



## **Recreolization as Decolonial Dramaturgy: *Tansi* Language in *Tonel* Performance, Sawahlunto City**

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### **Abstract**

*Tonel* performance in the city of Sawahlunto is practiced by the ethnic community who speak the *Tansi* creole language. Sawahlunto in tropical West Sumatra, Indonesia, was built by the Dutch colonialists in the late 19th century as a coal mining center based on the labor of local people and the forced labor of convicts of various ethnicities sent from around Indonesia. The multiethnic population developed a pidgin language which later became the *Tansi* creole language. This article discusses a new strategy for developing *Tonel* dramaturgy, which emerged through performances at the Sawahlunto Cultural Festival in 2021. Paying attention to the theatrical communication that occurs in *Tonel* performance, this study analyses how changes in the *Tansi* language used during performances, can be recognized as processes of decreolization and recreolization. The recreolization process proved to be a way to break the remnants of the continuing effects of colonialism in the *Tansi* culture. By changing words or adding new words to the *Tansi* language during the performances, the *Tansi* community builds a new dramaturgy based in a practice of cultural decoloniality through *Tonel* performance. This decolonial practice is particularly significant in the current development of Sawahlunto as a postcolonial mining tourism city, and the detangling of its colonial legacy.

**Keywords:** dramaturgy, decolonial theatre, postcolonial tourism, creole, *Tansi* language, *Tonel* performance, Sawahlunto, Indonesia, tropics

## ***Tonel* Performance and *Tansi* Language in Sawahlunto**

**T**onel performance is unique to the city of Sawahlunto in tropical West Sumatra, Indonesia. Established by the Dutch colonial regime as a mining town in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sawahlunto's native population included indigenous Minangkabau as well as Chinese and other Indonesian ethnic groups – including Batak, Sundanese, Madurese, Bugis, Balinese and Javanese. Many were sent from various prisons of the archipelago as forced labor for the mines. These diasporic ethnic groups developed a pidgin language, that later developed into the *Tansi* creole language. *Tonel* performance is based in the *Tansi* language.

Today the city of Sawahlunto is being developed as a mining tourism city. The postcolonial tourism potential of the city remains strongly intertwined with its colonial past, and includes not only tangible cultural heritage of colonial buildings and other material artifacts, such as the Ombilin coal mine and the old railway; but also the intangible heritage associated with the city's multicultural mix of people, including diasporic ethnic communities who speak the creole *Tansi* language and practice the performance art of *Tonel*.

This article discusses a new strategy for developing *Tonel* dramaturgy, which emerged through several performances at the Sawahlunto Cultural Festival in 2021. Paying attention to the theatrical communication that occurs in *Tonel* performance, the study analyses how changes in the *Tansi* language which occurred during performances, can be recognized as a decreolization and recreolization process. Importantly, the recreolization process proved to be a way to break the remnants of the continuing effects of colonialism in *Tansi* culture. By changing words or adding new words to the *Tansi* language during performances, the *Tansi* community builds a new dramaturgy while practicing cultural decoloniality through the *Tonel* performance. This decolonial practice is particularly pertinent as the city moves toward developing its postcolonial mining tourism potential – which remains inherently entangled with its colonial legacy.

### **Sawahlunto as a Mining City in the Shadow of Colonialism**

*Tonel*<sup>1</sup> is a dramatic performance that developed exclusively in Sawahlunto, a city that was once an important asset in Dutch colonialism in West Sumatra, Indonesia (Pramayoza, 2016). Sawahlunto developed into a city solely because of colonial coal

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<sup>1</sup> This type of dramatic performance is called *tonel* or *tonil*. It is also sometimes referred to as *sandiwara*. In this paper we will use the term '*Tonel*' following the nomenclature of the *Tansi* community which is the main agent and preserver of this art. See Elsa Putri E. Syafril (2010, p. 155).

mining interests. As can be seen through its name, Sawahlunto<sup>2</sup> was originally a rice field area. It began to be converted by the Dutch colonialists in 1892, when coal reserves were discovered. Sawahlunto was later designated a municipality by the Dutch in 1918, when the railroad tracks, station, and coal factory were completed, thus marking the establishment of a mining town (Erman, 2005; Syafril, 2011).

