

The Dramaturgy of Nostalgia and New Media in Sandiwara, West Sumatran Folk Theater

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Abstract

This study describes the changes in the dramaturgy of *sandiwara*, a folk theater in West Sumatra. The research was carried out using a combined research method: literary studies and artistic methods, through a project of making play scripts and dramaturgical worksheets. Research data was collected through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and individual interviews. The results of the qualitative analysis show that writing a play script can build a play's creative ethos in *sandiwara*, bring up the quality, and originality of the ideas and themes. One of the drivers of creativity in *sandiwara* is nostalgia, the longing for the events of *sandiwara* as a medium for evoking the memories of ancestors, hometown, rural creative space, and knowledge production space. The process of designing dramaturgy worksheets shows that *sandiwara* performers' perceptions tend to be optimistic about the progress of new media. *Sandiwara* performers see new media as an opportunity to elevate their performance and showcase their contemporary spirit.

Keywords: *Sandiwara, Folk Theatre, Dramaturgy, New Media, Nostalgia, Indonesia*

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Introduction

Sandiwara is the name of a folk theater that began and developed in West Sumatra from the 1960s to 1990s, rooted in *opera melayu* and *tonil* (Pramayoza 2013). The history of *sandiwara*'s growth stretches back to the late 19th century when Kerchoff reported the development of a new type of artform called 'maleisch toneel' in West Sumatra (Van Kerckhoff 1886). This theatrical artform, which later became popular as *opera melayu*, was allegedly the response of the local population after watching *wayang parsi*, which at the same time was also developing throughout Southeast Asia (Meddegoda 2020). In Malaysia, local communities adapted imitations of *wayang parsi* into a type of performance known as *bangsawan* (Sooi Beng 1993; 1989). Meanwhile in Java, Indonesia, *wayang parsi* inspired the growth of performance called *komedie stamboel* (Cohen 2013; 2006).

Around the 1920s, the style of *bangsawan* and *komedie stamboel* performances grew in West Sumatra, as seen by the birth of the Padangsche Opera with plays based on adaptations of novels by well-known Minangkabau authors, including the novel *Siti Nurbaya* by Marah Roesli (Cohen 2003). At the same time, *randai*, the traditional theater of the Minangkabau community, also began to grow, especially since Kweek School students in Bukittinggi in 1924 brought a story entitled *Cindur Mata* to the *tonil* stage (Navis 1985).

As for the *sandiwara* style, it grew in the 1940s, evident from the progress of the *Sandiwara Ratu Asia*, an itinerant *sandiwara* group, who raised the spirit of patriotism and nationalism (Pramayoza 2020). From the *Sandiwara Ratu Asia* Group, the Smiling Hawaiian music group was born, a well-known band in their time. The performance of *sandiwara* in the style of the *Sandiwara Ratu Asia* also gave birth to musicians, including Zubir Said, who composed the Singapore national anthem, Asbon Majid, leader of the Gumarang Orchestra, as well as Elly Kasim, a legendary regional pop singer from Indonesia (Idris et al. 1996). From the performance of the *sandiwara* in the style of the *Sandiwara Ratu Asia*, writers also emerged, including the author of Indonesia's first female novel, Selasih Saliguri, alias Sariamin Ismail (Rampan 2009).

Since the 1950s, the Nagari (villages) in West Sumatra have been the site of ongoing artistic creativity in *sandiwara*. Not only in the theater field, but *sandiwara* is also a laboratory for renewal in dance. For example, in Padang Magek, Tanah Datar Regency, the *tari mulo pado*, a traditional dance that depicts the arrival of the ancestors of the Minangkabau people, which in the 1970s was the opening dance of *sandiwara* with the play script *Cinduo Mato*, was then developed into a stand-alone dance. (Wahyuni, Yusfil, and Suharti 2017). Almost the same thing happened to the *tari tangan*, a traditional dance that depicts harmony in Minangkabau society, in Padang Laweh, Sijunjung Regency, that now can be performed at various public gatherings after experiencing a renewal in *sandiwara* (Hasnah Sy. 2013). Likewise, with the development of the *tari melayu*, traditional dance which is considered to be the culture of the Malay community on the east coast of the island of Sumatra and the Malaysian peninsula, in the 1960s because it found a place as an interlude in *sandiwara* performances (Erlinda 2012). *Tari melayu*, functions as an interlude in *sandiwara* performance, to fill the time between acts, when the crew changes the setting to show changes in the location of the next scene.

But nowadays, the *sandiwara* tradition in West Sumatra is experiencing an existential threat, due to the reduced number of performers and the stagnation of the creative process, in terms of creating play scripts and performances. Moreover, changes in the lifestyle

of the *sandiwara* audience are a particular threat because new types of work result in less time for watching a performance (interview with Syamsul Hidayat, 29 August 2022; Romi Armon, 3 September 2022; Ridho Ardian, 5 September 2022). Moreover, now that the *sandiwara* audience can access streaming shows anytime, exacerbated by the pandemic, where various performing arts have shifted to online media (Pramayoza and Birowo 2022), the audience for *sandiwara* live performances is decreasing.

