

History, Modification, and Contextualization of Toyomarto-Singosari Ludruk in the Covid-19 Pandemic

Eti Setiawati¹, Sony Sukmawan², Asri Kamila Ramadhani³, Elvin Nuril Firdaus⁴
{ety64@ub.ac.id¹, sony_sukmawan@ub.ac.id², asrikamilar@student.ub.ac.id³,
elvinurilf@student.ub.ac.id⁴}

Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia^{1,2,3,4}

Abstract. Ludruk is one of the local cultures of East Java that still survives in some areas to this day. This article attempts to describe the innovation strategy and local ludruk management of Toyomarto Village that is adaptive to the pandemic. In addition, this research is also an implementation of efforts to preserve and maintain local arts in East Java. One area in East Java that still preserves Ludruk culture is Toyomarto Village, Singosari District, Malang. The demands of the times require that the performing arts of Ludruk always undergo changes (transformation) both in the structure of the performance, the story that is told, acting, musical accompaniment, lighting, and others. It is the duty of art activists to always think creatively and innovatively, as well as modify Ludruk performances so that they can be accepted by the community, with a note that they maintain their traditional values. This qualitative research integrates folkloristic studies and text content analysis. The research data obtained through interviews and observations were then described with folklore studies and content analysis techniques.

Keywords: Art Modification, Ludruk, Story contextualization, Toyomarto

1 Introduction

Ludruk is a performing art that takes stories about everyday life, and it is one of the local cultures of East Java that still survives in several areas to this day [1]. Expressing and telling people's daily lives are the characteristics of *Ludruk*. argues that *Ludruk's* performance always transforms or changes across times in its performance structure, story presentation, acting, musical accompaniment, lighting, and others. *Ludruk's* transformations are in line with the statement from Abdillah [2] who says that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused all aspects to change, including in *Ludruk's* art. Therefore, the hard times of pandemic for almost two years is not an excuse for an artist to stop working. Arts and local wisdom of an area need to be developed so that it will not vanish by the times. This is a positive challenge for artists to keep working and maintaining everything that has been achieved.

Local culture will continue to adjust to its cultural environment so that it continues to grow and develop and creates a transformation of society that we both want to achieve and hope for [3]. Art activists must think creatively and innovatively to modify *Ludruk* performances so that they can be accepted by the community. However, they should maintain the traditional values of *Ludruk*. One local art that has undergone various modifications is the *Ludruk* Art in Toyomarto Village, Singosari District, Malang Regency. One challenge for *Ludruk* artists today

is to provide new things that are adapted to the situation. Modifying traditional arts is an effort to adjust the form of performance to the development era [4]. The modification of *Ludruk*'s story in Toyomarto Village is developed by an art activist in which its storyline is adaptable to the current situation, the COVID 19 pandemic. This study seeks to describe the innovation and management of local *Ludruk* strategies in Toyomarto Village that are adaptive to the pandemic. In addition, this research is also an implementation of efforts to preserve and maintain regional arts in East Java.

2 Research Method

This research uses qualitative research. Qualitative research aims to understand the object studied in-depth [5]. This qualitative research attempts to describe Toyomarto's verbal folklore from the aspects of history, transformation, and the artist's creativity. Ethnographic and folkloristic approaches are used in an integrated manner to reveal this phenomenon. An ethnographic approach is used to understand the culture of a group's community and understand the values behind the traditions [6]. This research data is in verbal folklore types of traditional *Ludruk* performances that contain dimensions of history, change, and artist creativity either it is spoken/shown by the informants, both conventional leaders, village elders, activists, and stakeholders of oral traditions. Data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and field notes. These three techniques are used to collect data about their view of life and how they think, live, behave, interact, and cooperate (emic) through observed phenomena in everyday life represented in folklore. Data analysis used an interactive model, starting with data collection, reduction, and description of data analysis, verification, and conclusions.

3 Finding and Discussion

3.1 The History of Ludruk Development in Toyomarto

Ludruk is a local art from East Java which is still preserved in various regions, one of which is Malang. suggests the peculiarities of Ludruk as follows: (1) the play that is performed is an expression of people's daily life; (2) it is accompanied by gamelan music with a typical of jula-juli song; (3) the costume worn describes people's daily life; (4) the language is adapted to the story being performed, it can be in the form of Javanese or Madurese; (5) kidungan consists of rhymes or poems with the theme of everyday life affair; (6) the show of the ludruk is simple, familiar to the audience.

One of the regions that has Ludruk is Toyomarto Village. Ludruk in Toyomarto Village was first pioneered by Sutomo's late father, in 1953. His admiration for ludruk made Sutomo learn ludruk from his father. In addition, Sutomo attempted to learn more about Ludruk by learning in the traditional art studio. Sutomo first performed with several Ludruk groups which were Putra Baru, Putra Bakti, and Panca Bakti. Sutomo started to establish ludruk in Toyomarto in 1967. This art did not last long, until finally he tried to form a ludruk art group called Karya Budaya in 1994. The group had various members of different age range : children, teenagers, to adults. However, luck was not in favor of the ludruk of Toyomarto Village. Ludruk in Toyomarto experienced several setbacks due to financial problems and the large number of

members who were already married, so they choose to do art. This proves that traditional arts are not well respected by the community.

