

REINTERPRETATION OF TRADITIONAL THEATER FROM A PATRONAGE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Traditional art theatre that is owned and attached to a community can be used to understand the culture of a society. This is true because traditional arts and theater reflect the personality and way of life of the broader community. Traditional theatrical productions that are held live and move from one location to another (*tobong*) are becoming increasingly rare and are currently on the verge of extinction. Additionally, every performance is always in competition with other arts that have been transformed by other technological media television. Many forms of presentation produced using stage visuals were influenced by *ludruk tobong*, which had its peak in the 1970s and 1980s. *Ludruk Tobong*, a traditional populist-based theater, was born and raised in a society that has served as its primary patron. Every staging of a play incorporates "actors and patrons" as a representation of life, and this is also true of the *ludruk tobong* performance. When entertainment in multiple media can alienate an audience, the *ludruk tobong* packaging is now regarded as outmoded and does not offer market benefits, making it more difficult to carry out regeneration, which causes a gradual fall in both supporters and perpetrators. It's interesting to investigate social dynamics that affect the continued existence of traditional populist arts or theater through a patronage-based reinterpretation. This qualitative study aims to describe various supporting factors and explain the reinterpretation and patronage perspectives in *ludruk tobong* performances as traditional theater. To analyze the results of the study, the concept of traditional art and the analogy of Goffman's performance or dramaturgy were used as well as the concept of patronage and various other concepts that were also supported by the results of interviews in the field.

Keywords: traditional theater; supporting factors; reinterpretation; patronage

INTRODUCTION

Traditional theater, like *ludruk* art, which is a populist art form, is frequently based on the routines of the supporting neighborhood. This indicates that the art has evolved into a tradition or part of their daily activities that take place in the neighborhood, particularly during significant events involving neighborhood customs and habits. Therefore, traditional theater is frequently utilized as a reflection of historical relationships and cultural symbols that unite a group of people as well as a cultural identity of the community. According to this viewpoint, a group can be recognized by its physical or external qualities. Traditional populist theater (*ludruk*) prioritizes spectacle or entertainment elements aspects in its performances of traditional pop art. These performances are always closely related to a variety of complex issues, particularly those that concern the growth and survival of its people who move from one place to another elsewhere (unlike in the 70-80s era). After the performance receives a warm reception from the crowd that filled the building or the performance arena, the attachment to space and

time, as well as numerous life events, soon passes. In its peak, every performance of *ludruk tobong* had an incredible magnetic power to draw people in since it was founded and supported by the community.

Through the "form of presentation" on stage that is shown by the "actors" of the theater as a supporting community, this populist-based traditional art performance can reflect many problems. This enabling community is crucial to *ludruk tobong's* existence and implementation. Purnomo (2018) claims that "*the survival and development of performing arts depend on the conditions of the community environment as its main support, and every change in the community environment will also have an impact on the community's continued existence as well as the production of works and performances in it.*" The actors in a community might be impacted by the social conditions, and this indirectly affects every activity that is conducted. For traditional arts organizations, especially those that exist and grow in urban communities, such circumstances provide a significant challenge to continuing

their existence (Purnomo, 2015). In the recent decades, a number of populist-based conventional theater productions have started to show signs of audience disengagement, even slowly starting to be abandoned by their fans. The most fundamental issue for the existence of *ludruk tobong* is when audience members might be distracted by amusement in numerous media, and the packaging is outmoded and does not offer market advantages. The regeneration of the players in this traditional theater, which requires reinterpretation from a patronage standpoint, is actually a very challenging challenge for any society. The support of management and patrons is always directly correlated with any works and performances today because of the different activities of art organizations or communities..

METHODOLOGY

The subject of this study is the existence of traditional art (theatre), as well as the theater actors who are involved as informants. The purpose of study is the reinterpretation and patronage of traditional theater. The

data were collected by limiting research efforts and gathering data through structured and unstructured interviews and observation. The data sources required for this study were gathered using several-stage data collection approaches, including (a) observation of a number of participants using research subjects and objects as data collecting tools. In order to directly observe the actions of traditional theater and its supporting aspects, the observations were made; (b). Interviews were conducted on informants as a data collection technique that refers to the research formulation. Bungin (2012) asserts that thorough interviewing techniques, which are typical for qualitative researchers, are appropriate data collection techniques for qualitative research, along with (c) literature research to gather background information on populist-based traditional theater and documents to gather information from audio-visual recordings of *ludruk tobong* performances. Data analysis on reinterpretation through this patronage perspective involves a work related to the arrangement and breakdown into manageable parts that can be handled. Then summarize and look for patterns,

