

Chapter 10

Traditional Artists in the Time of COVID-19: A Case Study of *Ludruk* and *Pencak Silat* Artists

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A. When COVID-19 Meets Artists

Issues regarding COVID-19 are no longer pure medical questions such as ‘how quickly the virus can spread’ or ‘how effective vaccines work.’ Its conundrum is even about social interaction during the pandemic. Before the pandemic, shaking hands was common for greeting or parting, and gathering into the general crowd was also a part of social life. However, due to COVID-19, one tends to be paranoid; people are such a threat to each other. Bentley (2020) formulates those phenomena rightly: “What has changed, though, is that many forms of interaction, a lot more problematic and harder to take for granted than they were a year ago.”

One might imagine that tourism has been the sector hit hardest by the crisis. It is not only due to the inhibition of interactions

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based on regulation, but the disintegration of the tourism industry elements such as accommodation and cultural activities cause this lousy fortune. For instance, in March, the turn of the *Saka* year, with *Melasti* and *Penggrupukan*¹ ceremonies, was an annual mandatory event. The ceremony is a field for some artists to exhibit their skills; for sculptors through *ogoh-ogoh*,² *karawitan* artists by creating the accompaniment of gamelan *Melasti*, or dancers who express themselves fragmentarily. However, due to the pandemic, everything must stop (Mariyana, 2020).

Melasti is definitely not a single case. The Indonesian Art Coalition (2020) noted that at least 234 art shows had been canceled since the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (*Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar/PSBB*) regulation, which started from March 16 until April 21, 2020. Many are music concerts (113 tours and festivals), while 46 events are performing arts (pantomime, puppets, and speech arts). The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy stated that at least 44,295 artists had adversity due to pandemics. Most of them are under the status of ‘being housed’ and have been laid off, while others are ‘informally affected’ (Iskandar, 2020). It should be noted that being ‘at home’ is no less worrying than being laid off (Sandi, 2020).³

¹ *Melasti* and *Pengerupukan* ceremonies are the precursors to *Nyepi*. According to Bali Editorial Team (2022), *Melasti* is incredible importance to the annual (and sometimes more) rites of the Balinese Hindu. “During this ceremony, lines and lines of local Hindus will journey to the sea or a holy spring for a special purification. As the term purification suggests, the goal of *Melasti* is to remove impurities. Still, unlike the *Melukat* ceremony, it isn’t the ‘self’ that is being purified, but rather of a village, its deities (through their earthly representations) and other external components.”

² *Ogoh-ogoh* is a kind of giant doll as a representation of the *Buta-Kala*. They are paraded before the *Penggrupukan* night and then burned. Genies fandom contends that *Buta-Kala* (plural) are considered the immediate cause of all detrimental to human joy and comfort, physical and mental, natural and social. Wars, catastrophes, anger, sadness, and probably also COVID-19 itself are signs of their presence

³ Law No. 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower clearly stipulates the definition and the rights and consequences of laid-off employees, but not for those who are ‘being housed.’

COVID-19 disproportionately hits all working classes financially, but artists, especially traditional ones, seem to have more hardship than others. Before COVID-19, they struggled from zero point; seemingly, their step had to retreat toward minus during the pandemic. Many conventional arts are on the way to extinction because of many factors. Modern arts might overshadow the fame of traditionalists. While from 'inner' traditional skills themselves, many are still strict to the conventional way, whether its timing or how a performance should be. As stated above, *Melasti* and *Pengerupukan* can only be presented before *Nyepi*, so *ogoh-ogoh* could not just be burned without being paraded. There is also a paradigm that the traditional artist is usually more idealist than the new one, in the sense that they tend to view art as binding to their tradition and culture. The way they do art, thus, is more of a method of contemplation rather than merely fulfilling economic needs.

