

Encik Jepara Art Performers from a Socio-Economic Perspective

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Abstract. Traditional arts are often overlooked in discussions of economic and social development. This article reveals the important role of Encik Jepara art in the economic and social aspects of society. The research method used is qualitative research with historical methods, including heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Primary data was obtained from observations, archives, photos, videos of activities, and interviews with Encik art actors in Jepara. Secondary data is taken from relevant literature such as books, journals, and other sources. The results showed that Encik art actors in Jepara have main jobs outside the world of art. Encik art actors are involved in Encik art more as a form of love for local culture and preservation efforts rather than the main source of income. Encik art actors also play a role in educating the younger generation about the noble culture of Jepara through Encik performances. Encik art has the potential to create jobs and increase community income. Collaboration between Encik performers and various parties, including government and non-government organizations, can support the development of this art as a tool to increase the attractiveness of cultural tourism. Encik arts have an important role in cultural heritage preservation and local economic development. Encik arts can continue to grow and make a valuable contribution to the people of Jepara and Indonesia.

1 Introduction

Art is an integral part of human culture that reflects the identity, values, and heritage of a society. Traditional arts are one of the richest cultural foundations in history (Setiadi, 2012). Traditional arts are an integral part of cultural identity, and have an important role in the economic and social aspects of society. Traditional arts have recently been overlooked in discussions about economic and social development.

Current developments focus more on big industry and modern technology. Traditional arts have enormous potential to contribute to economic growth and social development. Traditional arts can create jobs, increase household income, and encourage cultural tourism that can support the local economy (Maladi, 2017). Traditional arts also play an important role in building and maintaining strong social relationships among community members. Arts activities become centers of meeting and collaboration between individuals and generate strong social networks. Traditional arts can also be a tool to strengthen cultural identity and promote intercultural tolerance.

Some regions in Indonesia still maintain the wealth of traditional arts with dedication amid the rapid development of modernization and technology. Jepara, a city located on the north coast of Java Island, is also known as a city that has a variety of traditional arts (Alamsyah, 2023). The people of Jepara have tried to maintain the heritage of traditional arts for centuries. Jepara as a city is still trying to maintain traditional arts, by maintaining and developing the heritage of traditional arts. The people of Jepara not only preserve their cultural roots, but also make a valuable contribution to Indonesia's rich cultural heritage.

Jepara's traditional arts are not only carved arts, Jepara also has various other art forms such as crafts, music, drama, and dance which are an integral part of the community (Wrahatnala, 2013). The various traditional arts have become the identity of Jepara. One of the unique Jepara cultures is the Encik art which is an inseparable part of the lives of its supporters. Encik art is an art that is thought to have a connection with Malay culture. At one time, a group of Malays called Encik Lanang inhabited Teluk Island in Jepara for a long time to trade (Alamsyah, 2013). Encik's art is very unique due to cultural influences from outside Jepara. Encik art is different from other Javanese dance cultures which are more gentle but Encik embodies masculine dance movements.

Encik art can affect the economy and social community in Jepara. Encik arts affect employment, income, and social relations. The article will seek to understand the complex relationship between traditional arts, economy and society. It also seeks to identify opportunities for further improvement.

2 Methods

This article is a qualitative research using the historical method which consists of heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Garraghan, 1947). Heuristics is the process of finding primary and secondary sources (Herlina, 2020). Primary sources were obtained from observation, government and individual archives, photos and videos of activities, and interviews with people who are performers of Encik art in Jepara. Interviews were conducted to explore the process and meaning of Encik art which has social and economic relationships. Secondary sources are taken from relevant writings such as books, journals, and other literature. Secondary sources can be obtained from libraries, private collections, and the internet. The existing sources are then criticized and interpreted. The results of the above analysis are then connected and reconstructed into an article about the Encik Jepara art actors from a social and economic perspective.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Profile of Encik Jepara Art Performers

There are not too many performers of Encik Jepara art, this is because there are no longer many Encik art groups. The Encik Jepara art group that still survives, one of which is the group led by Mbah Sahlan from Bangsri District. The Encik art group led by Mbah Sahlan has several members, consisting of youth to adults. Encik art actors consist of Mbah Sahlan, Sugi, Yusuf, Faris, Sarmidi, Sudarnyo, and Sukadar. Besides being artists, Encik's performers have other jobs in various fields.

