

**BREAKING THE SILENCE :  
KETHOPRAK AND SOCIAL HEALINGS OF THE PAST VIOLENCE  
IN RURAL JAVA<sup>1</sup>**

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About seven years after the downfall of Suharto, social and political change has begun to take place in Indonesia. While the present government has not yet treated past human rights violations seriously, several groups of people such as local artists, NGOs and other civil society elements have initiated the articulation of voices of the past victims of violence. They have endorsed the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission which is conducting a process of ongoing selection. Their efforts have appeared in the establishment of victim organizations and other activities. Victim's Reunions and dissemination of their stories are apparently important to release their traumatic pains and burdens.

In this regard, *ketoprak* as a popular art in rural Java enables the mediation and articulation of truth from the victim's perspective. During the gatherings of women ex political prisoners of the New Order, *ketoprak* became the centre of cultural programs. In addition, the performance of *Bang-Bang Sumirat* (The Rise of Glowing Lights) based on the events of the 1965-1966 massacre, absorbed an audience of hundreds in the Art Bazaar of Bantul. By means of the performance people could learn a different version of history from that co-opted in the past by authoritarian rulers. The value of justice which so far has been monopolized by the rulers is beginning to be realized as not only the nation's responsibility but also that of individuals in their communities. Performing the victims' marginalized stories is an effective means to listen to the living aspiration and truth in the society. This paper critically examines the phenomenon of local performance art – *ketoprak* - in contemporary Indonesia and explores the possibilities of the medium for trauma healings for the survivors. It will evaluate the significance of *ketoprak* in mediating the recognition of the past violence and serving as a force for reconciliation in the community.

**The Silence of Victim's Narrative**

The killings of six generals and one middle high ranking army officers on the eve of 1 October 1965 had become a paradoxical moment in the Indonesian history. According to the official history, the killings were executed by the 30 September Movement. The communist party was accused of being culprit behind the movement. It was then aborted by the military under the command of Liet. Gen Soeharto. From then on the military disseminated the claim that it saved the nation from the abortive coup. In the official narrative, the counter-coup marked the beginning of New Order Indonesia. The

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rise of the New Order gave birth to the authoritarian rule of power that it masterminded the historical narratives of the nation.

Following the counter coup, the military deployed to any other areas of Indonesia, especially in Java and Bali to destroy communist party and its affiliated organization since the midst of October 1965. Militia backed up by military started to arrest, to torture and to kill people who were suspected became communist party members and even sympathizers around the country. The wave of massacre was happened in different times between Java and outer Java. In central Java, it was begun in Semarang, Salatiga and Boyolali on 20 October 1965 - about two weeks after September. In Bali, it started from the late of November 1965 while it was in 1969 – 1970 in East Nusa Tenggara. Estimation of the victim number varied. Five hundred thousands to a million people were slaughtered and hunted for detention without trial (Crib, 1990). Ironically, the atrocity had been turned into the story of victorious and heroic military action to wipe out communism through a bloody flood of the citizen.

People who had been released from detention, they were not easily accepted and accommodated in the social encounter. They had been living under surveillance of state apparatus. For instance, their identity cards were marked by ET (Eks Tapol, ex political (communist) prisoners) or OT (Organisasi Terlarang, Banned Organization) so that they were discriminated for public services and accessibilities. They were also eliminated for participating in the social organization such as kampung leaders. Moreover, their children and families were silently restricted to apply as civil servants through screening test of *bersih lingkungan* (environmental cleanliness). People were detached from them in order to avoid (threat of) ideological contamination.

In other words, the formers of 1965-6 detainees were forced to live in social isolation and burdens of negative stigma. Alongside their surveillances, authoritarian ruler of New Order stigmatized the victims and survivors of 1965-6 through historical writings and its dissemination. In this line, New Order established the regime of truth for historical memory of the nation. Students and government officers were obliged to follow periodical trainings in the regime's version of Pancasila ideology. A part of the lesson emphasized the divine power of Pancasila as the state ideology against treachery, brutality and immorality of its enemy, which it would endlessly want to change with other ideology, especially communism. Normative and ideological spheres were sharply inscribed through control over textbooks, media and publishing arts institutes, museums, monuments, public ceremonies and national symbols (Zurbuchen, 2005: 4)