After experiencing various ups and downs, Sutomo finally tried to re-establish the Toyomarto ludruk art in 2003. The group was named Bintang Budaya. Due to Sutomo's persistence, the Bintang Budaya ludruk group has been able to develop until now and become the largest ludruk group in Toyomarto. In the ludruk performance, there are 15 tandak players and 15 male players. Tandak players are originally male ludruk players who play and dress up as women. Before the covid-19 pandemic, ludruk in Toyomarto Village is often held for the traditional events and celebrations, especially during the month of Suro. Ludruk players usually practice 4 to 6 times before performing at the event. Numerous people get very excited and filled the audience seats since the events were usually open to the public. From the show, players get paid in the range of Rp500.000 to Rp750.000 depending on their respective skills. Unfortunately, the current pandemic situation does not allow people to hold art performances that involve a large crowd. Since then, there is no ludruk performances that have been held during the pandemic. As a result of this, many ludruk players temporarily switch professions to survive by working as a construction laborers or farmer.

3.2 Ludruk Modification in Toyomarto

The development of art in Indonesia has made various changes, one of which is modification, to traditional arts. According to Rogers [4] modification is an idea, object, and practice that is carried out after accepting new things to be adopted in something that is considered old or outdated. Modifications to traditional arts are carried out as an effort to adjust and maintain traditional arts to suit the advancement of the times. Modification was also carried out by the ludruk art group in Toyomarto Village. The Ludruk art groups which continue to develop until now in Toyomarto Village are Arma Budaya group which is led by Sukari and Bintang Budaya group which is led by Sutomo. The groups have the same members and even cooperate with each other during performances. However, both of them have their respective leaders because they have to deal with the wages or payments that each member will receive after completing the performance. This is a form of harmony between fellow artists.

Ludruk Toyomarto has developed at the initiative of the people who preserve it, so that financial change is determined by everyone who contributes [3]. Actors who have a big role in every performance will automatically get a big reward. In addition, the income obtained from the performance is also allocated to add the group's inventory. This shows that an art does not only think about existence on the entertainment stage, but also concerns the management and the independence of its artists to survive. The organization is managed in some various ways and one of which is through learning. The method used to learn ludruk in the past was 'gebyakan' which means learning together with peers and each person contributed some money to pay for the fee to the art studio from which they learned. At that time, many art groups tried to free the cost of training with the provision that every learner who wanted to join an art group had to get permission from parents to avoid misunderstandings.

"I never charged anyone who wanted to train as long as the parents know that their child is training with me. It is so as many parents do not give permission. When parents have entrusted their children to study with me, I am happy and calm,"

Ludruk Artist, an interview on 12 April 2021

The increasing number of children who participate in studying the art of ludruk signifies an improvement in the development of traditional arts in that the surrounding community is increasingly aware of the importance of studying art and preserving local culture. Regular

trainings and meetings are held every Saturday evening. Even though the pandemic has made training difficult, the group is still trying to do the practice while still adhering to health protocols.

Speaking of practice in ludruk art, it is no longer a secret that every ludruk artist must have high creativity because they have to improvise spontaneously on stage. According to Munandar [7] creativity is the ability to combine new things based on data, information, or elements that have already existed. Freedom [7] also argues that creativity is the ability to understand the world, interpret experiences and solve problems in new and original ways. Ludruk actors in ancient times were required to be able to memorize the numbers or codes of their group friends. That was in contrast to today's era in that they only have to memorize name. The number or code must be understood by all ludruk actors because the storyline of each character is shown through each number or code.

3.3 Responding to the Pandemic Through Contextualization of the Ludruk Storyline

The spirit of independence of the ludruk art group is also reflected in the contextualization of the ludruk storyline performed during the pandemic. The play Ampak-ampak Gunung Arjuna is a modification of the local ludruk storyline developed by the ludruk artist in Toyomarto which is adapted to the pandemic situation. The ludruk performance begins with the story of Ki Sidik Wacana asking his student named Janu Seto to climb Mount Candrageni with the aim of looking for kembang sore (kind of flower). Kembang sore is needed because the archipelago is experiencing danger or disaster that has been happening for almost two years. Janu Seto is asked to climb Mount Candrageni on Tuesday Kliwon which is believed to be the day. Ki Sidik Wacana believes that the kembang sore can be a cure for the Corona Virus plaque / pageblug that is hitting the archipelago. Soon, Janu Seto rushes towards Mount Candrageni. Janu Seto encountered various obstacles on his journey in search of kembang sore. The story of the ludruk performance begins with the story of Ki Sidik Wacana who is asking his student named Janu Seto or also called Sukma Sasmito to climb Mount Candrageni with the aim of looking for kembang sore because the archipelago is experiencing danger or a disaster that has been going on for almost two years. Janu Seto is asked to climb Mount Candrageni on Tuesday Kliwon which is believed to be a good day or Andara Kasih Day. Ki Sidik Wacana believes that the kembang sore can be a cure for the Corona Virus pageblug / plague that is hitting the archipelago.

