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## Efforts to Preserve Traditional Madurese Performing Arts by Akhmad Darus in Sumenep Regency

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**Abstract:** This research aims to describe the efforts made by Akhmad Darus in preserving traditional Madurese performing arts in Sumenep Regency. Using qualitative research methods with an ethnographic approach, data was collected through in-depth interviews and field observations. The results show that Akhmad Darus has made significant contributions to the preservation of Madurese traditional performing arts through various efforts including: (1) establishing the Teng Tinkerbell Arts Development Center as a learning platform, (2) reviving extinct traditional dances such as guplang, sikro, thengtère', rateb, and ngo'o dances, (3) creating new works that maintain traditional characteristics, (4) actively participating in competitions and performances at local, regional and national levels, and (5) conducting coaching activities in various villages. These efforts have succeeded in maintaining the existence and sustainability of Madurese traditional performing arts, especially topeng dance, gamelan music, macapat songs, and traditional dances in Sumenep Regency.

**Keywords:** *cultural preservation, Traditional performing arts, Madura masks, Akhmad Darus, Sumenep.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as an archipelagic country rich in cultural diversity, has various forms of traditional performing arts spread throughout the archipelago. Each region has its own unique and distinctive performing arts that reflect the cultural identity of the local community. Madura, as one of the islands in East Java, has a wealth of diverse traditional performing arts, such as masks, karawitan, traditional dance, and tembang macapat (Wibowo, 2019). Madura's traditional performing arts face serious challenges in the era of globalization and modernization. The penetration of pop culture and digital technology has shifted the interest of the younger generation from traditional arts to modern forms of entertainment (Susanto, 2020). This condition is exacerbated by the lack of regeneration of artists and the lack of adequate learning platforms for traditional arts. According to Kartika (2018), many forms of traditional performing arts in Indonesia are threatened with extinction due to the lack of systematic and sustainable preservation efforts. Amid these challenges, there are artists who are highly committed to preserving traditional cultural heritage. One of them is Akhmad Darus, a multi-talented artist from Sumenep Regency who has dedicated his life to preserving traditional Madurese performing arts. Born in 1955, Darus began his artistic journey at the age of 7 and has mastered various fields of art such as mask making, karawitan, traditional dance, tembang macapat, and traditional blangkon making.



The Darus family has a strong artistic background. His great-grandfather was a macapat poet, his grandfather was a gamelan player and mask dancer, while his mother was a gamelan player. This artistic family environment shaped Darus' character as an artist from an early age. At the age of 7, he began performing plays following in his grandfather's footsteps, and while in elementary school, he was already able to play the gamelan as a self-taught musician. Darus' artistic journey became more serious when he founded an art group initially named "Taman Sare" and later renamed "Teng Tinkerbell" in 2010. Through this organization, he not only practiced and created art, but also mentored the younger generation to preserve traditional Madurese performing arts. The art studio he founded has around 40 female and 53 male members who actively learn various types of traditional performing arts. Darus' contribution to the preservation of traditional arts is not limited to local activities. He has represented Indonesia in various international events, one of which was a tour to Japan in 1991 funded by the Japan Foundation. During the tour, he was entrusted as the director and performed mask dances in 9 cities in Japan for 9 consecutive days. This achievement demonstrates international recognition of Darus' quality and dedication in preserving traditional Madurese performing arts.

Darus has also won various awards at the local, regional, and national levels. Some of these include an award from the Province of East Java as a pioneer of regional arts, an award from the Governor as a cultural activist, and an award as a traditional puppeteer. These achievements strengthen his position as a key figure in the preservation of Madura's traditional performing arts ( ) in Sumenep Regency. What is interesting about Darus is his ability to revive traditional dances that were almost extinct. Some of the dances he has successfully revived include the guplang dance, sikro dance, thengetere' dance, rateb dance, and ngo'o dance. In addition, he has also created new works such as the Gambu Pamungkas dance, which has become the hallmark of the rukun pewaras organization, and the Kresna Terop dance, which was once the main subject of a course at STKW (Wilwatikta College of Arts). Seeing Akhmad Darus' extraordinary dedication and contribution to preserving Madurese traditional performing arts, researchers felt it was important to conduct an in-depth study of the preservation efforts he has made and is currently undertaking. This research is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of effective traditional art preservation strategies that can be used as a model for other regions facing similar challenges.