This research was conducted to review the current condition of *sandiwara* in West Sumatra, which is suspected, as is also the case in many folk theaters in Southeast Asia, at present they are experiencing a dilemma to survive in the old dramaturgy or to adapt to various media advances undergoing modernization (Ngoc 2014; Hiep and Son 2019). Of course, these two choices are also not easy for performers in West Sumatra because new dramaturgy requires mastery of various new tools and knowledge, for example lighting and projector arrangements or sound system settings, while sticking to old dramaturgy means that in the end they will lose their appeal to the audience.

Research Methods

This research generally applies an Indonesian theater studies approach (Pramayoza 2023). The study aims to analyze the case study of contemporary *sandiwara* dramaturgy, carried out using artistic research methods (Hannula, Suoranta, and Vaden 2014), namely in the form of a series of collaborative activities between the research team and *sandiwara* artists in the three villages. Two activities carried out consisted of: the creation of a play script, followed by the design of dramaturgical worksheets. There are three Nagari (village) used as research locations in West Sumatra: Nagari Duo Koto in Agam Regency; Nagari VII Koto in Lima Puluh Kota Regency; and Kubu Gadang tourist village in Padang Panjang City. The research subjects in the three villages were selected based on search results on the internet about *sandiwara* activities over the last ten years (see: Figure 1).

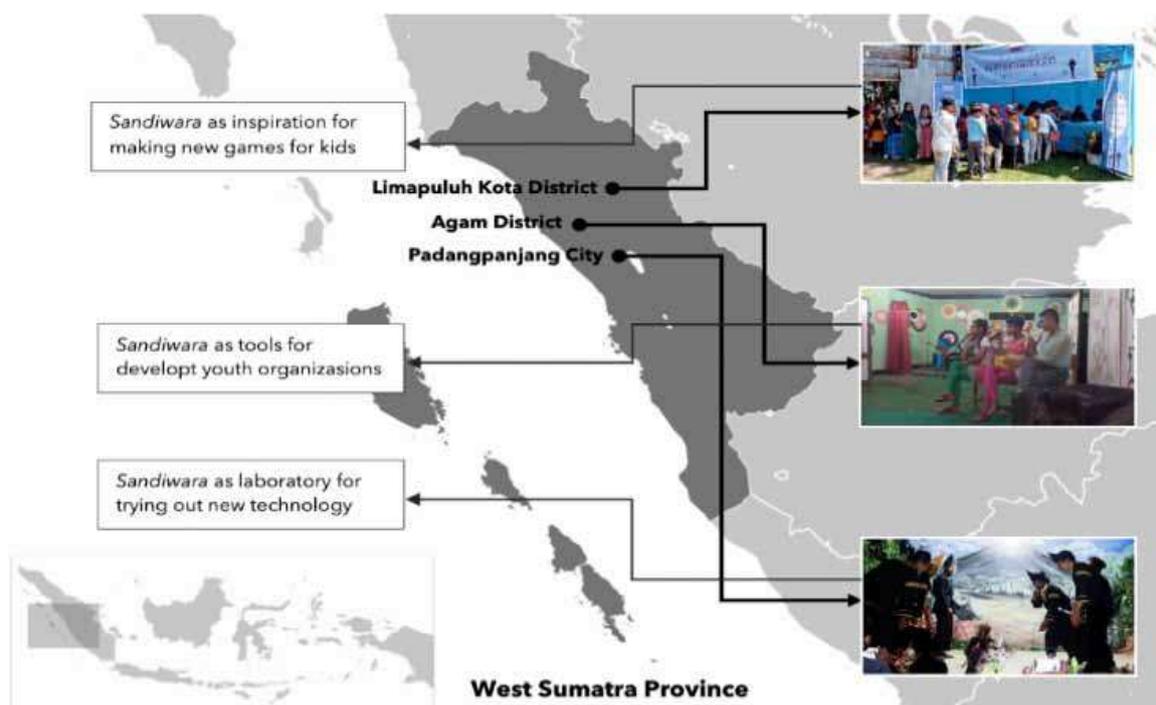


Figure 1. Research map of current dramaturgy of *sandiwara* in West Sumatra, map source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1e/Lokasi_Sumatra_Barat.png, modified by researcher.

There are three people as the main informants in this research, who are the new generation of *sandiwara* in the three Nagari where the research was conducted. Syamsul Hidayat (27 years old), is a young man in Nagari Duo Koto, Agam Regency, who develops new play texts for *sandiwara* in his hometown, while managing *sandiwara* production management through the Muhammadiyah youth organizations he is involved with. Romi Armon (35 years old), is a young man from Nagari VII Koto, Limapuluh Kota Regency, who developed a children's games festival with the scenario of a small town, as a form of extension of *sandiwara* tradition in his village. Meanwhile, Ridho Ardian (29 years old), a young man from the Kubu Gadang tourist village, Padang Panjang City, is active in reviving *sandiwara* tradition in his hometown by writing new play and raising funds for staging and productions.