Communism was singled out as the most threatening ghost by the authoritarian ruler. According to Ariel Heryanto (1999: 151), the threat was however constructed on the basis of floating empty signifier in which it refers to anything or anyone. It persisted even though the authoritarian regime had stepped down. Zurbuchen (2005) remarked this discursive phantom of the Communist threat as “a demon whose reproductions have penetrated historical awareness and popular culture and continue to be invoked to distract attention from own's misdeeds or throw the political opposition off guard.” It was operated through censorship, banning and stigmatization to what were alleged as the revival symptoms of communist movement. Furthermore, Heryanto delineated that the hegemonic and oppressive control of the New Order over communism threat were messy and insidious, but within its arbitrariness it produced hyper-obedient practices.

New Order terror using icon of communism threat nurtures fear, silence and self-censorship amongst people, even though they were born long after the tragedy. A student following workshop for visual art production entitled “September Something” posted his trauma dealing with the state sponsored terror on media.<sup>3</sup>

...I was born in 1983 so that I did not have direct experience with the event of 1965. I only know it from the available sources providing by “them” (state). When I was in elementary school, I had to watch film on “The treachery of 30 September Movement/ PKI.” Unfortunately, I never ended to see it. Up to now, I fear up to see the scene. I also remembered when my parents were anger to my older brother because he took a snapshot to People Democratic Party (PRD) during their rally in Surabaya. At the time, I only kept a question by myself: “Is there something wrong???” After Suharto went down, much information released about 1965 from another point of view certainly. It made me have different perspective. Nonetheless, did it let my fear disappear? Now, I am still afraid whenever seeing the symbol of hammer and sickle.

The New Order’s monopoly of historical truth was somehow effective to lock up collective memory of the traumatic 1965-6 tragedy for not being spoken beyond the official narratives. Many Indonesians put the ghostly past under the carpet. People might keep a distance in the daily encounter with the survivors to avoid allegation of ideological contamination with the immortal past of communism threat. Most of the survivors remained silent although they suffered discrimination in public services and even official harassment dealing with the stigma.

### **Demanding the Fulfilment of the Promise for Reformation**

On July 25, 2005, elderly people came one by one to the SMKI building in Yogyakarta since early mornings. Some of them enthusiastically came in a group by bus, some others were on foot. Entering the *pendopo* (auditorium hall) of SMKI, they like hugged each others when they met. “Ohh...God, you are still alive! Where do you live? How is your family? Where are our other friend?” Those were the words that they were often spoken one to another. The tears of touch and the scream for unbelievable meetings sometimes were heard blasting among the crowd. At the centre of *pendopo*, a cloth banner written “*Temu Rindu, Menggugat Senyap*” (Meet for Longing, Shake for Silence) was posted. The meeting was a moment of gathering amongst women ex-political prisoners of the 1965-6 affairs. For most of the attendants, it was the first moment to reunite after they had released from the detention camp about 20 to 25 years ago. Such as the gatherings was impossible to make when the authoritarian rule of New Order still hold on power. Unless the organizer may be suspected as new left wing.

Most attendants might have not imagined if they could still meet each others after a long time ago. Even, those people who lived in the same neighbourhood were previously neither eager enough to meet nor to communicate freely. They would rather keep their experiences for themselves and put away their stories in social encounters for some of the time. One of the reasons is that they avoid rumours, gossips or allegations from neighbours for their memories of 65-6 tragedy even though all of them had been detained and imprisoned without trial. Moreover, the label of women political prisoner

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<sup>3</sup> I will elaborate the visual projects on September Something in the subsequent part of the paper below.

was sensitive issues to speak in the community because the stories about women affiliated with Gerwani (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia – Indonesia Women Movement) stigmatized as immoral, cruel and inhuman.<sup>4</sup> For public's intents and purposes, the story what they had experiences during 1965-6 tragedy was kept in their mind silently for more than 30 years.

It was unsurprising that the reunion was then attended by more or less 500 people from different regions i.e. Yogyakarta, Klaten, Surakarta, Purworejo, Kebumen, Jepara and other towns in Central Java. They came to the meeting place voluntarily and even they brought snack which they cooked by themselves to share. The gathering was actually initiated by Bu Mamiek and Bu Sri Muhayati who had visited them one by one personally. The two women are survivors of 65-6 tragedy. Both of them met in Plantungan prison when they were detained.<sup>5</sup> At present, Bu Sri Muhayati followed Bu Mamiek staying in her house because she wanted a friend to release her trauma burden. According to both of them, their experiences for sharing the bitterness as the victim of the past violence then carried on their idea to make reunion amongst the fellow women survivors. As they said, they wanted to empower each others during their elderly or at least enable to rest in peace whenever they pass away. Implicitly, there are demands for recognition and rehabilitation of their status as full of citizenship since most of them are still discriminated for uncertain reasons.