Previous researchers have conducted numerous studies on the preservation of traditional arts. Prasetyo (2019) conducted research on efforts to preserve wayang kulit (leather puppet theater) in Yogyakarta, Sari (2021) researched the preservation of traditional Balinese dance, and Wijaya (2020) examined strategies for preserving traditional Javanese music. However, specific research on efforts to preserve traditional Madurese performing arts, especially those carried out by artists such as Akhmad Darus, is still limited. Therefore, this study is expected to fill this gap and contribute to the study of traditional cultural preservation in Indonesia. Based on this background, this study aims to describe the efforts to preserve traditional Madurese performing arts undertaken by Akhmad Darus

in Sumenep Regency. The focus of the study includes the strategies, methods, and forms of preservation activities carried out, as well as their impact on the sustainability of traditional Madurese performing arts in the region.

## 2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods to gain an in-depth understanding of Akhmad Darus' efforts to preserve traditional Madurese performing arts. The ethnographic approach was chosen because it allows researchers to observe and understand cultural practices in their natural context (Spradley, 2016). The research location was Sumenep Regency, specifically at Bina Seni Teng Tinkerbelle and various places where Akhmad Darus carried out traditional art preservation activities. The research was conducted from December 2024 to June 2025. The main research subject was Akhmad Darus as an artist and preserver of traditional Madurese performing arts. Supporting informants included members of Bina Seni Teng Tinkerbelle, local cultural figures, and communities involved in traditional arts activities. Data collection techniques were carried out through: (1) in-depth interviews with Akhmad Darus and supporting informants, (2) participant observation of traditional arts training and performance activities, (3) documentation in the form of photos, videos, and written documents related to preservation activities, and (4) document studies in the form of award certificates, articles, and promotional materials for traditional art activities. Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman (2014) analysis model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity is ensured through source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking. Data obtained from various sources and methods are compared to ensure consistency and accuracy of information.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Results

Based on the results of interviews and observations, it was found that Akhmad Darus has made various efforts to preserve traditional Madurese performing arts in Sumenep Regency. These efforts can be categorized into five main aspects. First, the establishment and development of Bina Seni Teng Tinkerbelle as a forum for learning and developing traditional arts. This art center was established with the aim of providing a place for the community, especially the younger generation, to learn various types of traditional Madurese performing arts. At the time of the study, this art center had around 40 female and 53 male members who actively participated in learning activities. Second, efforts to revitalize or revive traditional performing arts that were nearly extinct. Darus has successfully revived several traditional dances such as the *guplang* dance, *sikro* dance, *thengtere'* dance, *rateb* dance, and *ngo'o* dance. These efforts were carried out through research into traditional sources, interviews with elders, and reconstruction based on the collective memory of the community. In addition, Darus actively participates in various cultural activities organized by both the government and the community. He often performs at important events such as welcoming regional guests, Sumenep's anniversary, and various cultural festivals. This activity not only demonstrates the existence of traditional performing arts but also introduces them to the wider

community. Third, the creation of new works that still maintain traditional values. Darus has created various dance and mask works in three versions: the Pinggirpapas version, the Kalianget version, and the Salopeng version. In the Salopeng version, he created the Gambu Pamungkas dance, which became phenomenal and was once performed en masse in Sumenep Regency. In addition, there is also the Kresna Terop dance, which was once the main subject of a course at STKW. Not only that, Darus also collaborates closely with the local government in various cultural preservation programs. He is often trusted to represent Sumenep Regency in regional and national art competitions and festivals. This collaboration includes involvement in the East Java Tourism Award, youth puppeteer festivals, and various international events. Fourth, active participation in various competitions and performances at the local, regional, and national levels. Darus has represented Sumenep Regency in various events, including performing at the State Palace during the presidencies of B.J. Habibie, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and during President Joko Widodo's visit to Sumenep. His most proud international achievement was a tour to Japan for the 1991 World Puppetry Festival under the sponsorship of the Japan Foundation. Not stopping at one place, Darus also continues to innovate in the presentation of traditional performing arts without leaving behind the traditional values that underlie them. He created new dances and developed the art of tong-tong while still maintaining existing traditional rules. Fifth, coaching and educational activities in various places. In addition to coaching his own art, Darus also coaches mask-making in Salopeng, Pinggirpapas, and Gapura. He also taught culture at Sumenep 1 Public High School and founded the "KATES" dance extracurricular club, which still exists today.