The primary data collected centers on the memory and knowledge of *sandiwara* performers obtained through direct interviews and focus group discussions. Both data were used to formulate play scripts and dramaturgical working papers. In this case, the dramaturgical working paper is a staging plan, which contains plans for various visual aspects of the *sandiwara* performance, including casting, costumes, settings, hand props and lighting. Additional data was obtained from searching various netizen responses and comments regarding *sandiwara* for the keyword 'sandiwara,' 'sandiwara kampung,' 'sandiwara in West Sumatra,' etc. Furthermore, searches are carried out on social media and other digital platforms. In addition, secondary publication sources were also used from several previous studies.

The analysis is carried out through the joint practice of writing play scripts and dramaturgical working papers, in which the research team encourages and assists *sandiwara* artists in discussing matters that are considered necessary from the writing of play texts and dramaturgical working papers to identifying changes in *sandiwara* dramaturgy and exploring potential future changes. The research departs from the understanding that dramaturgy is related to: (1) the internal structure of a play text; and (2) external elements related to the performance, the concept behind the performance, the political value of the performance and expectations of audience response (Luckhurst 2005:10; Turner and Behrmdt 2008:17-18).

Research Results

The Dramaturgy of *Sandiwara* as a History of Innovation

During the investigation, it was found that the origin of the word '*sandiwara*' in Indonesian performing arts is unclear. However, there is an opinion that this word was popularized by Ki Hadjar Dewantara, the Father of Indonesian Education, as a term to represent a genre of dramatic art developed by native Indonesians, in this case, to avoid the word '*tonil*' being absorbed from the Dutch colonial language (Soedarsono 2002)(Soedarsono 2002; Pramayoza and Yuliza 2023). Ki Hadjar Dewantara wrote in 1936 that '*sandiwara*' is a type of literary art, which is embodied in the form of conversation accompanied by performers (dramatic personae) who carry out all these conversations accompanied by movement and behavior to manifest a story like an event that is real (Pramayoza 2013).

Since the 1950s, *sandiwara* has grown in West Sumatra as a form of 'folk theater' with hybrid dramaturgy, namely a mixture of various styles of dramatic performance, including *opera melayu* and *tonil*, with the addition of modern theater influences (Pramayoza 2013). Elementary schools were the main growth areas for *sandiwara*, including SPG (Teacher

Preparatory Schools), formerly known as Teacher Schools (See: Figure 2). However, the most advanced schools of their time, including INS Kayutanam and Dinniyah Putri, also staged *sandiwara* as one of the extra-curricular activities apart from being an evening of entertainment on important school events (Rasyad, Salim, and Saleh 1991; Navis 1996; Martamin et al. 1997).



Figure 2. Illustration of *Sandiwara* activities by students at Sekolah Guru (Teacher School) in the 1950s. Source: (Thaib and Dasiba 1956).

But, neither the *sandiwara* performers in Nagari Duo Koto in Agam Regency, Nagari VII Koto in Limapuluh Kota, nor the Kubu Gadang tourist village in Padang Panjang City, no longer remember precisely when *sandiwara* started in their Nagari. However, there is a common childhood memory among performers that the *sandiwara* evening performances were fun and exciting events and a source of learning (interview with Romi Armon, 3 September 2022). The training process for the performance of *sandiwara* conducted with organizational formation and, at the same time, was a medium for learning social criticism (interview with Syamsul Hidayat, 29 August 2022). The *sandiwara* performance event is also remembered as a field of creativity, which gave birth to artistic talents, such as play writers, new actors who are able to portray evil characters, dancers and singers, musicians who create special songs to accompany scenes, presenters, etc. (Interview with Ridho Ardian, 5 September 2022).

Sandiwara was then used as one of the benchmarks in cultural development in West Sumatra. A form of development of artistic activities reported in 1954 by the Cultural Bureau of Central Sumatra Province was the various research efforts on the growth and development of folk arts. The report continues with an overview of these arts' multiple forms and contents. In addition to the development of fine arts and sculpture, it is also stated that the Bureau has purchased *sandiwara* equipment that may be used for staging purposes by the general public: "[...] have also been able to provide various equipment of *sandiwara* such as screen, curtain wings, martial arts clothes, all of this is permanently loaned to art studios or the public who will put on performances not only in Bukittinggi but also in other areas that need them." (Thaib and Dasiba 1956)

Thus it becomes increasingly apparent that the growth of *sandiwara* from the beginning was part of government cultural development, innovation and renewal. The root of this view is *toneel* learning in Dutch schools during the colonial period, which was part of the 'ethical politics.' Most native students who had the opportunity to go to school during the Dutch East Indies period were involved in staging this *toneel* while also diligently watching films to make themselves part of modern society. This engagement, for example, was carried out by Sutan Sjahrir and Soekarno, two of the founders of the Indonesian Nation. Sutan Sjahrir performed *toneel* when he attended school at AMS Bandung (Marzek 1994). While Soekarno later founded two *toneel* groups, namely *Toneel Club Kalimutu* in Ende and *Toneel Club Monte Carlo* in Bengkulu (Adams and Sukarno 2018).