*Tonel* is a performance which uses the *Tansi* language, a creole language unique to Sawahlunto. The *Tansi* language is an important cultural artifact of colonization in Sawahlunto because Dutch colonial interests were the trigger for the birth of this language (Syafril, 2011). At the beginning of the 20th century the Dutch colonials sought to obtain cheap labor for the newly established coal mines. Adding to the indigenous Minangkabau, the Dutch brought other groups of ethnic peoples to Sawahlunto, including communities of Chinese, Batak, Sundanese, Madurese, Bugis, Balinese and Javanese (Asoka et al., 2016; Erman, 2005), who later contributed to the birth of the *Tansi* language.

Among the ethnic diaspora, the Javanese were the most numerous and also the most miserable. Many had been forcefully deported to Sawahlunto as prisoners after being criminalized as dissidents or rebels against Dutch colonial rule in Central and East Java (Erman et al., 2007). One of the largest groups from Java that is believed to have been exiled to Sawahlunto because of their anti-colonial attitude were the Samin Community, led by Samin Surosentiko (Benda & Castles, 1969). Today this historical narrative is a source of pride for the *Tansi* community of Sawahlunto, who believe themselves to be the descendants of an anti-colonial hero, whom they call *Mbah*<sup>3</sup> Surosentiko (Syafril, 2014).

Sent to Sawahlunto without trial, colonial prisoners from Java were used as forced labor, chained hand and foot as they worked. This community became known as the *Orang Rante*<sup>4</sup> (Chained People). However, their descendants are now called *Orang Tansi*<sup>5</sup> (*Tansi* people) referencing the term *tansi* which means overcrowded barracks, where their ancestors had lived in a state of deprivation (Pramayoza, 2014; Syafril, 2014).

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<sup>2</sup> Sawahlunto in the local language is formed by two words, 'sawah', meaning rice fields, and 'lunto' which refers to the Lunto river. Thus Sawahlunto means rice fields along the Lunto River.

<sup>3</sup> *Mbah* is a Javanese term for grandmother and grandfather. In more formal language, grandfather is called *Mbah Kakung*, while Grandmother is called *Mbah Putri*. In everyday conversation, both titles are abbreviated as *Mbah*.

<sup>4</sup> *Orang Rante* in the local language consists of two words, 'orang' which means people and 'rante' which means chain. Thus *Orang Rante* refers to chained people. However, as a term, it also has a pejorative meaning, because it was usually a madman or a wild beast that was chained.

<sup>5</sup> *Orang Tansi* in the local language means people from the barracks. Thus the term *Orang Tansi* refers to those who were born and raised in the barracks. The term *Orang Tansi* has a pejorative meaning, namely people who were born and raised in apprehensive circumstances.

The *Orang Tansi* has grown to become the second largest ethnic community in Sawahlunto after the indigenous Minangkabau people. Along with Sawahlunto city itself, the *Orang Tansi* are now facing a postcolonial dilemma. The coal mine has been closed (Rosmiati et al., 2020) and thus mining is no longer the main job for city residents, nor is it any longer the main source of income for the municipality of Sawahlunto. At the same time, former factories, coal mining pits and various colonial buildings scattered throughout the city, are requiring urgent maintenance (Martokusumo, 2016; Syafrini et al., 2022).

Under this situation, suggestions to develop mining and historical tourism were put forward (Armis & Kanegae, 2019; Rosmiati et al., 2020; Syafrini et al., 2022). *Goedang Ransoem*, *Societeit*, and *Waterboom* are the three most popular colonial artefacts in Sawahlunto that need to be redefined for the purposes of postcolonial tourism. *Goedang Ransoem*, is a public kitchen where forced coal mine workers in the past queued for food. *Societeit*, is a multipurpose building where the Dutch colonials held various parties and entertainments. While *Waterboom*, was a place where the Dutch colonial officials brought their families for recreation.