The needs of victim of the past violence to release their historical burden met with the concern of several institutions and NGOs promoted transitional justice approach for reconciliation. Amongst the organization and the study centre, there were Syarikat Indonesia, the Centre for History and Political Ethics (PUSdEP, Sanata Dharma University), National Commission for Women (Komnas Perempuan), and the Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy (ELSAM).<sup>6</sup> They were then facilitated to manage the activity by their own contribution such as providing volunteers and facilitator to organize the event as well as financial donation. In ideological and practical level, such as those institutions were consistently committed to insist the new government endorsing truth and reconciliation commission in which it is still under the selection process.<sup>7</sup> The involvement of academician, social workers and activists either personally or collectively

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<sup>4</sup> The immorality image of Gerwani is actually constructed by Suharto who control over the printed media soon after the aborted 30 September Coup. Daily Angkatan Bersenjata and Berita Yudha reported that members of Gerwani had committed in the killings of six generals in Lubang Buaya. Both the newspaper described that the generals had been tortured of the women left wings of communist party who made an orgy. In the Monuments of Lubang Buaya, it is drawn women dance of Harum Bunga while tortured the high level of Army officers. See Weiringa, 1998 and Tiwon, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Plantungan is the name of village in the region of Kendal, Central Java. It is used as an isolated camp for women political prisoners in 1970s. The place had become the hospital of leprocy patient prior to the camp utilization.

<sup>6</sup> There are many other organizations committed to facilitate victims of past violence as well as human right abusement that raise up at the last years of Suharto rule i. e. IKOHI, KONTRAS, IMPARTIAL, PEC, etc.

<sup>7</sup> The selection of truth and reconciliation commission is very tough because there are many interest behind the institution. The birth of the article on the issue has taken at least five years since the down fall of Suharto. It was initiated by groups of people embracing NGOs, civil society and academicians. They endorse the legal aspect for reconciliation to Habibie government. It was postponed for some of the time along with the dispute between military and elite group of authority. Somehow, the political elites use the issue of truth and reconciliation commission merely to get support for either positions or to acquire voices during the campaign of general election.

as part of civil society demand for social justice and democratic practices had raised in a line of reformation.

In terms of victims of 1965-6, there are also several associations being established to provide a place for sharing of their traumatic burden. However, most of the organizations actually began visible when the authoritarian rule of New Order stepped down. Included them, there are namely Paguyuban Korban Orde Baru (PAKORBA), LPKP, LPRKROB, FOPPERHAM, IKOHI, etc. Nonetheless, all of the mentioned organizations have their own ideas and strategies dealing with their claims for reconciliation issues. For instance, one needs merely forgiveness and rehabilitation while others attempts either to calculate their losing material and property for reparation or to emphasize on judicial system. Most of the organizations also do not pay attention gender as specific issues. Men seem dominant rather than women in their activities as well as in their involvement. Women voices seemed less articulated in the discourse of reconciliation. Therefore, when Bu Mamiiek and Bu Sri Muhayati proposed their idea to hold the activity, they considered to put the priority to women survivors.

The gatherings itself lasted not more than 4 hours, but it leaved memorable moments to the attendants. In this occasion, they did not only meet with whom they had ever spent together in New Order detention, they also spelled out voices about their experiences how they were able to survive after releasing from the detention and to start living from their ruins of life. Some others delineated their sufferings because their communities and even families keeping them a distance because of avoiding contamination with their communist stigma. The touching moment was happened when they saw one of their friends who were mad in the jail had become normal. The woman even walked to the stage in the centre of the meetings and read a poem.