Immediately, Janu Seto rushes towards Mount Candrageni. Janu Seto encountered various obstacles on his journey in search of kembang sore. However, with strong determination and good intentions, Janu Seto is determined to seek medicine as a cure for the ongoing plague in this world. Not long after, Janu Seto finds kembang sore on Mount Candrageni as instructed by his teacher, Ki Sidik Wacana. Kembang Sore becomes a symbol or storyline for practicing concern or meditation, solitude, calming the mind, asking for safety, protection, and praying that the Corona Virus pageblug / plague would soon disappear from the archipelago. When given the task by Ki Sidik Wacana to look for Afternoon Flowers on Mount Candrageni, Janu Seto immediately did it and did not dare to fight or delay. Janu Seto showed good intentions from the start by not procrastinating on work because Satan likes to persuade people to procrastinate [8]. Along the way to the search for Kembang Sore, Janu Seto must face obstacles and obstacles because people who meditate will surely find various temptations along the way so as not to arrive at their destination [8]. With his strong determination and good intentions, Janu Seto was able to find the Sore Flower. This is a form of Janu Seto's sincerity in his meditation and shows that he is able to reduce or cleanse his lust. It is this lust that actually

always invites to the path of misfortune [8]. It takes a strong determination to reach the goal. When the path taken is very difficult, then the results are worth it.

Kembang Sore became a symbol or storyline for practicing concern or meditation, solitude to calm the mind, asking for safety, protection, and praying that the Corona Virus pageblug/plague would soon disappear from the archipelago. When given the task by Ki Sidik Wacana to look for kembang sore on Mount Candrageni, Janu Seto immediately does it and does not dare to delay. Janu Seto shows good intentions from the start by not procrastinating on doing because evil spirit likes to persuade people to procrastinate [8]. Along the journey in the search for Kembang Sore, Janu Seto faces obstacles because people who meditate will surely find various temptations along the way so as not to arrive at their destination [8]. With his strong determination and good intentions, Janu Seto is able to find kembang sore. This is a form of Janu Seto's sincerity in his meditation and it shows that he is able to hold back and restrain his lust. It is this lust that actually always invites to the path of misfortune [8]. It takes a strong determination to reach the goal. When the path taken is very difficult, then the results are worth it.

4 Conclusion

During this current pandemic, various arts cannot be performed as usual. However, this did not dampen the enthusiasm of the artists of Ludruk Toyomarto, Singosari. This performing art group is still doing routine practices with the gebyakan method. The performing technique still maintains the code or cipher method that they have practiced for generations. Amazingly, these local artists also have created ludruk storyline that is relevant to the pandemic situation. The play is entitled Ampak-ampak Mount Arjuna. In general, this play narrates Kembang Sore as a cure for pageblug/plague. In fact, Kembang Sore is a symbol of inner calm, patience, and confidence. The contextualization of the ludruk performance is not only a form of creative response to pandemu but also as a form of local art defense so that it always survives in the midst of difficult times.

References

- [1] K. Azali, "Ludruk: Masihkah Ritus Modernisasi?," *J. Kaji. Sastra dan Budaya*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 48–60, 2012.
- [2] A. Abdillah, "Bentuk Dan Ekisistensi Ludruk Armada Pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19," *J. Pemikir. Seni Pertunjuk.*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2021.
- [3] A. Abdillah, "Inovasi Pertunjukan Teater Tradisional Ludruk Di Wilayah Budaya Arek," *Mudra J. Seni Budaya*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2009.
- [4] N. Rokhim, "Inovasi Kesenian Rakyat Kuda Lumping Di Desa Gandu, Kecamatan Tembarak, Kabupaten Temanggung," *J. Pengetah. dan Pencipta. Tari*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2018.
- [5] I. Gunawan, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara. 2013.
- [6] T. Subadi, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Surakarta, 2006.
- [7] D. Tjaturrini, "Calengsai: Kreativitas dan Inovasi Pekerja Seni dalam Mempertahankan Kesenian Tradisional," *J. Ling. Idea*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 109–120, 2018.
- [8] K. Melati, M. Abdullah, and R. Rukiyah, "Tinjauan Pragmatik Serat Bab Kanjeng Ing Sêmadi Sarta Bab Wangsulipun Kanjeng Kyai Tunggul Wulung," *J. Kajain Budaya, Perpustakaan, dan Inf.*, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 461–473, 2020.