### 3.2 Discussion

Akhmad Darus' efforts to preserve traditional performing arts demonstrate a comprehensive and sustainable approach. According to Sedyawati (2018), the preservation of traditional culture requires a strategy that includes documentation, transmission, and innovation. These three aspects are clearly evident in Darus' efforts. In terms of documentation, Darus has undertaken efforts to research and reconstruct performing arts that are on the verge of extinction. This process is in line with the concept of "cultural archaeology" proposed by Koentjaraningrat (2015), whereby a cultural preservationist must be able to rediscover cultural elements that have been buried by time. Darus' success in reviving five types of traditional dances demonstrates his ability in this aspect of documentation. The establishment of Bina Seni as a center for traditional arts education is a very important strategic step. According to Rustiyanti (2014), informal educational institutions such as art studios play a vital role in the transmission of culture from the older generation to the younger generation. Through Bina Seni, Darus not only transfers technical skills, but also the philosophical and spiritual values contained in traditional Madurese performing arts. This aspect of transmission can be seen in the coaching activities carried out through Bina Seni Teng Tinkerbelle and various other places. Vygotsky, in his theory of social learning, emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the learning process (Santrock, 2017). The learning method applied by Darus, which does not set a specific time target for his students to master the material, demonstrates a good understanding of humanistic and contextual learning principles. The aspect of innovation can be seen in the creation of new works that still maintain traditional values.

This is in line with the concept of "creative tradition" put forward by Shils (2019), where tradition does not have to be static but can evolve through innovation that still maintains its cultural essence. The Gambu Pamungkas and Kresna Terop dances created by Darus are clear examples of how innovation can enrich traditional art without neglecting its cultural roots. Close cooperation with local governments demonstrates the importance of institutional support in cultural preservation efforts. This is in line with Koentjaraningrat's (2009) view, which emphasizes that cultural preservation requires synergy between cultural actors and government institutions to create an ecosystem conducive to the development of traditional culture.

The success of Darus' preservation efforts was also supported by internal and external factors. Internal factors included a strong family background in the arts, a high level of talent and interest, and consistent dedication over decades. External factors included family support, particularly from his wife, who assisted in various aspects of his artistic activities, support from the local government, and public appreciation. Darus' ability to innovate while maintaining traditional values reflects a mature understanding of cultural dynamics. According to Kayam (1981), traditional culture must be able to adapt to the times without losing its essence. Darus' innovations show that traditional performing arts can remain relevant and attractive to younger generations. The impact of Darus' preservation efforts can be seen from several indicators. First, the preservation of traditional Madurese performing arts in Sumenep Regency. Second, the emergence of a new generation of young artists through training activities. Third, increased public appreciation of traditional arts. Fourth, national and international recognition of the quality of traditional Madurese performing arts. However, there are still challenges that must be faced in the effort to preserve traditional arts. First, limited funds for coaching and promotional activities. Second, a lack of interest in traditional arts among the younger generation.

Third, a lack of systematic documentation of various forms of traditional performing arts. Fourth, competition from modern forms of entertainment that are more appealing to the younger generation. To overcome these challenges, a more comprehensive strategy involving various parties is needed. Local governments need to provide greater support in the form of budgets, facilities, and cultural preservation programs. Educational institutions can play a role in integrating traditional arts into the curriculum. The mass media can assist in promoting and socializing traditional arts to the wider community. The traditional arts preservation model developed by Akhmad Darus can be used as a best practice for other regions facing similar challenges. The success of this model lies in its holistic approach, which involves a balanced mix of documentation, transmission, and innovation. In addition, consistency and long-term dedication are key to the success of preservation efforts.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that Akhmad Darus has made comprehensive and sustainable efforts to preserve traditional Madurese performing arts in Sumenep Regency.

These efforts include: (1) establishing Bina Seni Teng Tinkerbell as a forum for learning and development, (2) revitalizing traditional performing arts that were nearly extinct, (3) creating new works that preserve traditional values, (4) actively participating in competitions and performances at various levels, and (5) conducting coaching activities in various places.

The success of these preservation efforts is supported by internal factors such as family background, talent, interest, and high dedication, as well as external factors such as support from family, government, and community. The positive impact of these efforts can be seen in the preservation of traditional arts, the emergence of a new generation of artists, and recognition at the national and international levels. The preservation model developed by Darus can be used as a reference for other regions in developing effective strategies for preserving traditional arts. However, for the sustainability of preservation efforts in the future, greater support is needed from various parties, particularly the government and educational institutions.

#### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

The first author was responsible for data collection, analysis, and manuscript writing. The second author contributed to data analysis and manuscript review. The third author played a role in research conceptualization and supervision.

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