



Tongklek Ethnomusicology in Pesantren: A Case Study at Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7 Tuban

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Abstract :

Tongklek, commonly known as a traditional art form using kentongan percussion instruments, has become integrated into dakwah practices at Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7 Tuban. This study examines the extent to which tongklek music at the pesantren has merged with the social and cultural life of the surrounding community. This research is a field study conducted through direct observation of tongklek artistic practices at Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7. The study employs Timothy Rice's ethnomusicological framework. The findings indicate that tongklek music has developed into a social practice cultivated by the santri. The selection of specific religious songs reflects a fusion of religious identity and cultural meaning within the music. Tongklek art at the pesantren demonstrates how traditional music can transform and play a significant role in strengthening social and cultural relationships within the community.

Keywords : *Tongklek, Musical Art, Pesantren (Islamic Boarding School), Ethnomusicology*

Abstrak :

Tongklek yang umumnya dikenal sebagai kesenian dengan alat musik kentongan telah melebur dalam aspek dakwah di pondok pesantren sunan drajat 7 tuban. Penelitian ini menelaah sejauh mana musik tongklek di pondok telah melebur dalam masyarakat dan kebudayaan di wilayah tersebut. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian lapangan dengan mengobservasi secara langsung praktik kesenian tongklek di pondok pesantren sunan drajat 7. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori etnomusikologi ala Timothy Rice. Hasil dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa musik tongklek melebur sebagai praktik sosial yang dikembangkan oleh santri. Pemilihan musik-musik religi khusus mencerminkan adanya perkawinan identitas agama dan makna budaya dalam musik. Kesenian tongklek di pondok ini menunjukkan bagaimana musik tradisional dapat bertransformasi dan memiliki peran penting dalam memperkuat hubungan sosial dan budaya di masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: *Tongklek, Seni musik, Pesantren, Etnomusikologi*

INTRODUCTION

Ethnomusicology is a discipline that studies the relationship between music and culture, focusing on the social, cultural, and historical contexts of music within specific societies (Rice, 2013). One intriguing phenomenon in ethnomusicology is the presence of traditional music within pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), where music often becomes an integral part of religious practice and local culture (Susanto et al., 2020). Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7 Tuban, as one of the pesantren with a long history and rich traditions, offers a compelling site for exploring music, particularly traditional music known as tongklek (Mahendra & Adi, 2022) and its role in the daily lives of santri (students) and the surrounding community. Tongklek music at Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7 Tuban functions not only as an artistic medium but also as a means of deepening religious, social, and cultural values.

Tongklek music at Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7 Tuban possesses unique characteristics in both form and function. In the pesantren context, tongklek is not merely a form of entertainment but also a method of introducing Islamic teachings to santri through melodies and rhythms that are easy to remember. Furthermore, this music forms part of religious ritual activities, such as the commemoration of Islamic holy days or specific ceremonial events within the pesantren. Research on the ethnomusicology of tongklek in this pesantren provides insights into how traditional music functions as a medium for education and the reinforcement of religious values (Rice, 2013) among younger generations.

By focusing on Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7 Tuban, this study aims to identify the social, cultural, and religious aspects reflected in the practice of tongklek music within the pesantren. In addition, this research seeks to explore how tongklek music adapts to changing times and external influences, as well as how the pesantren community plays a role in preserving and developing this musical tradition. Through an ethnomusicological approach, this study is expected to yield a deeper understanding of the role of music in strengthening the cultural identity of the pesantren while preserving its traditional heritage (Sauri et al., 2022).

This study aims to examine the extent to which tongklek art can be integrated into social and religious aspects at Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7 Tuban. The research focuses on three main research questions: (1) What is the relationship between tongklek art and Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7? (2) What factors influence the effectiveness of dakwah (Islamic preaching) through tongklek as a medium? (3) What are the implications of dakwah conducted through tongklek art for society and for religious development within the environment of Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7? This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the role of tongklek art in the dakwah process within pesantren and its contribution to the social and religious dynamics of the surrounding community.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using a descriptive-analytical approach, intended to gain an in-depth understanding of the

phenomena under investigation (Alwasilah, 2013). The research examines the extent to which tongklek art plays an effective role in dakwah and in promoting Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7 Tuban. This examination requires valid data, including interviews with individuals responsible for tongklek activities and at least one pesantren caregiver or administrator as a supporting informant. Secondary data were collected from articles and books relevant to the topics discussed in this study. To ensure systematic and focused analysis, the researcher employs an ethnomusicological approach developed by Rice (n.d.) and Nettl (2015). The combination of these data collection methods is expected to minimize inaccuracies in the research findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Relationship between Tongklek and the Pesantren Environment

Musical activities within pesantren environments and the integration of music into Islamic contexts have been examined in previous studies, which generally focus on Sufistic and pedagogical values. From an Islamic perspective, music remains a subject of debate between Ahl al-Sunnah scholars and Sufi scholars. Some Ahl al-Sunnah scholars consider music to be prohibited, while Sufi scholars tend to regard it as permissible. Based on arguments presented by figures such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Arabi, and Abu Dawud, music is considered forbidden due to its potential negative effects, such as diverting attention from obedience to God, encouraging immoral behavior, and wasting time (Yasid, 2007). However, if music or songs do not produce negative effects and instead convey positive messages, they may be performed and listened to. Thus, music as an artifact has the potential to be used for specific purposes, whether beneficial or harmful, depending on individual responses (Sauri et al., 2022).