Many of the tourism assets of Sawahlunto are of material colonial heritage, and require sensitive and thoughtful management (Martokusumo, 2016). On the one hand, these various assets have historical value which can become a postcolonial tourism and mining tourism potential that will benefit city residents. On the other hand, these various sites are also material evidence of the 'glory days' of colonialism which was based on the suffering of the indigenous and diasporic ethnic peoples – who were the ancestors of many of the residents of Sawahlunto city. A specialized tourism development approach is needed<sup>6</sup> in order to be able to use these sites as a tool to break lingering colonial influences. In other words, the challenge is in developing the use of tangible cultural heritage of Sawahlunto city as a means towards decolonial tourism (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015). Such a move will also require the assets of the intangible cultural heritage of the city's people.

### ***Tonel* Performance in Sawahluto as Postcolonial Theatre**

Multiculturalism and multiethnicity are Sawahlunto city's greatest potential which is expected to become a new source of livelihood through mining tourism development (Cheris et al., 2020). In this regard the people's intangible cultural heritage of language and performing arts becomes an important aspect in the development of tourism. It is at this level that *Tonel* emerges as one of the unique arts of the city, for *Tonel* was

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<sup>6</sup> One way to organize decolonial tourism that is currently developing in West Sumatra is to organize festivals giving new meanings to various existing cultural assets. As a comparison, can see the Pasa Harau Festival created by the Minangkabau Ethnic in Limapuluh Kota District, West Sumatra. ( Pramayoza & Yuliza, 2023).

born as a direct consequence of colonialism in Sawahlunto, and at the same time uses the *Tansi* creole language, which first emerged as a pidgin communication strategy for mine laborers during the colonial period (Pramayoza, 2016).

The term *Tonel* itself performs an act of linguistic decoloniality, for it comes from the Dutch term '*toneel*,' meaning theatre. According to one analysis, the *Tansi* '*Tonel*,' spoofed the Dutch '*toneel*' (Pramayoza, 2014).<sup>7</sup> In this view, the changing of the word *toneel* into *Tonel* was a cultural strategy used by the *Orang Rante* during the colonial occupation. The naming indicates that *Tonel* is something similar to *toneel*, but not quite the same and indicates that there is an element of mimicry in this type of performing art.

'*Toneel*' was a form of colonial 'high culture' which the Dutch colonial teachers also taught in schools in the practice of 'ethical politics.'<sup>8</sup> One of the places where *toneel* was taught was at the Kweekschool or Teacher Candidate School in Bukittinggi, which West Sumatran natives called Sekolah Radja (Navis, 1985). The colonial-trained teachers in West Sumatra, including the Minangkabau people who are the dominant indigenous ethnic group of Sawahlunto and West Sumatra in general, later substituted the term '*sandiwara*'<sup>9</sup> for the Dutch '*toneel*'. *Sandiwara* rapidly developed as a popular West Sumatran theater in the 1950s to 1990s (Pramayoza, 2013).

This renaming of the Dutch *toneel* by the dominant Minangkabau community, of course, reveals a different point of view from that of the *Orang Rante*, the chained laborers. In contrast to the Minangkabau, who were taught the performance by the Dutch colonialists in formal schools; the *Orang Rante*, by referring to their new art as *Tonel*, wanted to deliberately demonstrate that they stole this performance art from the Dutch colonialists.

Through this linguistic history, it is revealed that *Tonel* is an art form which is simultaneously an imitative performance of Dutch *toneel* by *Orang Rante*. The Dutch colonial authorities partied and enjoyed high culture *toneel* performances at the *Societeit* while the *Orang Rante* were in a state of forced deprivation. They could only

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<sup>7</sup> This language tactic is also used by the *Tansi* people for other types of performance art, such as '*Jalan Kepang*,' which in the original language (Javanese) is '*Jaran Kepang*' (Pramayoza, 2014). *Jaran Kepang* is a performing art that developed in Central and East Java, which imitates warriors on horseback. The show is performed using equipment in the form of a small horse made of woven bamboo. The word '*jaran*' in Javanese means horse, while '*kepang*' means hair in a bun, which refers to the artificial hair of the woven horse. This term changed to '*jalan kepang*' in the *Tansi* creole language, with the word '*jalan*,' meaning walk, referring to the performers walking through the performance.