The organizer indeed let the meetings go on informally. The attendants sit down on the floor around a half circle. At the centre, it was a stage where they could make art performances like reading poem, dancing or singing. The peak of meetings that absorbed attention of the attendants was actually happened in the short play of *kethoprak*. All eyes watched on the elegant figure of Bu Kadariyah who had never been on the stage since the 65-6 tragedy. In her seventies, her acting was still shown her popularity of 1960s. In this play, she acted as a mother who asked responsibility for a rich old man - somehow high level bureaucrat who had two wives, but he harassed and made her pretty daughter being pregnant. Most of audience busted of laughing when the mother mocked and stripped the old man for his immorality and insolent.

A woman sit next to me commented to the story in which it reflected an arbitrariness phenomenon of *priyayi* (high to middle status of Javanese) to *wong cilik* (low, ordinary people). According to her, people who own power and status tend to abuse it for his personal and material interest. It is particularly addressed to patriarchy culture that put men's role dominant in all living sphere. She claimed that men of *priyayi* could do anything as he liked whenever he was far away from his household. Meanwhile, her spouse was innocent to what men do beyond the domestic area as far as he fulfilled the obligation as a father and a husband.

Then, the women began to appropriate her comments to what she remembered when she was arrested and interrogated about 30 years ago. She told me that she was harassed by several interrogators while she was asking her activities in Gerwani. She knew nothing about the organization except for attending district meetings to discuss

women's right in the society. In the detention, she could not forget to what the interrogator did since she was not only forced to claim as a member of Gerwani, but also the way the interrogator did. She told me while the interrogators asked questions, their hands groped for her breast and their foot fingers attempted to touch her intimate organ. She was also forced to be naked together with other detainees. When she asked why they treated her like that, they humiliated that it had to be done for Gerwani members because Gerwani was less respected than prostitutes. In her silence, she thought how did they feel if their spouses heard and saw their husbands treating women like that?

People who need to release the pain were in fact not only felt by survivors, but also others who were connected with the perpetrators. There was incident when the reunion would be ended. Mutmainah, a girl who assisted to organize the meetings, was hysterically crying out. She scream and hug to one of an old women and pronounced her apologize repetitively. When she become calm down, she said that she felt guilty after hearing experiences of the victim and survivors. It reminded her to a friend whose life changed up side down because of the 65-6 tragedy. She found that her friend became insane and his family lives in poor condition since his parents were arrested and passed away in the atrocity. As she learned later on, it was actually her father who arrested and tortured their parents. While her father never felt guilty and even proud of his previous bloody action, she was confused and felt having a sin. She did not know to whom she asked for forgiveness to the sin of her family.

A woman who sits around her tried to console. She said:

“Okay...okay, just relax and stay calm... All of us know what you feel. I can understand your desperate and frustration. Do not hate your father. Perhaps, he only did the task or instruction of his upper level person at the time. The most important thing is that you see and find today is very different with what people talk about us. We are not prostitute. We are not cruel, brutal and immoral like what people think... We are also human like others who could be sufferings, hate or happy.”

Alongside gathering in reunion or establishing victim's association, the survivor voices to contest with official historical narratives have been published in the form of memoirs, novel, and poetry. Art performances and other visual arts raise topics interrogate historical construction of the authoritarian rule. For instance “Mass Grave” tells about exhumation of 65-6 victims in Wonosobo, “Gift to Mother (*Kado untuk Ibu*)” show the stories of women survivors and “the Trace of Blood (*Jejak Darah*)” describe the arrest and torture of traditional artist who is allegiated as PKI sympathizers. The interested point is that those last works are produced by young generation who have no direct experiences with the tragedy 65-6.

As Indonesia is distancing itself from the period of Suharto's authoritarian rule, the young generation begins to ask questions about its past. The willingness to confront the events and developments of the past forty years are, however already visible. The historical truth which is used to legitimize the authoritarian ruler is thus contested with multiple voices of the trauma burden of historical past.

A workshop which is so called “September Something” produce several art works questioning official narratives of historical truth on the 1965-6 tragedy.<sup>8</sup> The short film

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<sup>8</sup> According to the organizer, the visual project of September Something intends to interrogate collective memories of the 1965-6 tragedy from the generation who was born in the golden heyday of New Order.

production directed by Hahan attempted to trace why the song of *Genjer-Genjer* was banned to hear since the 1965. As Hahan found a phonograph record of 1960s contained the song in which its title on the cover was highlighted with a circle as dangerous, he gives a title for his work “*Berbahaya*” (Dangerous) The song was sung by popular artist Lilis Suryani with Baju music group. He then interviewed several people randomly to search for their understanding of the problem. In fact, no body knows the reason why *Genjer-genjer* is labeled as the dangerous song.<sup>9</sup>

The similar innocent of the youth to 1965-6 event also appeared on the video clip entitled “Gerwani on Stage”. Illustrated by the “*Genjer-Genjer*” song, the clip shows the comments of girls and boys about the image of Gerwani. Actually, the interviewee knows nothings about Gerwani except women members of the communist party. However, they commented that the Gerwani is sexy, superwoman and political activists. As presented in the clip, the producer views the image of Gerwani just like a women career nowadays. They are apparently confusing to what and who Gerwani is.

