

Kethoprak Conthong Yogyakarta Presents Story of Sardjito

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A riot sparked in late November 1945 in Bandung, West Java, since Colonel MacDonald issued an ultimatum forcing the local residents to leave Northern Bandung. The ultimatum was confronted by the Indonesian Republican army with sporadic attacks. Dr. Sardjito, the head of Institute Pasteur Bandung that produced vaccines, predicted that the riot would continue to escalate. Considering the recent outbreak of diseases, the safety of equipment and vaccines became very important. Hence, he was determined to move the Institute to Tegalyasa Klaten Hospital.

That is a fragment of a play titled “The President” performed by Kethoprak Conthong group on Sunday (6/17) and Monday (6/18) at Taman Budaya Yogyakarta. Directed by Sumarwata and Susilo Nugroho, the play carried the heroic tale of Sardjito as one of UGM founders and an important figure in achieving the independence of Indonesia.

“In various plays we often carry the stories of local and national figures that might be little known but actually have contributed greatly to the community,” said Susilo who is also the screenwriter of the play.

In this play, under the coordination of Ray Soeko-emi, Sardjito’s wife, the equipment was transported by train, while smallpox vaccines were carried by buffalos and herded to Klaten.



Meanwhile, Sardjito in Klaten conducted various research, produced vaccines, became the chairman of Indonesian Red Cross, and even established the Faculty of Medicine with several partners, namely dr. Abdulrahman Saleh and Herman Johannes.

Sardjito's role in this period, stated Susilo, is very important and deserves our appreciation. He deserves the title of a national hero, although he did not directly take part on the battlefield with weapons as any other heroes.

"Heroes are different from armed soldiers. Anyone can become a hero in many ways and through the contribution one gives. I believe that Sardjito truly deserves the title," explained Susilo.

Susilo added, not every historical detail of Sardjito's struggle was presented in the Javanese theatrical performance. He used some important and interesting fragments of the story for the play so that the audience could learn the spirit and determination of Sardjito.

"It is a shame if people do not recognize this important figure. From this play we expect the community to better understand history and appreciate their heroes. There are many aspects that we can learn from this figure, especially his spirit and social awareness."

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