<sup>8</sup> Ethical politics was the policy of the Dutch colonial government to make compensation to the indigenous people that they extorted through three programmes: education, irrigation, and transmigration.

<sup>9</sup> *Sandiwara* is a Javanese word consisting of two words, namely '*sandi*' which means symbol and '*warah*' which means teaching, so it is interpreted as teaching with symbols. The term '*sandiwara*' was introduced by Ki Hadjar Dewantara, the Father of Indonesian Education, who later became the first Indonesian Minister of Education.

peek at Dutch *toneel* performances through the cracks of the *Societeit* building (Pramayoza, 2016). They then imitated the show, staging it in the *Goedang Ransoem* (workers kitchen), which gave birth to a performance similar to *toneel*, called *Tonel*, which included a mixture of drama, *ketoprak*,<sup>10</sup> *ronggengan*,<sup>11</sup> and national slogans (Syafriil, 2014).

However, according to a different history of *Tonel*, it is stated that the miners were deliberately trained to perform *toneel* by the Dutch colonial government in order to prevent them from engaging in other types of entertainment that could cause chaos or fights. In this history, *Orang Rante* used *Tonel* it to increase their social status (Erman et al., 2007). They recognized the opportunity to create a new type of performance – *Tonel* as an early form of postcolonial theater which incorporated three critical aspects: mimicry and mockery; hybridization; and parody or satire (Pramayoza, 2016).

**Figure 1. The Societeit building past and present**



The Societeit building is where the ancestors of the *Tansi* community, the '*Orang Rante*', peered at the Dutch *toneel* performance and imitated it to create *Tonel*. Image courtesy of KITLV and the Sawahlunto Cultural Office.

### ***Tansi* Language in *Tonel* Performance as a Creole Language**

The crucial characteristic of *Tonel* performance is the use of the *Tansi* creole language. The language of the descendants of the Sawahlunto coal miners is derived from a mixture of the original languages of the various ethnic communities of the coal laborers, including Minangkabau, Javanese, Chinese, Madurese, Sundanese, Bugis, Balinese, and Batak, with Malay is the primary language (Syafriil, 2014). In addition, the *Tansi* language also has reduced properties, with fragments of the original language mixed into the *Tansi* language, and slack codification in which meanings can easily change (Syafriil, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> *Ketoprak* is a traditional performing art from Central Java, Indonesia, that combines stories, songs and jokes.

<sup>11</sup> *Ronggengan* is the designation for a type of dance in pairs, it has a connotative meaning as a form of openly channeling lust to the dancers.

The meeting of the various ethnic groups in Sawahlunto is the source of the emergence of the *Tansi* language, initially, a pidgin language, which was used as a pragmatic communication device by workers who spoke different languages (Syafri, 2011). The pidgin language grew to become the *Tansi* creole language which at the same time marked the creole culture of the *Tansi* people in the city of Sawahlunto (Cheris et al., 2020). As Elsa Syafri (2011) reveals, the *Tansi* language is a creole language that was intelligently created by the native ethnic peoples of Sawahlunto.

Creole language becomes an important concept in postcolonial studies, because it shows the long effects of colonialism (Loomba, 2015). In the past, the *Tansi* language could not be separated from its founders, originators, and early users, namely the *Orang Rante*. And today, the *Tansi* language cannot be separated from the condition of its preservers and testators, namely the *Tansi* people, a community formed in part by the descendants of colonial exiles (Erman et al., 2007). However, the culture and creole language of *Tansi*, as in the case with other creole languages elsewhere, is always in tension with the local or indigenous cultures (Préaud, 2016). In the context of Sawahlunto, this is Minangkabau language and culture. The creole language and culture of the *Tansi* are pushed back by the dominant language and culture of the Minangkabau indigenous ethnic group.