discover what is important and what needs to be learned, and make decisions about what to say to others. The data validity in this research on the reinterpretation of traditional theater in a patronage perspective was carried out through triangulation which is mostly associated with data collection and analysis methods at the same time, including using informants as a tool to test the validity and analysis of research results by prioritizing the effectiveness of the process and the desired results..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This traditional arts study does not seek to gather data or establish a problem; rather, it seeks to present an overview that explains the existence of traditional theater in light of diverse data discovered in the field. The discussion of supporting elements, the requirement for reinterpretation, and the patronage viewpoint in traditional theater are the main points of the article. Through the actions of theater performers and the viewpoint of sponsorship, the existence of

traditional arts (*ludruk tobong*) may be traced. This is based on the *ludruk tobong* performance as a type of creative activity that is always tied to the circumstances of the audience, competition with different performances that are modified through electronic media like television broadcasts that might repel the audience. Traditional theatrical is no longer regarded as effective and does not benefit the market. A common issue that contributes to the decline of many performance production activities is how the audience interacts with performances that are intended to elicit satisfaction or an aesthetic impression. As a result, conventional theater, which has been enduring a protracted period of stagnation, must be reinterpreted.

The term traditional art according to Sedyawati (2014) can actually refer to two different things: 1) artistic expressions that are connected to or complement a tradition in the sense of integrated behavior in carrying out certain social activities, commonly referred to as customs, or 2) a system of artistic expression in which there are standardized ways of implementation. This relates to artistic methods that are

typically connected to particular aesthetic ideas. Even though its appeal or stature are not as large as they once were, the presence of *ludruk* art is still acknowledged by the supportive community to this day. *Ludruk* is one example of populist-based traditional art that has managed to persist. *Ludruk* is possible to perform in a variety of performances that include many forms of entertainment because it is a performing art. Through many components presented in each of its performances, both in the form of the artist's creativity and entertainment performance, various evidences that *ludruk* is capable of playing a part with varied functions may be traced (Sunaryo et al, 1997: 2).

A performance combines elements from the performing arts in the form of artwork and actors as participants who are displayed on stage. The stage serves as a venue for appreciation, with the audience serving as the appreciator. Goffman's theatrical analogy, which distinguishes between the front stage and the back stage, helps us to understand performance. The audience watches actors perform on the front stage, while the back stage is

used for a variety of activities and actor personas that the audience is not supposed to see. There are two types of front stage: setting and personal front. The scenery or actual objects that must be present when an actor performs a role are referred to as the setting. The actor's personal front is made up of a variety of props that are used to convey the character they are playing to the audience. The props take on the identity of the character they are playing. For information or informal acting styles from actors, the backstage is purposefully concealed. If the audience is there backstage, the play loses its allure and credibility since the audience is aware of the original ulcers, which are something that should be kept a secret. The actor can freely elicit appreciation from the audience by maintaining their separation, which also prevents the audience from challenging the performance (Jazuli, M. 2014).

Traditional artistic performances must include the importance of artistic stage design (*ludruk*). Knowing how to arrange sounds and images in performances in a way that the audience can feel and appreciate in order to evoke a sense of beauty is known as artistic

arrangement (artistic value). Stage design, background/decoration, lighting, sound, make-up, clothes, and props are examples of artistic arrangements used as supporting media in performances (Purnomo, 2018). However, the current political context has a significant impact on artists' freedom of expression as well as how the public perceives the works produced during that time, which can result in a number of changes.

A. Supporting Aspects of Traditional Theater

The amount of people that attend appreciation events or interactions on stage, especially those shown on television, can influence how successful a production is. But in truth, it's becoming increasingly difficult to find an audience for live performances of community-based traditional art. Each show's success has a unique appeal and character, and the show's current performance is intimately tied to the event being discussed. Each party appears to have different interests when it comes to putting on performances, and this potential hegemony should be recognized. Several factors that are directly related to what happens on

stage are supportive to performing artistic works: 1) directing; 2) acting; and 3) artistic arrangement of the performance (although performed with different terms). While the supporting aspects that are not directly related to activities on stage are: 4) audience and 5) management.