The main players in Encik art consist of two dancers, where the dancers will perform the dance using swords. The main players of Encik art led by Mbah Sahlan are held by Sugi and Yusuf. Sugi and Yusuf already have basic knowledge and skills of the art, making adaptation and training easier. Learning Encik art is not easy and must be full of patience. The two young people who already have a basis in art will be very helpful in the success of Encik art training. Sugi, who is also a teacher and young artist in Jepara, is interested in learning Encik art because he feels concerned about the condition of Encik art which is endangered. Sugi was a fan of Encik art when he was in elementary school to high school. Sugi hopes to play an active role in efforts to preserve Encik art (Interview Sugiyarto, 2022). Yusuf is Sugi's *partner* in playing and practicing Encik. Yusuf is still in vocational high school in Jepara, but has a strong intention and willingness to learn Encik. Yusuf hopes to play an active role in Encik art preservation efforts. He also wants to introduce Encik to the wider community (Interview Yusuf

Irfani, 2022). Sugi and Yusuf learned and performed Encik dance accompanied by Mbah Sahlan and Mbah Darnyo. Both of these figures are senior artists in Encik art in Jepara. They conduct routine Encik exercises at some time every month.

The majority of Encik music players come from experienced musicians, only one of whom is the younger generation. Encik art requires at least five music players, consisting of large drummers, small drummers, kenong, sompret, and gong dencong. The five musical instruments are the standard musical instruments of Encik art, which cannot be reduced or added. The five musical instruments are one of the characteristics of Encik (Interview Sahlan, 2022.). The musicians consist of Sahlan, Faris, Sarmidi, Sudarnyo, and Sukadar.

Sudarnyo is currently playing the sompret instrument, which is one of the most difficult instruments to play during Encik performances. Sudarnyo has no previous experience playing sompret, but he managed to play sompret well. Sudarnyo said that the difficulty in playing sompret is to regulate breathing, where in Encik performances the sompret instrument is almost always played during the performance. He has experience in the arts since 1986, but this is the first time he has played for Encik (Interview Sudarnyo, 2022). Sudarnyo, who has been involved in the arts for a long time, is certainly not difficult to adapt to using the sompret instrument.

Sukadar is currently a gong dencong player, and he has also been in the arts for a long time. Sukadar has long been in the arts group with Mbah Sahlan (Interview Sukadar, 2022). Sarmidi is currently a kenong instrument player, he also has experience since 1979 playing in the Encik arts. Sarmidi can play the role of a musical instrument player as well as an Encik player (Interview Sarmidi, 2022). Faris is a big drum player in Encik art. Faris chose to play the big drum because the rhythm is fixed, but he also has to set the tempo when performing. He is willing to become an Encik instrumentalist because he wants to play an active role in the revival of Encik. He considers Encik as a unique art form and very typical of Jepara so it must be maintained (Interview Faris, 2022).

Mbah Sahlan also participates as a small drum player, as well as being the leader in the Encik performance. Mbah Sahlan, who is the leader of the group, does not actually master martial arts, but can play the Encik art dances fluently. Sahlan memorized the movements and sequences in the Encik performance. Sahlan is also still quite good at demonstrating the movements in Encik performances despite his age.

3.2 Social Relationships of Encik Jepara Art Performers

Traditional arts are a way for a society to express its cultural identity. Traditional arts reflect the values, beliefs and history of a group

or society (Wandansari, 2009). Encik art is also a way of expressing Jepara's cultural identity for its performers. Encik art performers feel proud when they are part of Encik performances. Traditional arts also play an important role in education, teaching history, folklore and cultural values to the younger generation. This helps to ensure that cultural heritage is maintained and preserved to the younger generation. Encik art performers have indirectly played an active role in introducing Encik art to the younger generation. Encik art performance activities can be an educational medium for the younger generation about the noble culture of Jepara. Encik art performances contain local Jepara cultural values that must be maintained by the younger generation.