Besides those assumptions, the digital divide is perhaps one of the most substantial impacts on traditional artists. Since the pandemic, it is a reality that we have been 'forced' to work or interact remotely. Migration to the digital space certainly requires fluency in digital platforms and adequate internet access. However, as I stated earlier, traditional arts maintain the old standards, which are usually occasional, require the involvement of many people, and are presented directly in front of the audience. In addition to that, most traditional artists are older than new ones. Kartawi points out: "Millennial interest in traditional culture and art is meager. As a result, many traditional artists are old, and only a few are young artists" (Adi, 2020).

The consequence of that facts relates to the current situation regarding digital needs during pandemics, raising some questions: How do traditional artists survive during pandemics, especially with this bump between their conventional way to the digital ones? Does digital penetration obscure the essence of conventional performing art because 'taste transfer' is lacking from the performer toward each other or to the audience? What is the government's role in responding to the emergency of traditional arts amid the pandemic? Are digi-

talization and economic assistance and development given equally to all artists? Then how is the role of the arts community in making traditional arts sustainable? Is COVID-19, for the whole situation, just a disaster for the old master?

In this chapter, I would like to discuss these issues. As presented in earlier paragraphs, traditional artists feasibly are in-between existence contra extinct and idealism versus needs (i.e., digitalization). Rather than the modern artist, the new one seems more adaptive to the situation since digitalization is already a part of their market. The subjects of this case study would mention some kinds of traditional art, such as *Ludruk* (performing art) and *Pencak Silat* (martial art).

Before going any further, I choose *Ludruk* and *Pencak Silat* as the case study is not without any particular reason. As explained briefly in the following section, Indonesian traditional art has many categories, from the perspective of time or based on how the art is performed. Performing art has its roots in ritual and serves as folks' entertainment. Rather than other traditional performing arts, *Ludruk* and *Pencak Silat* are the famous ones. There are some similarities between them, such as using some attributes and local languages, elements of song and dance are involved, accompanied by *tetabuhan* (regional music) on the stage, and there is an intimacy between the players and the audience. Amidst the pandemic, those elements should be adjusted.

The main discussion is provided in several sections. First, definitions of arts and artists are discussed. Second, I elaborate on how *the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia impacted Ludruk and Pencak Silat artists*. Third, I discuss how the Indonesian government (including at the local and community level) responds to the crises and the outcome of the government's pandemic responses. I conclude this chapter by providing recommendations on how Indonesia should navigate the post-pandemic world.

B. Defining Artists and Creative Workers

Paying attention to the notion of traditional art requires me to clarify some terminologies and briefly describe the sub-categories of art.

What is art? I adopted the definition by the Ministry of Education and Culture: “Art is an individual, collective, or communal artistic expression based on cultural heritage or on the creativity of new creations that are manifested in various forms of activities and or mediums” (Kemendikbud, 2017). Who is an artist? According to The Indonesian Dictionary (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia/KBBI*) (2016): “An artist is a person who has artistic talent and has succeeded in creating and presenting works of art.” This broad definition allows ‘artists’ to mingle with other terms, such as creative industry workers.

Creative industries are processes of creation, creativity, and ideas from people who can produce work without exploiting natural resources and can be used as financial products (Gie, 2020). Therefore, artists who process their work based on this definition can be categorized as creative industry workers. The Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia has classified 14 creative industry sectors; some of the sub-sectors are contributed by the arts cluster, such as crafts, design, music, and performing arts (Idrus et al., 2020).

In addition, there is also a classification of art that distinguishes art based on the form of its products. For example, the Ministry of Education and Culture divides arts into performing, fine, literary, films, media, martial, and functional arts. For this chapter, let me explain just the two of them (Kemendikbud, 2017).