Islamic musical expressions infused with cultural nuances are evident in tongklek activities. Historically, tongklek was commonly used as a signal to mark the time for *sahur* (pre-dawn meals during Ramadan). Several historians suggest that tongklek emerged during the era of the *wali* when they conducted *dakwah* in Tuban (Fitriasari et al., 2023). Tongklek performances become more vibrant and rhythmic when accompanied by instruments such as bonang, gong kempul, and iron gambang, whose pitch notations are adapted from modern keyboard solmization. Initially, tongklek served as a symbol of Tuban, enlivening various events and accompanying *dakwah* activities. Over time, however, tongklek evolved into an independent cultural activity.

The fusion of culture and music with Islamic nuances positions tongklek as a social construction phenomenon, reflecting the idea that social processes and interactions create and shape aspects of reality. Understanding the world is influenced by sociocultural, historical, and individual social contexts. Indigenous knowledge consists of systems, practices, and beliefs developed by communities across generations (Croal et al., 2015), encompassing understandings of the natural environment, spirituality, social organization, and healing practices. Applying the concept of social

construction highlights how social and cultural contexts influence indigenous knowledge, which is dynamic and adaptive in response to environmental and social changes. This knowledge is deeply rooted in the interconnection between indigenous communities and their land, emphasizing sustainability, reciprocity, and interconnectedness with nature (Birsyada & Utami, 2024).

Tongklek interaction within the cultural and social context of Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7 can be understood as a phenomenon that bridges local artistic traditions with evolving *dakwah* practices among santri. Initially, tongklek served as a form of entertainment for santri residing in the pesantren, combining leisure with cultural education and providing opportunities for socialization and creative expression.

Over time, tongklek underwent significant transformation (Bakhrudin, 2024). Strong interest among santri encouraged its development beyond mere entertainment, integrating it into *dakwah* activities conducted at Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7. The presence of tongklek within the surrounding community has positively contributed to introducing and disseminating pesantren values through an engaging and accessible art form.

The presence of tongklek at Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7 has received full support from the *kyai* as part of a cultural strategy to foster togetherness and strengthen pesantren identity. This support goes beyond symbolism, demonstrating integration between Islamic values and local cultural expression. As a rhythm-based traditional art form, tongklek enlivens the pesantren atmosphere, creating a festive yet meaningful religious environment.

More than mere entertainment, tongklek has evolved into an effective medium for *dakwah*. In religious events such as community celebrations and commemorations of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (*Maulid Nabi Muhammad SAW*), tongklek functions not only as an aesthetic element but also as a medium for conveying moral and spiritual messages. This demonstrates tongklek's role as a culturally grounded communication medium for *dakwah* that reaches diverse audiences in a humanistic and contextual manner.

Table 1. The Relationship between Tongklek and the Pesantren Environment

No	Aspect	Description of the Relationship between Tongklek and the Pesantren Environment
1	Local Culture of the Pesantren	Tongklek represents a form of local cultural expression that lives and develops within the pesantren as a socio-cultural institution.
2	Medium of Cultural Da'wah	Tongklek is used in religious activities of the pesantren as a communicative and contextual medium for Islamic da'wah.
3	Character Education for Santri	Tongklek activities cultivate discipline, cooperation, responsibility, and a sense of ukhuwah (brotherhood) among santri.
4	Santri Creativity and Artistic Expression	Tongklek serves as a space for developing santri's artistic talents and creativity while maintaining pesantren values.

5	Pesantren Identity	Tongklek functions as a symbol of collective identity that reflects the religious and local cultural character of the pesantren.
6	Interaction between Pesantren and Community	Tongklek performances strengthen social relations between the pesantren and the surrounding community through cultural and religious events.
7	Internalization of Local Wisdom	Values such as simplicity, mutual cooperation, and togetherness embodied in tongklek are internalized in santri's daily lives.
8	Preservation of Traditional Culture	The pesantren plays an important role as an agent in preserving tongklek amid cultural modernization.
9	Social Ecology of the Pesantren	Tongklek contributes to the creation of a harmonious pesantren environment that balances spiritual, social, and cultural aspects.