Since the basis of legitimacy of the authoritarian ruler to exercise the threat of communism fade away, people insisted historical clarification of the 1965-6 events. In the midst of the new regime absence carried over the problem, people played out idioms of “the allegiated state enemy” to remind them. A group of students in Indonesian Institute of Art, Yogyakarta set up music groups namely Gestapu<sup>10</sup> in 2000. Instead of eradicating the negative stigma and bad image of 1965-6 victims as constructed by New Order, the birth of the music group is intended to stimulate people for not being suffered a historical amnesia. The group usually plays *dangdut* (melayu orchestra) to make people familiar with the sound of music. The lyrics of their music always articulate social problems. During their performances, it was also interrupted with the oratory of the players wearing t-shirt appropriated with the theme. Gestapo have two fan’s group following them in any performances. The fan’s group united in what they called “dance batallion of TJAKRABIRAWA (**T**jakap = charm; **R**amah = polite; **B**ijaksana = wise; **R**api = neat; **W**agu = Odd)” for male fans and “GERWANI (**G**erakan **W**anita Ingin **N**ikmat – women’s movement need pleasure)” for female fans.

However, the efforts to interrogate the past atrocities did not go on smoothly. People who obtained advantage from the past violence as well as hidden perpetrators hamper and intimidate efforts and activities concerning with the uncovering the mask of 1965-6 affairs. The official historical narratives blaming the communism and its latent

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The title itself remind to the month of September in that the authoritarian ruler was used periodically to celebrate the divine day of Pancasila against the latent dangerous threat of communism. Since the step down of Suharto, the ritual has no longer glorified. From July to August 2005, the participants of September Something involving young artists and students at their teenagers gather to discuss and to prepare production individually dealing with their knowledge about the event. Various artwork were made including music arrangement, clip video, graphics, photograph and even chocolate cakes. The production then was exhibited on September 17 – October 7, 2005 in Kedai Kebun, Yogyakarta.

<sup>9</sup> According to the official narrative, the song was in a blacklist because the lyrics indicated that the communist party mastermind to what had happened at the Crocodile Hole in the eve of October 1. It is said “*ing kledokan pating keleler* “ referred to the killing of six army generals. In the film of G 30 S/ PKI directed by Arifin C. Noor, the song illustrated for accompanying Gerwani members to dance “*Harum Bunga*” while torturing the kidnapped generals.

<sup>10</sup> Gestapu is acronym of Gerakan September Tiga Puluh. It is the other name of G30 S. The idiom of Gestapu is often used by people to associate it with the similar phenomenon of Gestapo in Germany.

threat to the nation still thrives today in the minds of victors, supporters and cronies of the New Order. The initiatives of Abdurrahman Wahid on his presidency to withdraw the law banning communist party and communism as a form of reconciliation confront a serious challenge from various agents. In Yogyakarta, poster of anti-communism often appears in the strategic corner of crossroad. Those posters are made by Indonesia Anti-Communist Forum (FAKI), a militia backed up by military. It is evident that Indonesian society has not completely change after the demise of Suharto.

The needs to reconcile with the past are inevitably demanded by elements of civil society alongside the reformation. This discourse has been widely spoken as the commitment of Indonesian to shape democratic society. Ironically, while civil society takes seriously the issue, it is likely considered as either rhetoric or commodity of the elites to gain support for their political interest and position. The political culture and the ensuing system of government of the New Order still strongly influence the society.