Performing arts, or other sources mentioned as Indonesian theater, is a type of art in the form of drama performances staged and displayed in front of large crowds. As mentioned earlier, Indonesia’s performing arts have their roots in rituals and serve as folks’ entertainment. It exhibits ritual dances and dramas retelling the ancient epics, legends, and stories. *Wayang* and *Ludruk* are two famous examples of performing art. Besides them, there are also *Barong*, *Kecak*, *Jaipongan*, *Kuda Lumping*, *Reog*, and many others. Meanwhile, Indonesian martial arts include various fighting systems native to or developed in the Indonesian archipelago, both the age-old traditional arts and the more recently developed hybrid combative. Besides physical training, martial arts often include spiritual aspects to cultivate inner strength,

inner peace, and higher psychological ends (arts and culture). Besides *Pencak Silat*, some other of Indonesian martial arts are *Debus*, *Kuntao*, *Caci*, *Cakalele* and *Fitimaen*.

C. *Ludruk* and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Ludruk, like any other Javanese theatrical form, is based on the religious ritual ceremony (Geertz, 1959, p. 306). Many chronicles in Maisaroh (2019) noted that the word “*Ludruk*” first emerged in the early 20th century. Indeed, there were quite a lot of *Ludruk* performances in this period. But a long time before, some data describing theatrical forms similar to *Ludruk* were found in the 13–14th century during the Majapahit era—the greatest empire ever to exist in the Indonesian archipelago. At least there are two kinds of *Ludruk* based on its performance. First is the *Ludruk Bandan*, which emerged in the 13–15th centuries (Hefner et al., in Maisaroh, 2019). It refers to a Hindu-Javanese religious, mystical performance in which a person in a trance performs several feats. For instance, the actor cut his skin off with a knife, but he is not bleeding, set his body on fire, but his body did not burn, or he can set his body disappear suddenly, and other similar bizarre actions based on mystical power. Another *Ludruk* type is *Ludruk Besut*, which will be presented in this chapter. Unlike the former *Ludruk*, *Ludruk Besut* offers in the form of drama accompanied by gamelan chants, *Pengremo* (a dance that shows the courage of the main play, such as a prince), *Bedayan* (at least five people, contains jokes). Peacock (cited in Maisaroh, 2019) explained, “A *Ludruk* troupe usually performs six jokes with six different stories, as well as three types of *ngeremo* for 20 consecutive performances.” One performance of *Ludruk Besut* involves the actors, actresses, and the crew, such as the master of ceremonies, make-up artist, sound, and lighting.

Fitri and Abdillah (2021) stated that the *Ludruk* performance was strong; it could be seen in various activities before the COVID-19 pandemic. Several *Ludruk* associations hold performances in multiple regions and fill government or private celebrations. One is *Ludruk Armada*, which had ten shows before the pandemic. Before the

pandemic, their members usually do not return to their homes due to their busy schedules and rehearsals for the following events.

Ludruk's performance schedule must be annulled like other activities due to the COVID-19 outbreak. During that time, there was no stage for them. It is mainly due to the Malang district government, which did not permit the event though it was in the green zone. As a result, many members of the Ludruk Armada temporarily switched professions. Ludruk Armada leader, Eros Djarot Mustadjab, rented a vehicle to transport sand, bricks, and other building materials. Previously, the vehicle was used as a carrier for gamelan and *Ludruk* properties. Some move to another job, such as salons or trading, whereas the rest are jobless. It is hard to find a new formal job at their age. Besides the situation, more terminated employees than open new job vacancies.

Another example is Cak Kartolo, who has played *Ludruk* since the 1970s. The COVID-19 situation forced him to sell his house because there was no show during the epidemic (Taufiq, 2021). As in Malang, the government restricts social activities and prohibits performing arts. Beforehand, Kartolo admitted that he and the team had recorded their performance in the 1980s and 1990s under Nirwana Records' label. There were 79 episodes during that period. One of those audio recording snippets has gone viral in the last two years and has been widely used as a meme on many social media. The famous one is "*angel..angel is tenan pitakonmu*" (complex, your words are entirely complicated). Unfortunately, all royalties go to the record label, and nothing is left for the artists or production crew involved.