The opportunity to study *toneel* from the Dutch colonials was then used by indigenous students to produce innovation, namely, writing play scripts and renewing their oral traditions. For example, it was later proven that the Kweek School Bukittinggi students changed their *kaba* (Minangkabau people's term for oral storytelling), *Cinduo Mato*, into a play script entitled *Tjindur Mata*, later published into a book of play scripts in 1942 (Gani 1942). Not only that, but the introduction to *toneel* later also gave birth to *randai*. This dramatic art is now recognized as a traditional theater art in West Sumatra (Cohen 2003), which continues to experience innovation in form and function (Latrell 1999).



Figure 3. Visualization of the texture of the *Sandiwara* performance in the past, from the 1960s to the 1980s. Source: (Pramayoza 2013).

In short, *sandiwara* is a site where various innovations in the arts have occurred since its inception. For example, in West Sumatra, initial research showed that teachers and cultural activists in the villages used *sandiwara* as an educational medium and a laboratory for experimentation. (Pramayoza 2013; 2020). The results of the experiment then resulted in conventional dramaturgy of *sandiwara* (see: Figure 3), including: (1) dividing the performance into acts and interludes (comedy, pantomime, music, dance, and auction); (2) making *dekor* (decoration) with stage components in the form of *layar bergambar* (illustrated screen), *sebang* (curtain wings), and *strongkeang* (lamps); (3) *carito* (story), as the text play, consists of *carito minang* (in Minangkabau language) and *carito moderen* (in Bahasa); with the words of

a character called *buah kato* (dialog) in a lyrical language style, resembling a rhyme; and or prose language style, an exclamation of language in everyday life (Pramayoza 2013: 99-155).

The New Dramaturgy of *Sandiwara* with New Media Intervention

Based on the findings of research conducted in the three subjects Nagari, there is a strong indication that the development and changes in *sandiwara* dramaturgy in West Sumatra in the last 20 years, or to borrow Barbara Hatley's term 'post-reformation,' were also influenced by two elements, namely: (1) new technologies as staging devices; and (2) changes in script writing strategy. Changes can also be viewed in a dramaturgical way because they involve fundamental elements of dramaturgy, namely the structure that takes place in the text of the play and the texture on the surface physically, both of which can be considered a socio-cultural text as well as a local political text.

Texturally or on the surface, it can be seen that now *sandiwara* in West Sumatra tends to start acquiring or adopting several media developments, which indirectly indicate the infiltration of new media into the daily life of people in West Sumatra. The definition of 'new media' in *sandiwara* can be interpreted as the involvement of various communication media in the image and sound delivery, which were not commonly used before (Hujatnikajenong 2006). In practice, this new media also seems to lead to transmedia (Rae 2017: 162), namely using multiple media at once in a performance or using different media to convey various scene in *sandiwara* performances.

The striking use of LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) projectors as staging devices, a luxury object or equipment a decade ago, can now be rented or borrowed from private owners. LCD projectors are a media technology now often used for various entertainment needs. For example, in creating new *sandiwara* performances, LCD projectors replace the essential component of a typical *sandiwara* dramaturgy, namely *layar bergambar* (literally means a screen with pictures) as a backdrop, which in the past had to be done by making large paintings. Using an LCD projector, *sandiwara* performers in Nagari can easily design a background that they can change based on the needs of the scene, dramatic rhythm, or story plot being presented. Practice like this means that, dramaturgically, now with an LCD projector, *sandiwara* performers can produce certain visual effects in performances, which previously could only be produced in films, especially the rapid changes in scene space (see: Figure 4).

Apart from using LCD projectors, what can also be seen as a significant change in today's *sandiwara* performances is using electronic keyboards, local known as '*orgen tunggal*.' The use of *orgen tunggal* cannot be separated from the development of the creative industry, in this case, local popular music in West Sumatra. The local popular music industry made the use of *orgen tunggal* very massive in West Sumatra in the early 2000s, used in almost all forms of entertainment and events (Asril et al. 2018; Syeilendra 2016). One expert interprets this as a part of the tendency of the Minangkabau people in West Sumatra to '*badunia*' or entertain themselves, escape from the pressures of their lives (Gusti Asnan 2018:2).



Figure 4. The new dramaturgy of *sandiwara* in the present involving new media, since the 2000s, as seen in the performance of the *sandiwara* group in the tourist village of Kubu Gadang, Padangpanjang City (above), and *sandiwara* group in Kawai, Tanah Datar Regency (below). Source: <https://www.pasbana.com/2020/12/sandiwara-bujang-sambilan.html>; <https://hariansinggalang.co.id/menonton-sandiwara-di-kawai-lintau/>.

