's play dichotomises between the way of gaining wealth and the risk to her life in the afterlife. This gives a picture of life in the world today and in the afterlife after leaving the world. The space is open to make a choice between a life of struggle that promises glory in the afterlife or the ease and luxury of life in the world but misery and suffering throughout life in the afterlife. Humans are freely faced with choices.

4.3 Tayub

In Yogyakarta, there is a tradition of *ketoprak* with Ki Wanabaya as the leader of Perdikan Mangir. The first king of Mataram, Panembahan Senapati struggled to expand his territory by conquering neighbouring kingdoms. His intentions faltered due to Ki Wanabaya's unrivalled magic. Besides being powerful, Ki Wanabaya had the mainstay weapon of the Kiai Baroklinting spear. The Mataram royal advisor Ki Juru Martani proposed a strategy to conquer Ki Wanabaya with an amorous snare. Princess Sekar Pambayun disguised herself as a tayub dancer accompanied by Mataram officials and knights.



Gambar 5. Cleaning up the Mangir shrine (left) and Cultural parade followed by Mangir community, Summersari village, Pajangan sub-district, Bantul regency

(Personal Documentation, 2018)

Things become "complicated" when Sekar Pambayun truly falls in love with Ki Wanabaya and enjoys the happiness of being his wife. Sekar Pambayun undergoes a transformation and change of identity from a material used as a political tool to a personal one (Macaryus, 2017; Macaryus, 2021). The popularity of the story of Princess Pambayun and her love affair with Ki Wanabaya inspired ketoprak artists as a type of traditional theatre, filmmakers who produced films, ballets, the book *Drama Mangir* (2000) by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, the novel *Sihir Pambayun* (2014) by Joko Santoso, and the novel *Mangir Membara* (2019) by Apung Swarno.

The three creative works show similarities by presenting Princess Pambayun's disguise as a *Tayub* dancer to lure Prince Wanabaya. Apung Swarno's novel *Mangir Membara* (2019) is only the first book to be published, while the second book has not yet been published. This symptom shows the similarity of perceptions and the power of the traditional art of *tayub* as a local political strategy in the early days of the Mataram Kingdom.

Ki Wanabaya's footsteps are used as a place of pilgrimage and the organisation of village clean-up rituals held on 1 Sura. A series of activities were organised ranging from cultural parades, *tausiah*, sports, and art performances produced by the local community. The cultural parade followed by Bantul, journalists, researchers and cultural observers was used as a space to convey the successes and development plans of the region and to

educate the community. The information is intended to foster awareness, responsibility and shared struggle. In addition, it also provides opportunities for the community to be actively involved so that they can reap the results achieved together.

The historical journey of the Mangir Hamlet area is a legend that is still a collective memory of the Mangir Community. It is still kept alive by organising a village clean-up ritual held on the night of 1 Sura (Muharam). Various activities that are educational, entertainment, religious, sports, and various activities that express the achievements of the community in the field of arts and creative industry development are held and become part of the village clean ritual.

The traditional art of *Tayub* is part of a *ketoprak* performance that presents the play *Ki Ageng Wanabaya*, a story set against the backdrop of Mataram history. The play expresses local politics as well. This strategy of disguise is also evident in the traditional art of *Dulmuluk* in Palembang in particular and Sumatra in general.

Two *Dulmuluk* performances in Palembang, supported by HISKI members and partners from Sumatra to Papua, told stories that featured disguise as a political strategy in overcoming royal problems. The phenomenon of disguise in modern political dynamics is known as espionage, intelligence operations, infiltration strategies, and various other terms which in essence are to conduct covert and hidden surveillance. This method is also to find out weaknesses and determine the right choice of time to fight or attack.

In the *Dulmuluk* play, there is an emphasis on the romantic element against the background of competition between rulers and kingdoms. This provisional assumption requires further study in a deeper and broader manner by placing the socio-cultural context

of each story. Romance as part of human life is a universal phenomenon that appears in various versions. Stories at the level of human life become one of the attractions that bring stories to life.

The pattern of plays in various traditional arts that are based on history and oral tradition has the potential to be the subject of inter-regional research. Separate findings have the potential to explore and discover story patterns, especially those related to political strategies that take place in each region. Through comprehensive inter-regional research, the universality or universality of story patterns is built. In modern life, these political strategies and dynamics are supported by sophisticated communication and information technology with all its potential and possibilities of utilisation.

5. Conclusion

To conclude this paper, the following concluding remarks can be made. First, traditional art is related to the dynamics of local politics to gain power, safety, and common welfare. Traditional art tends to accentuate the romanticism shown in the character with the historical background of the succession of power. Third, traditional art reveals that strategies of disguise, infiltration and espionage were carried out during the era of royal rule. Fourthly, research on traditional arts in particular needs to be placed in the context of culture, power, politics in accordance with the context of the times to make future projections and the dynamics and strategies that occur today.

Broad and comprehensive research on story patterns that develop in each region of Indonesia. The results of this comprehensive research are to obtain a general pattern that represents the spirit of the supporting community.

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