Moving to a new circumstance for Ludruk Armada's members, so does Kartolo with the royalty theme, is just a small illustration of how COVID-19 reveals a new angle for them. Before the pandemic, most traditional artists were more involved in the creative process than monetizing or generating the financial aspects through virtual spaces (Yulianto, 2020). They move solitary and pay less attention to aspects of promotion management. In contrast to modern musicians, traditional artists have not optimally mastered the virtual space.

Not only about the commercial and management sector, but the rush toward digitalization also hits the essential things of the way they do 'art.' Ahead of time, stages were a magical place for *Ludruk* artists to transfer their sense to the audience directly. Every angle or distance between them is a part of the message of the whole drama. Changing the medium from the live stage to the online platforms is not just a matter of recording. The atmosphere differs via online medium, with no clap or laughing sound. Unfortunately, compared to functional art, performing arts are not represented by 'concrete' products, such as *batik* or *keris*; its meaning lies in the transfer of feeling between the players and the audience. The actress plays their role, and the gamelan musicians add different music based on the audience's reaction. The sense is supposed to be delivered reciprocally in this way. It would be worse if there were an option to do the creative process separately; the sound of gamelan in the studio while the actors and actresses play their roles from home. One could say it might be like cooking veggies and the water separately for making soup, even though optimism through this method still should be appeared. Massive migration from physical to online apparently perplexed a show that could be presented live (Yulianto, 2020).

The pandemic situation is very detrimental, but fortunately, there is still a rainbow after the rain falls. Some creative processes have been born amidst pandemics. An instance comes from *Ludruk Meimura*. Their members realize that cooperation, mutual help, and care for others are communal values to confront the virus. Reflecting on the traditional way, *Ludruk Meimura* carries out dynamics from a cultural activity to a social movement with a spirit of critical thought. They break down the limitations of action into an activity carried out to fight COVID-19 among the people of the City of Surabaya. The group uses traditional markets as a media for performance space to convey a message of awareness of the importance of being alert to COVID-19 and promoting a culture of wearing masks (Rahma, 2020). In addition, they also play a situational drama about how people easily believe hoax news or how important vaccination or washing hands

is. Whatever the stories are, their goal is to engage directly with the current situation and amuse the audience facing the pandemic. They change the script, which usually brings folks' tales, into art that can provide inspiration, understanding, appreciation, and aesthetic experience through a process of reflection (Rahma, 2020).

D. *Pencak Silat* amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

Similar to *Ludruk*, COVID-19 has two different impacts on *Pencak Silat*. Before considering that correspondence further, let me briefly elucidate what *Pencak Silat* is. *Pencak Silat* is the indigenous martial art of Indonesia. *Pencak* means artistic body movements for self-defense, while *Silat* stands for actual fighting. It comprises many styles, which vary depending on the region and ethnic groups where each type originated. However, the common elements of all styles are smooth movements, resembling and influencing traditional dance, and fighting application as self-defense. Smooth movements targeted at redirecting and using the enemy's force are the typical elements of *Pencak Silat*. Their goal is to transition the movements smoothly instead of opposing a counterforce. According to *Pencak Silat Anak Harimau* (2022), *Pencak Silat* is a system that trains body and spirit equally and which always consists of four aspects: (1) the mental-spiritual aspect (ethics), (2) the aspect of self-defense, (3) the aesthetic and artistic aspect, (4) the sports aspect, including power, endurance, flexibility, and coordination. *Pencak Silat* today consists of traditional styles continuing the ancient roots, but also modern styles, organized around the globe, which focus on sports and competition elements.

COVID-19 does not only change the status of many *Pencak Silat* teachers as unemployment. Switching communication to online doesn't necessarily keep these activities smoothly running. As stated earlier, one of the significant aspects of *Pencak Silat* is flexibility and coordination. Angga (2021), a *Pencak Silat* artist, admitted that the quality of online training was neither optimal nor effective. *Pencak Silat* is not only moving the body like a dance, but the elements of flexibility and focus must still be maintained. Practicing alone may

be like fighting with imagination; it is still worth doing, though its essence should not be decreased.