Several community groups and government agencies have provided support for traditional arts practitioners. This shows that there is an increasing awareness of the importance of cultural preservation. Encik art actors take advantage of this condition by establishing communication and cooperation with academics, the Jepara Arts Council, and the Jepara Regency Tourism and Culture Office. The collaboration between Encik art actors led by Mbah Sahlan with academics, the Jepara Arts Council, and the Tourism and Culture Office includes organizing Encik art performances at the Jepara Kartini Museum in 2022 (Interview Sahlan, 2022). This was done in order to preserve Encik art and introduce Encik art to the younger generation. Encik art performers are very instrumental in educating the younger generation. This helps maintain the sustainability of Encik art and provides educational opportunities to those who are interested.



Image. 1. Collaborative performance of Encik art led by Mbah Sahlan with academics, the Jepara Arts Council, and the Tourism and Culture Office in 2022.

Source: Personal Documentation

3.3 Economic Relationships of Encik Jepara Art Performers

Traditional arts have great potential to be developed, but a number of challenges face arts practitioners in preservation efforts. Globalization, modernization and rapid social change can threaten the sustainability of traditional arts. The majority of traditional arts practitioners face economic pressures that force them to switch to other more lucrative occupations. The majority of Encik Jepara performers are not pure performers, the performers have other jobs outside the arts. Mbah Sahlan is the only Encik personnel who has a full profession as an artist. Mbah Sahlan not only plays Encik, but also plays the art of Jararan and Reog Jepara. Mbah Sahlan has been a performer in various fields of art since he was young (Interview Sahlan, 2022).

The majority of Encik performers have jobs outside the arts. Sugi is a junior high school teacher in one of the sub-districts in Jepara. Sugi works as a teacher every day, but always makes time for activities in the arts including Encik (Interview Sugiyarto, 2022). Sudarno and Sarmidi work as farmers outside of their activities in the Encik arts. Sudarno and Sarmidi farm every day if there are no invitations to Encik's performances (Interview Sudarno and Sarmidi, 2022)). Sukadar works mainly as a carpenter, apart from being a performer of Encik's kesnian, which is performed when there is an invitation to perform. Faris is a young person with a profession as a private employee. Faris will become an Encik kesnian performer if there is an invitation to perform (Interview Faris, 2022). Yusuf is the youngest personnel who is a student at one of the Vocational High Schools in Jepara (Interview Yusuf Irfani, 2022).

Encik art performers are involved in the art world not only for the desire to gain financial benefits. Encik art performers have a great interest in the world of art, so they are interested in joining the Encik Jepara art group. Encik art performers also feel concerned about the development of Encik which is endangered and abandoned by the younger generation. Encik art performers try to preserve Encik art by actively joining as one of the personnel (Interview Sugiyarto, Sudarno, and Sukadar, 2022).

Encik arts are expected to be a major source of employment in the communities that develop them in the future. Encik arts are also expected to create jobs for many people in rural areas. Encik art is also expected to be part of efforts to improve the local economy in Jepara. Encik arts in the future are expected to help reduce unemployment rates and increase average incomes in rural areas. Cooperation between the government and non-governmental organizations should be intensified to support traditional arts as a means of poverty alleviation in Jepara. Encik arts can also become part of Jepara's tourism industry. Tourists are certainly looking for authentic cultural experiences when visiting a place.

4 Conclusion

Encik arts play a very important role in the social and economic spheres of Jepara. Traditional arts are not only a source of income for serni performers and local communities, but also a way to maintain and celebrate the cultural identity of a region. Encik's performers have succeeded in building social relations as a form of conveying local cultural identity and efforts to preserve local culture. Encik kesnian performers perform kesnian activities not as their main income. Art performers have other jobs outside the field of art. Encik art actors are not dependent on the world of arts, where Encik art actors participate in Encik performances as a form of love for the arts and efforts to preserve the arts. Encik art has great potential to make a significant contribution to social development and economic growth. Encik arts can continue to develop and preserve cultural heritage for the younger generation with support from the community, government, and non-governmental organizations.

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