There was a time when the *sandiwara* traditional stage was a vehicle for expressing and identifying oneself as an artist in society. In the 1960s to 1980s young people used the *sandiwara* stage to display their skills and sophistication in playing musical instruments. At that time, the musical instrument being popular was the combo band. With almost the same motivation, since the early 2000s, the combo band in *sandiwara* has been replaced by the *orgen tunggal*, which is seen as more effective and efficient because it only consists of one piece of equipment, contrast to the combo band, which includes a set of instrument that require more space and significant effort. Using the *orgen tunggal* also encourages dramaturgical changes because it makes it possible to simplify the stage of *sandiwara* performances, where not too many music instrument need to be placed, but can still produce the various sounds needed. After all, *orgen tunggal* can still produce music and sound effects for *sandiwara* performances.

Apart from that, its use, which tends to be more concise and practical, makes this *orgen tunggal* in *sandiwara* performances a field of creativity because it allows many people to participate in learning it. Younger *Sandiwara* performers use this opportunity to explore their skills and, at the same time, test their musicality. The ease of using the *orgen tunggal* is now also supported by the digitalization of music, where various songs, from traditional to experimental ones, can be obtained easily. This sophistication provoked *sandiwara* performers to be creative, make sound compositions, and rearrange old pieces.

The exciting thing is the songs that can be accessed by the performers of *sandiwara* using *orgen tunggal* are even songs that some combo band players cannot perform because they require high skills. Now, with *orgen tunggal*, this can be achieved in a way with a technique similar to karaoke, where the old songs are then stored on one disc to make it easier for the operator to find any piece requested by the singer or the audience who contributed the music in the *sandiwara* performance.

One other use of new media that perhaps was not planned or realized by *sandiwara* performers in their practice today is the use of lighting technology. This technology is a significant change in the artistic arrangement of *sandiwara* performances. With easy access to the sale of equipment for the entertainment industry, including recently through different online buying and selling platforms, *sandiwara* performers also have access to buy and utilize new lighting technology for the needs of *sandiwara* performances. The types of lights commonly used are LED (Light-Emitting Diode), with Par 64, Par 32, and Moving Head specifications, also widely used by popular local entertainment stages.

These three LED light types are used in *sandiwara* performances for lighting techniques. In the *sandiwara* stage, there is an effort to organize and not solely depend on technology. Of course, this change also has a dramaturgical impact because by using this newer lighting technology, *sandiwara* performers can have the opportunity to adjust the light intensity and the color change of the light for their performances. The lighting system can now also function as a provider of time information and amplify the atmosphere of the scenes in *sandiwara* performances.

The new media, which *sandiwara* performers are also looking at as one of the possibilities for updating the form of appearance of their performances, is stage rigging, which is now developing as part of the growth of the creative industry in Indonesia. Today, the rigging stage is a sight that is very easy to find in various festivals that are expanding in Indonesia, as well as in various music concerts, performances of religious activities such as sermons, or even large gatherings for political needs.

Sandiwara performers in various Nagari see the rigging stage as a way out because many villages with *sandiwara* traditions no longer have market stalls and school halls, which have conventional stage venues for *sandiwara* performances (Pramayoza 2013). Its construction, which is very flexible in terms of size, relatively weather resistant, and can be placed anywhere outdoors, are some of the reasons for the popularity of the rigging stage.

The shape of the rigging stage also makes it easier for *sandiwara* performers to place images in the background to reflect the pictures they want. The upper part of the stage rigging also makes it easier for them to install show lights, as well as to install sound system devices. Meanwhile, after the show ends, the rigging stage allows them to immediately dismantle it and reuse the land used as the stage for their other needs. This convenience is essential because the area used for performances in several Nagari is usually productive land used daily for farming or sports.

Viewed as a whole, both because of coercion of circumstances and because they are part of progress, the performers of *sandiwara* seem to be very grateful for the advancement of stage technology in several aspects. If it is returned in its original sense, that all devices used in staging are mediums used to convey messages, the various changes implemented in today's *sandiwara* performances can be seen as the development of new media in *sandiwara* (Barry 2006).

The New Dramaturgy of *Sandiwara* as Estuary of Nostalgia

The development of new media in *sandiwara* dramaturgy today is accompanied by a strong indication that nostalgia for *sandiwara* plays an important role. In this case, nostalgia means a sentimental longing for the past, a resource that allows someone to maintain their perception of the meaning of their life (Routledge et al. 2012; Andersson 2011), where one of those longings is for the atmosphere and events of *sandiwara* performances in the past. The first indication of nostalgia for *sandiwara* is the role of the school as a center for *sandiwara* activities. Nazif Basir, one of Indonesia's leading playwrights and directors from West Sumatra, recounts where he first became acquainted with the world of theater:

Before continuing school from Bukittinggi Middle School to High School in Yogyakarta in 1951, in my village, Balingka, IV Koto sub-district, Agam Regency, it had become a tradition every Eid al-Fitr to hold *sandiwara* performances for three consecutive nights [...] By clearing the school and setting up benches flat as a stage, then equipped with a screen to open the stage lid, the audience sits in a row sitting on chairs in other classrooms which have had their partition walls opened (Basir 2013, accessed November 7, 2021).