Pieces of training coordinated by a city service must also be stopped. For example, Boyke Santoso, the General Secretary of the Indonesian *Pencak Silat* Association (*Asosiasi Pencak Silat Indonesia/APSI*), said, *Pencak Silat* communities admitted it was challenging to find a place for training. Schools with extracurricular *Pencak Silat* have not allowed their students to participate in *Pencak Silat* training (Ariyanto, 2021). The situation got even more complicated when the Education Office instructed that all school students were not allowed to practice or hold extracurricular activities. Santoso emphasizes: “If anyone participates in extracurricular activities or training inside or outside the school environment, that extracurricular will be dormant” (Ariyanto, 2021). The exact impact also applies to competitions. *Pencak Silat* competitions with the scale of national or international such as the National Student Sports Competition (*Kompetisi Olahraga Siswa Nasional/KOSN*) (20–26 September 2021) or the International *Pencak Silat* Arts Championships (28–30 November 2020), still be held virtually. However, the sub-category was only a single played; there was no competition for doubles or team categories due to limited physical contact. Some trouble also occurs during online matches, such as a bad connection, problems with the projector screen, or imprecise angle, so the player’s dynamic is rarely seen. Things like that make the game less than optimal.

COVID-19 may bring down various activities of *Pencak Silat*, but do not forget that there is also the mental-spiritual aspect to it, as stated above. With this spirit, some communities hold an activity called “*Indonesia Tangguh dan Tumbuh dengan Tempaan Pencak Silat*” (Indonesia is Tough and Grows with *Pencak Silat*). With all of the limitations, they organize the activity online, as joint training or just distance-gathering. Arifia, as a committee of that program and the chief of the Salamun Alaikum *Pencak Silat* Community, stated, “During the pandemic, *Pencak Silat* becomes pertinent. It is not only a past culture hailed as a cultural catalyst. But *Pencak Silat* needs to

be cultivated to make Indonesia strong and growing.” He adds that Pencak Silat is not merely beating, hitting, or performing. He quotes what Djatnika Nanggamihardja—a figure of bamboo’s conservator—said, “For those who pass through this crisis, he or she is the truly a warrior.” The hope is that people come out of this conjuncture as physically and mentally healthy warriors through *Pencak Silat*.

Like the previous activity, the PSHT community (Pencak Silat Persaudaraan Setia Hati Ternate) pursued an alternative following the local government’s decision, which stopped all training until the pandemic ended. They use social media platforms to share exercise videos. The targeted parties are not only athletes but also the wider community. They aim to ensure and maintain people’s physical fitness amid COVID-19. Renaldi, one of the members, emphasizes that they undertake this approach due to the lack of public knowledge about arranging physical exercise or body fitness programs at home (Renaldi, 2021). In addition, this community also forms groups via the WhatsApp application as a medium of communication, online guidance, and evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the exercises that have been carried out.

E. The Indonesian Government's Policy Responses

Then how is the central government’s response to traditional artists regarding the impact of COVID-19? On April 3, 2020, the Directorate General of Culture of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Hilmar Farid, opened an online form for collecting data on art workers affected by COVID-19. The Ministry of Education and Culture provided assistance funds of IDR 1 million for cultural actors affected by the COVID-19 pandemic during the Community Activities Restrictions (*Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat/PPKM*). The government allocates IDR 26.5 billion to support 26,500 artists, including the traditional ones whose livelihoods have been affected by this condition (Stevani, 2021). Mattalitti, as the Chair of the Regional Representative Council (*Dewan Perwakilan Daerah/DPD*), admitted that the aid funds were relatively small because traditional arts and

cultural activities were not prioritized and categorized as the essential or critical sectors (Stevani, 2021). However, some local governments have imitated the central government's aid promotion. One is the West Java Regional Government, which allocated IDR 50 billion for social assistance toward street vendors and modern and traditional artists. In addition to cash funds, food packages were also given.