### **The Rise of the Glowing Light: Forgive but not Forget**

Reconciliation is not simply a matter of shaping the society. The discourse has attracted serious attention in much scholarly work. Zurbuchen (2005: 8-13) observed the difficulties of countries that have experienced repression and a gross violation of human rights to consolidate new national arrangements without dealing with their historical past. Instead of the weak or corrupt on judicial system, perpetrators and supporters who prospered in the patronage with the authoritarian regime are embraced as a part of the new government. There are neither formal charges nor tribunal court made to settle down the past violations. Historical clarification as Zurbuchen affirmed is the another way around to promote reconciliation process and truth seeking of the past historical injustice. Historical clarification enable helping the survivors to release the burden of trauma and social stigma because it lay bare to acknowledge victim's status during the truth monopoly by the authoritarian ruler.

The conventional method of historical approach however is insufficient to uncover the mask of past atrocities. Robert Goodfellow (2002: 48) critically assessed that modern historical writings tend to ignore or to set aside "eyewitness" interview and plain narratives since it was crafted to be ostensibly scientific. Instead of this, oral history is key point to account for such as stories of the victim and survivors. In this line, Robert Cribb and Kenneth Christie underscored that in the broad historical perspective, there is still a little knowledge and less explanation of the consequences of atrocity. They claimed that the emotional burden which survivors carry from their experience of political trauma remained largely unexplored, mainly because documents rarely existed to give any insight into this terrain. In addition, interview work in this field is possible only for relatively recent events, and then it is enormously time consuming, spiritually troubling and often fraught with political difficulties (2002: 5).

While historical clarification of the past trouble is still made and unmade in the discursive practices of the post Suharto Indonesia, the initiative to reconcile with the past trauma has been emerging from among the elements of society. Among others, the traditional art performance in Java namely *ketoprak* available to use as the medium to force the process. The possibility of *ketoprak* to reveal the social burden of the past violence related to their stories which are actually based on people's memories (their recollection of images). It does not only enable historical truth embedded in collective

memory to be articulated, but also it leads people to share understanding of what they ought to do in such as situation like the story of the past.

Historically, ketoprak was born in the early of twentieth century as popular performance art among Javanese villagers. It was influenced by *tonil* - Western theatre and *wayang* (puppet shadow), but ketoprak gradually developed the borrowed elements for its own sake. Although ketoprak usually stages plays inspired by stories of the Javanese kingdoms of the past, it talks about the present day Java. According to Budi Susanto (1997:15), ketoprak has been a means of creating collective consciences in people without access to bureaucratic or other institutionalized forms of political muscle. He further observes:

Generally speaking, the Javanese ketoprak community (actor as well as spectators) were self consciously proletarian, remaining largely ignorant of royal or classical Javanese arts and literature. They came from agrarian backgrounds which have been well equipped to deal with and to be able to overcome the dangers present in the otherness of human beings and human nature with their operative knowledge or know how. This knowledge allows them to survive, carry on and find the means to reconciliation with their community fellows (1997: 28).

Ketoprak constitutes a performance to deal with the past for the present social life. The significant correlation of social life within ketoprak plays has been underscored by Barbara Hatley. In her studies, she found

There are certain conventional patterns which define kethoprak as a theatre form which resonates with key areas of the experience and thought of its actor's as well as spectator's participation. As these patterns are reproduced in individual performances, their shaping by the circumstances of production of the show gives rise to specific kinds of social reference. (c.f Budi Susanto, 1977: 13)

The potency of ketoprak to stimulate people's remembering of the past is experimentally done by Bondan Nusantara, the script-writer and the art director of ketoprak, in performing a story entitled *Bang-Bang Sumirat* – The Rise of Glowing Light. As he told me, he composed the story inspired by 1965-6 turmoil which is nowadays seemed to forget while leaving some problems to the victim's discrimination and stigmatization of being affiliated with the communist party. He intends to make people remember such as the tragedy that it could be happened anytime just like what was happened 40 years ago. People who used to claim as the saviour was uncovered his greediness so that it leads to other calamity of the nation. In so doing, he offers a new hope by learning from the stories in that people have to forgive each other, to restore order and to maintain harmony for the future.

The intention of Bondan is explicitly delivered to the spectators prior to the ending of the performance. It is articulated by a madman who suddenly appears at the stage. He said:

.....Take a look at! all look at! The world is not stopped! The world rotates just like *cakra manggilingan*.<sup>11</sup> Person is used to claim as the saviour, now he is becoming a terrible giant! Damage! all damage! Bantala Warih (the homeland) flood by blood. The homeland is lost thousands of his citizens. Tolerance is suspected as illness. The humanity is disregarded. It is ignored by the greedy of power desire. Oaaalhh Mbok... all death – their heart is death, their sense is death and so do their humanity. The only remaining thing is a voracious giant. It eats land. The forest is cleared away. The rice field is chewed up, and the mountain is swallowed.