Furthermore, Nazif Basir said that the production process for *sandiwara* performances in his hometown was usually led by two brothers named Rasyidin Rasyid and Anis Rasyid, who had studied during the Japanese colonial era at INS Kayu Tanam, led by Engku Syafei. The *sandiwara* performance at Balingka, a Nagari in Agam district, was performed using scripts written in Indonesian, including *Pelarian dari Nusa Kambangan*, *Dokter Syamsi*, *Puputan Bali*, *Penjaga Kubur*, and *Tuaniku Imam Bonjol*. The various titles of the plays mentioned show the wide range of possible genres of stories in *sandiwara*, ranging from tragedy, heroism, adventure to horror.

Nostalgia for *sandiwara* has even become a way for Minangkabau migrants in Jakarta to visit their hometown in the past imaginatively. This kind of nostalgia can be seen in the staging of the play script entitled *Palimo Alang Bangkeh*, a performance that only have a short time to prepared and supported by actors who were picked from here and there. Even though it was produced under minimal conditions, this *sandiwara* performance was entertaining. Nazif Basir, who took part in the production said it was an experiment in a non-rhetorical way, not presented in rhymes but in everyday Minang language, which seemed to satisfy the audience (Pusat Data dan Analisa TEMPO 2019).

Nostalgia for *sandiwara* a decade ago emerged in a mail group called *Palanta r@ntau-net*. The participants in the mail group connected *sandiwara* performances in their hometowns with developments in the Nagari and as one of the good memories of youth organizations in their hometowns. They also remember the bad characters they played in *sandiwara*'s performances back home and use them as an example in instilling good values in the younger generation. The *sandiwara* performance in his hometown was also remembered by the participants in the *Palanta r@ntau-net* email group as a way for them to remember those who are now gone, recognized for their services as well as for their humor or ability to entertain the audience. Similar to the story of Nazif Basir's introduction to theatre, an immigrant named Wady Afriadi wrote that in 1989, when he was a teenager and in junior high school, he had watched a *sandiwara* performance in his village. According to him:

At that time, around Payakumbuh, the Mudiak area, Guguak District, and its surroundings, people often held sandiwara during school holidays. At the sandiwara, all kinds of skills from the village youths and parents who are still young at heart appear. Sandiwara is usually held in the local elementary school building. Starting approximately after the Isya prayer, it will only end at dawn (Afriadi 2004, accessed February 12, 2022).

Sandiwara's performance has also become an archetype in one's memories of his life struggles. In his description, Sjamsir Sjarif wrote:

In 1964-65, when the Liberation of West Irian was in full swing, I watched a sandiwara performance presented by Zuster School students at the Bukittinggi National Building. One of the things that became a memory and is still in my mind to this day is the smart girl with impressive colorful lighting, singing *Senja di Kaimana*. I still remember some lyrics; sometimes, I mutter when the twilight looks bright (Sjarif 2011, accessed February 16, 2022).

One's involvement in *sandiwara* is a way of building an image of the character, as reminiscent of Hanifah Damanhuri, who wrote:

Her full name is Eriwarni, and she is a sweet, agile, versatile woman with a melodious voice. At the farewell ceremony held every year by SD [Elementary School] in my village, several times Warni played the leading role in sandiwara, who was part of the farewell ceremony. The performance that people remember the most is when Warni sang the song *Oto Tri Arga* in a duet with Nofen (the late). The collaboration of a sweet girl and a handsome boy with a stunning voice and matching rocking attitude made the stage lively (Damanhuri 2013, accessed February 16, 2022).

Sandiwara is also a way to commemorate a role considered very well performed by someone. This type of memory is shown in the description by Sjamsir Sjarif in another article, who wrote:

When I was a child, I watched sandiwara [titled] *Si Ambuang Baro*, based on a true story at Balaigurah, Ampek Angkek. I was reminded of Aciek Cipeh, the village's source of trouble and the Nagari's instigator. Aciek Cipeh is played by a woman whose mouth is open and who works happily to incite people against each other. As a result of the intrigue of his instigation, the main characters, who were very good, ended in murder and bloodshed. A sad story because of what Aciek Cipeh did (Sjarif 2013, accessed February 16, 2022).

Memories of a similar *sandiwara* that appeared in a mail group called *Palanta r@ntau-net* ten years ago are now appearing on a more up-to-date platform as a video. One of them is what a YouTuber quite popular in West Sumatra does on his channel @Wadya, under the title: "Mengenang *Sandiwara* Pentas di Tiakar Guguak Era 80-90an." (Remembering the *Sandiwara* Performance at Tiakar Guguak in the 1980-90s). In his content, Wadya revisits not only the school where the *sandiwara* was performed but also the performers of the *sandiwara*, including performers, playwrights, directors, and the gatekeepers at the entrance to the theater, which in this case is the SD building that was transformed. Wadya also invited them to reminisce by looking at old photos stored in each other's albums. The video shows that staging *sandiwara* in one's hometown is one way to build good memories about the people and the village. That is just as important as being a modern person in their time (see: Figure 5).