Related to *Ludruk* and *Pencak Silat*, unfortunately, some artists admit that the assistance has not been evenly distributed. Ludruk Meimura members admitted that they had never received a social grant from the central government during the pandemic, similar to their *Ludruk* artists' fellow in East Java (Perdana, 2021).

There are more than a thousand *Ludruk* artists in East Java. Maybe they have not received help because they did not get information or because they had returned to their hometown. However, assistance must be obtained as soon as possible. On average, *Ludruk* artists are old. If they have to change professions, it is no longer possible to do manual labor, such as construction workers or farming.

However, Meimura, as the Chairperson of Ludruk Meimura, admitted that he had received Direct Cash Assistance (*Bantuan Langsung Tunai/BLT*) worth IDR 300,000 from the Surabaya regional government. The funds were used to build a small stage in his house. He bought bamboo as a decorative fence with the remaining money. The stage was intended to be a small show property that he showed virtually via YouTube.

On the other side, as the chair of Ludruk Tobongan Suromeng-golo, Eka received assistance from the Lembayan Police and the Governor of East Java through the Kirun Madiun Art Community. Besides funds, he wishes to get permission from the local government to hold a performance even virtually. Initially, he was optimistic that he could organize a show (Siswanto, 2021). He took care of permits from the Lembayan Police, the COVID-19 Handling Task Force (*Satuan Tugas/Satgas*), and the Magetan Police. However, the possibility is very slight because of the emergency PPKM. "Until now (2021, red)

PPKM continues, then what should we do? What do we have to do? Our lives are entirely depending on the show” (Siswanto, 2021).

In another city, the Cimahi City Cultural Council (*Dewan Kebudayaan Kota Cimahi/DKKC*), together with the Cimahi City Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sports Agency (*Dinas Budaya, Pariwisata, Pemuda dan Olahraga/Disbudparpora*), have held an online art performance entitled “Cimahi City’s 2nd Virtual Arts Degree”. This event involves 75 art communities from 3–19 June 2021 (Herdiana, 2021). *Pencak Silat* artists are one of the parties involved, besides modern music, traditional dance, theater, puppetry, traditional games, and other cultural activists. Communities have an opportunity to create a new opus or display their existing ones. Each community received a stimulus from the Disbudparpora Cimahi City of IDR 1 million. The three best performers received IDR 10 million for the first winner, IDR 7.5 million for the second position, and IDR 5 million for the third. There were also three participants in the favorite category of Youtube viewers who got prize money of IDR 5 million each.

About 40 music communities have the privilege to perform at the 2nd Virtual Arts Degree in Cimahi City. Unfortunately, the committee focused on modern music for the competition, considering the limited space for movement. Rahaja, as the Head of Disbudparpora Cimahi City, stated: “This opportunity is given to the modern music arts community” (Herdiana, 2021).

To avoid unequal rights for traditional and modern artists, on July 2, 2020, the Minister of Education and Culture and the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy issued Ministerial Decree Number 02/KB/2020; KB/1/UM.04.00/MK/2020. This regulation is concerning the Joint Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture and the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy/Head of the Tourism and Creative Economy Agency on Technical Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Corona Virus Disease 2019 in the Field of Culture and Creative Economy in the Determination of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The guidelines apply to organizers of activities or services such as museums, cultural parks, galleries, studios, hermit-

ages, other art exhibition halls, cinemas, and performance spaces; cultural heritage; art shows; and audio-visual production.

Farid stated that apart from distributing direct assistance, his team has designed other schemes for art workers, such as capital incentives. For *Ludruk* artists, for example, the East Java Regional Government has prepared direct grants for 750 artists on the priority list of beneficiaries (Riski, 2020), even though the number of artists in East Java can be ten times more than the amount of aid received. The local government also distributed non-cash direct assistance to art workers during the PSBB. In addition, artists' initiatives in the second month of the PSBB started to produce various programs expected to help support artists from multiple sub-categories.