1.The Packaging Story

The packaging of the story in question is a sort of performance as a result of the work of performing arts as a whole and goes beyond simply discussing the topic of a performance. If taken into account over the course of time and conditions, the telling of stories in the traditional art world has undergone its own growth or journey as a performing art or type of entertainment. Unless there is a specific request relating to the theme of the event, which is typically tied to the remembrance of national holidays, the packaging of the story of performing traditional art works has not changed up until this point. One must thoroughly comprehend audience preferences in order to decide how the content should be packaged.

2.Supporting Actor

The term actor or acting refers to an artist who transforms the

role of the play into the reality of the performing arts. As an artist, he is inextricably linked to both the universal aspects of humanity and his role as a fully realized human being in the culture and values in which he works and lives. His looks and approach to problem-solving will cause his personal beauty or charisma to emerge and become quite significant (Anirun, 1998: 43). Every narrative that is performed tries to be packaged in an appealing manner. In today's arts community, supporting actors are typically a partnership between experienced players and emerging talent. Player regeneration is a challenging issue that affects all artistic communities, particularly those that use entertainment models with multiple player characters, like *ludruk*. Nowadays, it is uncommon for players with reliable capabilities to perform at a senior-level level. *Ludruk* performers are a very complicated issue, especially when it comes to underdeveloped HR or disorganized management issues. In the past, even though the concert was hosted in a nobong, it could still be controlled because the *ludruk* community was still seriously managed.

3. Artistic Arrangement

According to Riantiarno (2011), the area of artistic arrangement in theater includes the use of sets - decorations - property, clothing, makeup and hair, and lighting. It should also be emphasized that artistic arrangement is an important part of a theatrical performance, now often referred to as scenography. In the theatrical performances of the folk tradition, artistic arrangement activities are related to the set – decoration. The setting of the event or decoration is a form of artistic arrangement that can visually describe: 1) the atmosphere or situation in an event; 2) where the event occurred; and 3) when the event occurred. So that the setting or decoration is directly related to the structure of the traditional populist theater performance. The existence of a setting or decoration is the main focus that must be present as an important supporter of a show.

According to Purnomo (2017), in populist traditional theater (*ludruk* in particular), what is meant by setting or decoration is an image of a landscape which is usually referred to as "*kelir*". The screen is a scene that is

visualized or painted on a piece of cloth as wide as the backdrop of the performance stage that can describe the atmosphere, place and time of the event, so it is also known as "*artistic kelir*". 4. Audiences

The audiences in the show are the people who purposely want to get a sense of satisfaction from watching. They go to watch with the intention that first, it is to get a sense of satisfaction, then their needs and desires can be fulfilled (Harymawan, 1988: 193). In other words, an audience wants to get an inner satisfaction as an interesting gift to take home without being burdened with other things. The audience is a very decisive supporting factor in traditional theater performances and becomes the ultimate goal of each performance.



Figure 1: The conflict scene in the *Ludruk Irama Budaya* performance using artistic visuals with a picture of a wooden house (doc. HENiMEN 2018)

Problem lies in the different situations and conditions of traditional theater performances; the audience today is not the audience of the former glory days. They are spectators who have been formed in their respective eras, so they have different tastes and behaviors. The audience is now an audience who is nurtured and raised by the glory of television media and is vulnerable to being influenced by conditions in their environment.

The audience's presence can impact how well a performance goes; as the audience leaves quietly, the show starts to lose steam. Traditional art performances are sometimes abandoned by the audience due to a variety of societal circumstances in today's society, which eventually leads to issues with the following performance. Even today's ludruk shows must contend with entertainment competition that is just beginning to expand extremely quickly. The audience and the performance are intertwined and difficult to separate, making them the primary factors to determine a show's success. The visual and aural audience interactions that take place

substantially influence whether a show is performed on stage, but the satisfaction or impression (aesthetics) that the audience takes away is frequently an issue that ultimately results in the decline of various performance production activities. Previously frequently held on various live entertainment stages, the performances are now transmitted on electronic media, making the contact between participants and the audience artificial because it is staged. With designed communication in front of the screen as a fictitious two-dimensional stage space model, the audience only transforms into customers or passive audiences.

5. Management Aspect

Since the community is actually built based on individual wants, objectives, and weaknesses when in a solitary condition, traditional theater constantly calls for the participation of actors who are manifested in the community to resolve issues. Theater actors are primarily helped by organizational life to meet their requirements and pursue their objectives. The organizers, as well as the organizers

of the organization or the committee that has just been formed, can hold performances in a short amount of time or for a sufficient amount of time. Traditional, modern, contemporary, collaborative, and even enormous works are all acceptable forms of performance, but they all will affect the management system that is used. The environmental circumstances in which the community lives and develops can have an impact on each performing organization's specific issues, personalities, and distinctiveness. Performances can be held for regular amusement, festivals, competitions (competitions), tours (exhibitions), used to pursue financial gain, fundraising, held without charge to the general public, for a select group of people, or even for specific invitations.