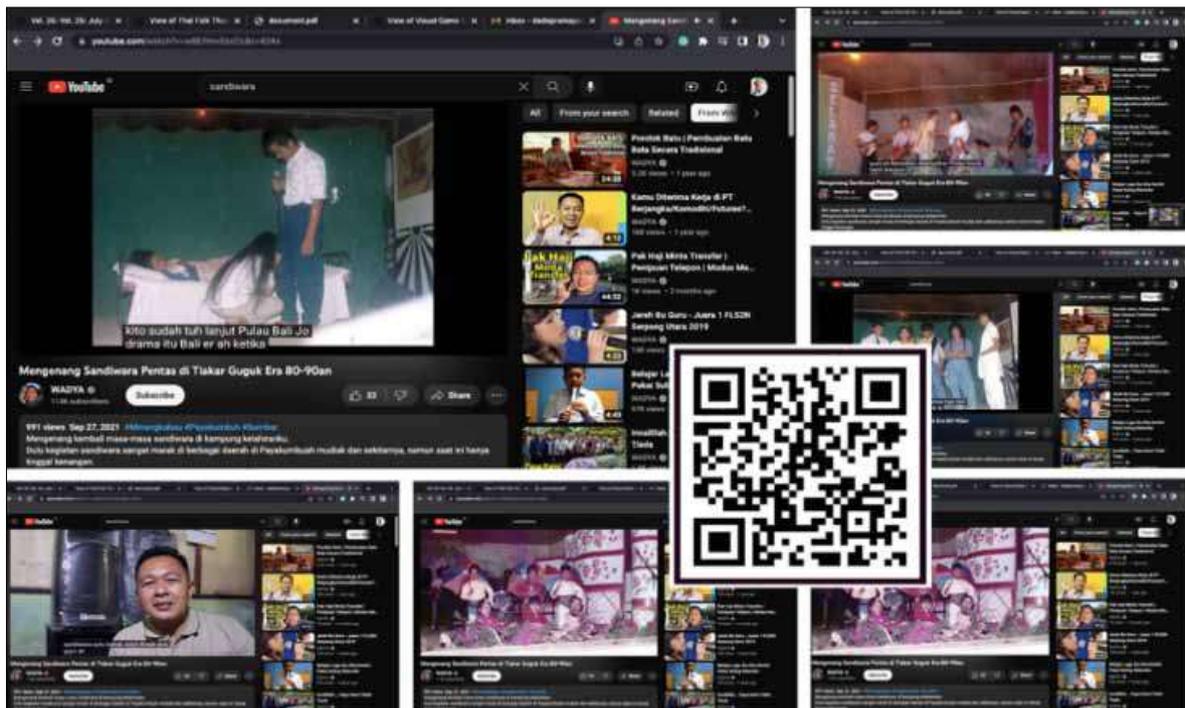


Figure 5. Video created by @Wadya, Youtuber in West Sumatra for his nostalgia about *sandiwara* tradition in his hometown in, see QR Code for quick viewing.

Similar to the nostalgia seen in the *Palanta r@ntau-net* mail group and @Wanda Youtube channel, nostalgia for *sandiwara* performances is also a way to create meaning for *sandiwara* performers in the three Nagari, namely: the beauty of hometown, the importance of friendship, and also the sense of good and evil. The power of nostalgia for *sandiwara* leads to a creative force that encourages the emergence of themes for writing new play scripts today. For the *sandiwara* performers in the three research subject villages, writing the play itself, or as they often refer to it as the 'scenario,' is one way of indicating or expressing their progress or the modernization they have absorbed. Nostalgia for *sandiwara* performances in the past in their country is also very useful in building imagination about the forms of the arrangements.

Three forms of developing play texts for *sandiwara* emerged from the three Nagari. The first shows a desire to make play texts as a way to document knowledge and local history. Passion like this appeared in the tourist village of Kubu Gadang, where the *sandiwara* performers wanted the research to produce a scenario about *Inyiak Upiak Palatiang*, a female martial artist who is the pride of the *Kubu Gadang* community.

The *Sandiwara* performers of Kubu Gadang Tourism Village, Padang Panjang City, want to write down the life history of *Inyiak Upiak Palatiang* as a form of knowledge and role model for the younger generation, as well as a form of their pride. The further aim of writing the script for the play *Inyiak Upiak Palatiang* for them is to form a separate identity from *sandiwara* performances in their village, which they hope can also become a commodity of cultural tourism because Kubu Gadang Village is a village that specifically places village development in the tourism sector.

Meanwhile, in Nagari VII Koto, Limapuluh Kota Regency, nostalgia for *sandiwara* performances in the past underscored the shared memory of *sandiwara* as a positive activity that could not only entertain society as a whole but also become a medium for training and educating children. In this case, what is meant as the past practice is to remember the storyline of *sandiwara* and be creative in constructing expressions in words or poetry that will be recited in *sandiwara* performances. Interestingly, the nostalgia for *sandiwara* was then used by one of the cultural performers in this Nagari to create a festival called the *Festival Olek-Olek*, where children play the role of city residents.