Odd... the world is odd. White and black is mixed turning into grey. Right and wrong is mingled looking for its own place. Eee... friend wake up. Let's wake up. Let's learn from the story. Kill to kill, revenge to revenge and hate each others will not make the world becoming peace. It is just to raise endless suffering ...

Let's friend wake up...look at the southern side. There is a light down to earth. That is the light of hope. That is the glowing light that you wait. That is the light of hope so that people rise up to step in the new age. The age is full of hope for better living in the future.

Whether people catch the message or pay attention to the statement of the madman or not, it is not under my scrutiny at the show time. But, the performance absorbed a thousand spectators around the regency of Bantul near Yogyakarta. They stunned following the plays and most of them did not move from their place to watch on until the end of the story. Occasionally, they commented to the actors that they have been familiar as it involved 300 actors and actresses in the regions. The performance was on stage at August 11, 2005 in Art Bazaar of Bantul and its recording tape was aired twice in local television – TVRI Station Yogyakarta on August 17 and 24, 2005 at 20.00 – 21.00.

The story begins with in the kingdom of Bantala Warih (homeland) – where its name does neither find in the legend nor real in the local history. The king of Bantala Warih, Prabu Tuk Gunung, and elite groups of Bantala Warih is worried and disturbed with the rumour provoked by army officers that the kingdom will be attacked by its neighbour kingdom, namely Malaya Bumi. Then the king of Bantala Warih instructs the army commander to prepare troops and to give training for civilians to be volunteers sending in the battlefield. When the confrontation is inevitably heightened, the king is reported sick in which it raise a buzz about a board of general preparing to takeover the power if the king passing away. The buzz is heard by the guardians of the kings in which they take an action by kidnapping several army elites. The kidnapped general then is executed that it creates chaos. At the same time, a middle high ranking army officer, Haryo Tratap, appears

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<sup>11</sup> Cakra Manggilingan is the heirloom of Kresna/ Vishnu in which it symbolizes the life of human being up and down like a circle.

and announces that there is a coup d'etat in Bantala Warih. He approaches the king through his persons asking for a commanding letter to destroy the rebels and to restore order in the country. While the king lost his power ascendancy, what are happened then are mass killings. Haryo Tratap is behind the massacre but people presume him as a hero. Thus, he holds on power, but he suddenly changes his face into a terrible giant. Everyone is afraid of the giant, except a madman coming to the stage and mocking the giant as well as giving a comment to the massacre.

In my view, it does not so difficult to know the parallel of the story in the stage with what was happened in 1965. It is simply not because I have been introduced the story from the director. Neither it is because the name of kingdoms and actors looked like the geopolitical settings of Indonesia. For instance: the kingdom of Bantala Warih points to Indonesia; Malaya Bumi refers to Malaysia; Prabu Tuk Gunung is associated with Soekarno; Haryo Tratap is associated with Soeharto, etc. Instead of this, the parallelism of the story seems appropriate with the historical narratives of Indonesian politics in the 1960s. Perhaps, the spectators will not associate the story with Indonesia in time of the tragedy. Nonetheless, they might learn from the story that either feud or civil war will destroy themselves and bring about sufferings as they have encountered at least in the year 1965-6 or what they have heard, read and watched recently in other areas like the long conflict in Aceh, Ambon, and Poso. In this sense, forgiveness will open a space for creating peace and harmonious relationship in the society.

Certainly, both actors and spectators of ketoprak consciously knew that the play was not really their real life. What happened on the stage was a fiction although it referred to an event that occurred in the past and not today. Like in other art performances, the scriptwriter as well as producer could not dictate meanings of the performance to their spectators and even their actors. It let people justify the meanings by themselves to what they had watched on the stage. In its independence, they were nonetheless put on the frame that the story on the stage was not detached beyond their experiences and references. The story of *Bang-Bang Sumirat* invited people to remember about the past violence in which people's sufferings derived from the political conflicts of the elites. In doing so, people were reminded to strengthen solidarity and tolerance each others in terms of their Javanese value laden culture because they are just the victims.

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