2. The Effectiveness of Tongklek as a Dakwah Medium at Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7 Tuban

Dakwah generally manifests through tangible and intangible media, often requiring accompanying instruments. At Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7, *dakwah* is conducted by incorporating tongklek instruments into various events, both formal and informal, performed by santri. "Initially, tongklek was merely entertainment for the santri. At that time, I tried incorporating tongklek into pesantren events, and this playful idea received positive responses from the *kyai* and the community" (Interview with Giri, April 15, 2025).

According to Giri, one of the initiators of tongklek activities at the pesantren, this practice initially emerged as internal entertainment among santri. Tongklek activities began as informal, recreational, and spontaneous performances without being intended as part of the official pesantren agenda. However, Giri later experimented by integrating tongklek performances into formal pesantren events. This experiment, initially considered casual, received positive responses from both the *kyai* and the surrounding community. This enthusiastic reception became a turning point for tongklek to develop into a distinctive form of religious cultural expression and an accepted medium of *dakwah* within both the pesantren and broader society.

Community responses to the presence of tongklek in organized events varied. While many viewed it as ordinary, others perceived it as adding a unique atmosphere. The songs performed in tongklek performances include religious compositions such as *Wasiat Sunan Drajat* and *Kidung Wahyu Kolosebo*, which are regarded as core repertoires and are not combined with other religious songs. Consequently, transitions between performances are managed by continuing with subsequent program segments.

"At first, I thought the tongklek instruments near the stage were merely decorative. It turned out they were played during the opening and closing of the event. I find the addition of tongklek quite unique and entertaining for the local community, as I have never encountered such variation in pesantren events before" (Interview with Herman, April 15,

2025).

As public acceptance of tongklek grew, this performing art gained broader recognition beyond Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7. Positive responses led to tongklek being invited to perform at events outside the pesantren, such as circumcision ceremonies and community celebrations. This expansion demonstrates that tongklek is not only accepted as entertainment but also as an effective *dakwah* medium, becoming an integral part of local cultural traditions.

3. Ethnomusicological Relations of Tongklek at Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7 Tuban

In Timothy Rice's ethnomusicological approach, music is not merely an aesthetic or entertainment phenomenon but a social practice connected to cultural values and group identity (Rice, 2013). Tongklek, initially introduced among santri as internal entertainment, has evolved into a key feature of social events within the community. Its presence in ceremonies such as circumcisions and celebrations illustrates how music functions as a social practice that connects pesantren with surrounding communities, fostering social interaction and strengthening cultural bonds.

In this context, tongklek music serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium for conveying religious and cultural values. By using religious songs such as *Wasiat Sunan Drajat* and *Kidung Wahyu Kolosebo* as core repertoires, tongklek represents the pesantren's religious identity intertwined with local wisdom. This reflects Rice's understanding of cultural meaning in music, where music strengthens community identity through lyrics, arrangements, and performance forms (Rice, 2013).

Rice's approach also emphasizes the importance of social context in understanding music (Rice, 2013). Tongklek's development beyond the pesantren environment demonstrates how music adapts to social change. This transformation illustrates cultural adaptation over time, wherein traditional music adjusts to broader social needs. Tongklek functions as a connector across social layers, blending traditional elements with contemporary community contexts, such as circumcision ceremonies and celebrations.

From an aesthetic perspective, tongklek functions as both a medium for conveying religious messages and a source of entertainment. In ethnomusicology, Rice emphasizes that the social and aesthetic functions of music are often intertwined. Tongklek not only communicates religious messages but also creates an aesthetic space that allows audiences to enjoy performances while reflecting on the meanings embedded in the song lyrics.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that tongklek music has transformed from a form of internal entertainment among santri into an integral component of *dakwah* practices at Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7 Tuban. Initially used as casual entertainment, tongklek was later integrated into various formal and informal pesantren events, as well as community events such as circumcision ceremonies

and celebrations, receiving positive responses from both the *kyai* and the public. Tongklek not only introduces and disseminates pesantren values through an engaging and accessible art form but also functions as a culturally grounded, humanistic, and contextual medium of *dakwah*. The selection of religious songs such as *Wasiat Sunan Drajat* and *Kidung Wahyu Kolosebo* reflects the integration of religious identity and cultural meaning, strengthening pesantren cultural identity and preserving traditional heritage.

Through Timothy Rice's ethnomusicological framework, tongklek at Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat 7 Tuban is understood as a social practice that connects the pesantren with surrounding communities, strengthens cultural bonds, and conveys religious and cultural values. Its adaptation to social change from pesantren settings to broader community events demonstrates how traditional music can transform while maintaining its relevance. Tongklek functions not only aesthetically as entertainment but also socially by creating spaces where communities can enjoy performances while reflecting on the religious messages embedded in the lyrics. This confirms the significant role of tongklek in strengthening social and cultural relationships while preserving traditional heritage.

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