Performing arts groups can more successfully and efficiently accomplish their aims with the aid of management. Using the captain style of management and a family-based strategy, management was relatively straightforward when the ludruk community was still producing shows near (nobong). The skipper

model of management in a populist-based traditional art community is similar to other traditional art management models like ketoprak, ludruk, wayang orang, and others that feature a skipper, who is the person who leads or manages the group members. Since management essentially involves planning, organizing, directing, and regulating a process while taking into account the situation and external factors in order to employ input to create artistic creations.

B. Reinterpretation of Traditional Theater

Traditional theatrical activities consist of two parts: performances and audiences, which always work together to achieve their respective goals. However, the decline in conventional theatrical performances now is frequently brought on by the presentation being less interesting, making it difficult to hold the audience's attention. Every traditional theater action requires reinterpretation in order to comprehend the presence of performances and spectators. The traditional theater community, specifically ludruk tobong, needs

sponsors, patrons, and a place to express themselves in order to continue existing.

The concept of Erving Goffman's performance is expected to provide a description of the realm of interaction between the show and the audience, and its direct implementation in the traditional ludruk tobong theater performance which is divided into two stage areas: 1) a place where the community holds live and routine performances which is commonly referred to as the front stage (frontstage); and 2) a place where the community carries out its daily activities or a permanent base (base camp) which is commonly referred to as the back stage. In these two stage areas, the front stage is the stage area, where it is the realm of the performers (actors, directors and scenographers) which will ultimately lead to the audience point of view.

The audience and various supporting communities may experience modifications in how traditional theatrical performances are implemented because of the frequent shifts in space and time. Understanding the traditional theater actors as the primary supporting

group is necessary to solve this issue. The interaction in the performances might be fake because they are frequently virtual, and they are frequently designed to convey the value of beauty or pleasure. The presence of a fictitious two-dimensional (2D) area also exposes the spectator to the engineering of aesthetic qualities. In order to present the visual play in its entirety during a performance, theater actors are required. The existence of the show is closely related to the interest of the audience who watches, but the satisfaction of the audience is also related to the art communication that is built through the visual play on stage. In this situation, technical sophistication should be used as a benchmark for developing aesthetic standards that support the continued existence of traditional populist theater, which is currently going through a protracted stagnation to attract an audience.

C. Traditional Theater Patronage Perspective

To maintain the survival of the traditional theater community, a patron is needed as a supporter in every performance activity. Patron is an institution or a figure, who can protect or provide various material and spiritual support for various community performances and productions. Communities and performances of performing arts (traditions), are now facing competition from the popular arts-based entertainment industry. To maintain the survival of the community, and the existence of performing arts performances, both domains often rely on patrons as protectors or protectors. The existence of populist-based traditional theater is now facing various problems related to the traditional theater community that often finds it difficult to regenerate traditional theater actors, so their estuary also often relies on patrons as community protectors.

An organization or individual with the skills to maintain a community management system is required in order to become a patron. Since management depends on the governing body as a potent institution, every institution has

individuals with the authority to control the things that fall within their purview. So the organization ought to be a patron that can look out for the artistic community. However, the bureaucracy currently appears to be less attentive and responsive to the circumstances, especially when it comes to institutions or agencies that do not comprehend cultural strategies and, furthermore, do not have the management skills. Therefore, it is doubtful that institutions that do not comprehend will end up being actual art group patrons.

CONCLUSION

Apart from radical political changes, the influence of the economic situation and the strengthening of global cultural trends are other factors that can directly change the pattern of relations between the audience and the art space as well as the artists themselves. The development of popular art does not only have a strong influence on the artistic process, but can also affect the form of performances and the behavior of the audience. so that these various influences can also

have an impact on the emergence of forms of change that lead to traditional theater as a whole. At the present time, there is still a need for a new model *nobong* concept, and various events that can describe the splendor of traditional arts that are present in a new appearance according to cultural identity and the demands of the times.

Creativity can be demonstrated in a variety of ways, including through brilliant, original ideas that are fully committed to planning an entertaining spectacle and inspiring guidance tradition. The traditional theater communities are re-perceiving this in order to sustain and protect their existence in and among the supporting groupss

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