The Ministry of Education and Culture also participates in the art preservation relay. One of the ongoing programs is the Online Exhibition of Solidarity of Indonesian Artists Against COVID-19. This program is an art exhibition project with an open call system. Artists are expected to collect two or three-dimensional works with the theme of surviving during the COVID-19 pandemic. The exhibition organizer will allocate IDR 4 million for each artist who passes the selection process. The results were exhibited online on July 10, 2020 (Riski, 2020)

In Central Java, Governor Ganjar Pranowo provided an area for virtual events to function as an art stage (Eviyanti, 2020). Local artists are allowed to perform, and the public can donate. The Government of the Special Region of Yogyakarta also intervened; they channeled aid funds of IDR 600,000 for each art worker who had financial difficulties due to the pandemic.

Unfortunately, the art ecosystem makes it difficult for artists and art performers to have access. Whereas Law No. 5 of 2017 mandates the establishment of a cultural trust fund. The 2020 state budget has allocated IDR 1 trillion to form a cultural trust fund, but no management agency has existed until now. As a result, the funds that have been allocated cannot be used to help artists continue to work,

especially during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (Gumay, cited in Mediana, 2021).

F. Post-Pandemic World: What's Next?

Ludruk and *Pencak Silat* are the faces of traditional performing art. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, they convey the conventional values into social life. As mentioned above, their performance must be adjusted during the pandemic to respond to the current situation. For instance, it is the endeavor of *Ludruk Meimura*, which uses the traditional market as its stage; they shift its value from traditional performance to a medium for promoting health protocols. Some quirky habits such as wearing a mask or foreign notions like 'PCR,' 'vaccine,' or 'lockdown' might perplex some groups, especially the older and low-class people. To deliver its meanings, *Ludruk Meimura* performs it in the 'casual' and 'local' way, in the sense that it does not contain any theoretical or academic terminology. Therefore, their performance is an efficient way of promoting health protocols for locals.

Similarly, *Pencak Silat* does not appear as a mere body defense; it deepens the spiritual aspect as a response to pandemics. As stated earlier, body and spirit are harmonized in *Pencak Silat*. Several *Pencak Silat* communities have shown that the spiritual element could be an additional immune for the self. They cultivate their body action into mind-peacefulness, persuading that medicine is not only medical medicine but also comes from the self and God's great power.

Humans often feel helpless when disasters or calamities happen. COVID-19 is one of them. Amid this feeling of powerless, spiritual and religious values are disseminated through *olah roso* (manage our sense). Hopefully, it would be one of the best ways to master the situation.

Moreover, the pandemic is like opening Pandora's box. The field considered acceptable so far has turned out to have several fundamental problems. During the pandemic, sponsors from private companies that have been the prominent supporters of art activities are also busy surviving. The art ecosystem in Indonesia, which is not yet established

and stable, immediately collapsed due to the pandemic. It resulted in the absence of a safety net for artists and art workers.

The government can provide financial assistance to survive artists and art workers in the short term and improve the arts and culture ecosystem for a long-term program. Then what should be done next? Here, I present three recommendations that can be considered.

1. The government needs to prepare a separate recovery scheme following the characteristics of artistic activities, especially those not on an industrial scale. Moreover, the artwork has proven to have significantly helped many people to survive during the pandemic.
2. The arts ecosystem must be built holistically. Even though it is not yet profitable in terms of capital, traditional arts must have the same support as other arts, such as film, new media, and visual arts. In addition, the government must provide an incubator for developing arts actors without caring about the type of art classification.
3. Alignment to all fields of art. The government is not an entrepreneur. It means that the government may not distinguish between the classification of art to be saved and cared for based solely on profit. There is no longer any need for a distinction just because of the number of fans. Instead, traditional arts must be mainstreamed because they have been marginalized and do not have enough audiences and enthusiasts.

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