Despite these relational tensions, Sawahlunto's *Tansi* language was established by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, through the Ministry of Education and Culture, as an Indonesian Intangible Cultural Heritage of West Sumatra in October 2018. *Tansi* language is essential in developing Sawahlunto as a mining tourism city (Armis & Kanegae, 2019). Furthermore, the city's tourism development places art and culture as main intangible heritage assets, alongside the tangible heritage of colonial buildings and other material assets such as coal mines (Syafri et al., 2022).

### ***Tonel* Dramaturgy in the Research and Theory of Decolonization**

Research on theater and drama in postcolonial society has not yet received adequate recognition in Indonesia. Following Smith's proposal, a particular research method is needed to study these types of dramatic performances – such as *Tonel* – that are taken for granted (Smith, 2012). A possible research method is to view *Tonel* as an ethnic dramaturgy or, to borrow Vallack's term, as: 'ethnographic drama' (2016, p. 114). In this way, the experience of living under cultural oppression, reflected in *Tonel* performances, is seen as a form of knowledge production through the dramatic art of the *Tansi* people – a form of postcolonial dramaturgy (see Crow & Banfield, 2010).

Hence, this research on *Tonel* in Sawahlunto returns to the performance essence as a form of communication with the *Tansi* language as the primary medium. Every contact in theatrical performances contains meta-communication, where performers not only talk to other performers but also talk to the audience (Pramayoza, 2020). Meanwhile, the audience is aware of attending theater performances as a communicative and discursive space (Vikulova et al., 2018). Therefore, the language of *Tansi* in *Tonel* can be seen as functioning 'actively' and dialogically, not just descriptively, to reflect a non-narrative discourse (Elam, 1980, p. 139), which can be called dramatic discourse.

Based on this understanding, this research carried out observations and literature studies to see the *Tansi* language in *Tonel* performances, using dialogues and monologues as units of analysis. The research section below is directed at reading the following aspects: *dramatic discourse*, to understand the central themes and issues of the performance; *dramatic irony*, for the understanding of the opposite meaning of the performance; and *dramaturgy*, the pattern and method of developing *Tonel's* performance as a whole.

The primary data extracted in order to carry out this analysis of dramatic discourse, dramatic irony and dramaturgy are a selection of *Tonel* performances that were enacted in the 'Tansi Language Tonil Contest',<sup>12</sup> during the Regional Cultural Week under the theme "Cultural Heritage Festival" at the Goedang Ransoem Museum from 23 to 26 November, 2021. This event was part of a series of celebrations organized by the City Government of Sawahlunto to celebrate its 133rd anniversary. In addition to the 'Tansi Language Tonil Contest', the 'Minang Song Festival' and 'Randai Festival' were also held during the Regional Culture Week.

From the point of view of cultural diplomacy, 'Tansi Language Tonil Contest' was compromised. To begin with, the City Government chose the term 'Tonil' even though it is evident that the *Tansi* people use the term *Tonel*. Furthermore *Tonel's* performance space was squeezed between the two other competitions, those of the *Randai* Festival<sup>13</sup> and *Lagu Minang*<sup>14</sup> (Minang Song Festival), which are both performance arts of the dominant Minangkabau ethnic community. This squeezing out, or marginalization, is further experienced in the cultural politics of Sawahlunto city, where the supporters of *Tonel*, the *Tansi* people, remain a marginal party.

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<sup>12</sup> It can be seen from the name of the event that the City Government chose to use the term '*Tonil*,' even though they knew the *Tansi* people themselves call it '*Tonel*.'

<sup>13</sup> *Randai* is a type of dramatic performance in the Minangkabau language which combines stories, movements originating from *pencak silat*, and rhymes sung in the form of chants. For more about *Randai*, see Kirstin Pauka (1996).

<sup>14</sup> *Lagu Minang*, is the designation for pop songs in the Minangkabau language, which have grown to become one of the entertainment industries in West Sumatra. For more about *Lagu Minang*, see Suryadi (2015).