All participants in the *Olek-Olek Festival* work together to organize the festival's location. All the necessary attributes have been prepared, including the medium of exchange in money, several city offices, including the mayor's office, and various agencies' offices. The children then enter the scenario of being able to hold general elections, choose the mayor and then organize the city in an orderly manner, enforce the rules, and obey the applicable laws. The town also has law enforcement officers, consisting of traffic police, immigration office employees, prosecutors, and judges. In addition, some act as Health Services and Sanitation Services (see: Figure 6). All of this was part of Romi's nostalgia for *sandiwara* in his childhood when he had the opportunity to understand patterns of relationships in society through *sandiwara* (interview with Romi Armon, September 3, 2022).



Figure 6. Dramaturgical developments of *sandiwara* in the present as games and simulation, two scenes from Nagari Duo Koto (above), and two scenes from the festival held by Romi in nagari VII Koto, Limapuluh Kota Regency (below). Photo courtesy of Syamsul Hidayat & Romi Armon.

Meanwhile, in Nagari Duo Koto Maninjau, Agam Regency, the performance of *sandiwara*, which was organized by two youth organizations, namely Muhammadiyah Youth and Tarbiyah Youth, was used as a way to explore values of kindness and nobility from the past. At the same time, *sandiwara* production is also used to record and re-invent rich stories from the past that belonged to their Nagari. Two *sandiwara* organizers from different organizations then jointly tracked down and, at the same time, rewrote stories that they believed were popular in the past and were played in their hometown, but now fewer people

know the plot. Based on that, a play script entitled *Puti Amai Nilam* was created, which tells the story of kindness, sincerity in helping others, and patience in facing slander.

The resulting play script shows that writing *sandiwara* nowadays, both for Muhammadiyah Youth and for Tarbiyah Youth, is a way to do written documentation of various oral stories that prevailed in their society and were once popular. Moreover, writing *sandiwara* plays is also helpful in building good relations with the older generation in the Nagari. They believe this relationship will be very productive for building cooperation to advance the Nagari and their community in the future, not only in the field of *sandiwara* and the arts but also in social and cultural life in general.

Conclusion

Various new communication tools have entered into present-day *sandiwara* performances, originating from the infiltration of the media into the social life of *sandiwara* supporters. Thus the existence of new media in *Sandiwara* dramaturgy has happened and has been well received by its West Sumatran audiences. Moreover, the existence of this new media is not seen by most of *sandiwara* supporters as a threat. Thus, it can potentially encourage renewal in the *sandiwara* dramaturgy.

However, there are still some supporters of *sandiwara* who object to the use of new media in *sandiwara* performances, and this also means a subtle rejection of the new dramaturgy of *sandiwara* in general. This attitude is mainly based on great nostalgia for the atmosphere and form of *sandiwara* from the past, which of course cannot be completely found anymore when they watch *sandiwara* with the intervention of new media today. This type of audience usually chooses not to watch *sandiwara* performances with new dramaturgy. This difference in artistic tastes can of course still be seen as beneficial, because it allows for the creation of two styles of *sandiwara* performances. On the one side, classical *sandiwara* with old dramaturgy, which fulfills the nostalgic desires of some audiences, and contemporary *sandiwara* with new dramaturgy on the other side, which is proven to be able to attract the attention of young people and children.

From the beginning, the nature of *sandiwara* is a hybrid theater, which selectively and independently combines several forms and concepts from different dramatic art traditions, enabling the tradition of *sandiwara* performances to make the necessary appropriations for new media. Another strength that can be harnessed from within *sandiwara* to take advantage of technological advances and new media to renew and advance *sandiwara* in West Sumatra is nostalgia, namely the longing of many people for *Sandiwara* performances in their hometowns. Nostalgia for *sandiwara* is felt not only by those who still live in their hometowns but also by those who live far away overseas.

Nostalgia for *sandiwara* is helpful for: first, reconstructing the themes of the play, which are deeply embedded in the memories of present-day *sandiwara* performers and embedded in the memories of the audience. Second, nostalgia for *sandiwara* can be used to reconstruct the dramaturgy typical of *sandiwara* in the past, which was very close to the latest technological developments in the performing arts at that time. Third, the actual nature of *sandiwara* can also be a capital for revitalization and innovation in *sandiwara* by utilizing the spirit of progress and modernization stored in the tradition of *sandiwara* performances.

Furthermore, this nostalgia for *sandiwara* is a valuable asset and strong enough to encourage the tradition of performing *sandiwara* in West Sumatra to become an essential part of the development of the local creative industry and in the movement for the advancement of culture. This possibility is wide open because in the tradition of performing *sandiwara*, various cultural assets owned by an area can be displayed selectively so that the performance of *sandiwara* can function as a form of cultural performance from a region. In that case, *sandiwara* has the potential to become one of the icons of cultural tourism in West Sumatra and generate sufficient capital to encourage the growth of creative industries in West Sumatra.

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