Despite the restricted conditions the *Tansi* community utilized the opportunity of the 'Tansi Language Tonil Contest' to the fullest. Participants used the *Tansi* language in *Tonel* as a strategy for cultural performance – a site for reaffirming shared identity as a community of postcolonial and diaspora people with multiethnic and multicultural characteristics. The strategy of using the *Tansi* language in *Tonel* is discussed in this paper by seeing it as part of the dramaturgical developments of *Tonel*. *Tonel's* dramaturgy its self seen as an expression of decoloniality, in terms of knowledge of the dramatic arts (Bala, 2017). Furthermore, the use of *Tansi* language in *Tonel* performances was identified as a way to fight back and break the continuing impacts of colonialism on *Tansi* culture and community (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

## The New Dramaturgy of *Tonel* Performance

### *Tonel* Dramatic Discourse: Multiculturality and Mining Tourism

The Jury of the 'Tansi Language Tonil Contest' announced five criteria of assessment: (1) suitability between the theme, title, and content; (2) show systematics; (3) the natural *Tansi* language; (4) vocals, intonation, and articulation; and (5) style, expression and improvisation. However, the most important aspect was the flexibility in presenting the *Tansi* language in everyday life. The jury acknowledged that the use of the *Tansi* language in the daily life of the Sawahlunto people today is fading and that the *Tansi* language was recognized as an identity language when *Tansi* people travelled beyond Sawahlunto city.

The stories presented by the participants at the *Tonel* festival narrowed down to three main themes, which describe a 'shared anxiety' of the *Tansi* people. The first was the theme of multiculturalism, which is essentially the main characteristic of the city of Sawahlunto and is, at the same time, its existential nature. However, this characteristic is increasingly threatened by local cultural politics, where the dominant ethnic group, the Minangkabau, now control the bureaucracy and are giving the city Minangkabau characteristics. Several groups symbolized this situation through stories in their *Tonel* performances about the importance of respecting diversity and difference.

The second theme widely presented by the participants was Sawahlunto city tourism, pointing to several tourist objects, especially the former coal mine which has been protected and was recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 2019. This theme expresses the concern and awareness of the *Tansi* people of the death of Sawahlunto with the end of mining, when the city effectively became a ghost town. Adopting this theme is also to project that for future survival Sawahlunto must develop into a tourism city based on its (post)colonial mining heritage, including both its

tangible and intangible aspects. In this context, the *Tansi* people, their *Tansi* creole language, and their distinctive *Tonel* performance art, are central potentials that must be preserved and explored.

The third theme was the history of the city, which is a reminder of the nature of Sawahlunto as a postcolonial city, however, one which was established and developed when the Dutch colonials discovered the Ombilin coal mine two centuries ago. Several participants in the *Tonel* contest presented stories about the arrival of various ethnic groups to Sawahlunto City, who later formed the *Tansi* community. Within this theme, the participants underlined the historical basis for the multiethnic and multicultural existence of the City of Sawahlunto. This simultaneously confirms the *Tansi* people as a diasporic community, where most still acknowledge their relationship with the Samin people of Central Java through the existence of their anti-colonial hero *Mbah Surosentiko*.

**Figure 1. Women of the *Tansi* community: past as nurses and present in *Tonel* performance**



Women in Sawahlunto during the colonial period came compulsorily as nurses or prostitutes. Now Sawahlunto women appear as the main actors of *Tansi* culture. Image courtesy of KITLV and the Sawahlunto Cultural Office.

Participant Number 02, for example, presented a story entitled *Differences That Unite* (2021), telling the story of school students of different ethnicities in Sawahlunto. Students are depicted playing puzzles and then talking about schoolwork. This story also describes the teachings of a *Tansi* family, who advised their son to help his friend who had recently moved to Sawahlunto to adapt. There is also a description of the teacher presenting a lesson about a diverse Indonesia, which is also used to describe the city of Sawahlunto as a small Indonesia consisting of various ethnicities.

Participant Number 03, presented *The New Child is Our Friend Too* (2021). The story begins with a group of girls in the classroom busy on their mobile devices, including creating tick-tock content. A teacher invites new students to learn about the history of the city of Sawahlunto with its various cultural riches and tourism potential. The girls,

one by one, explained *Goedang Ransoem*, *Societeit*, and *Waterboom*. New students also learn the *Tansi* language, Sawahlunto's signature language. The teacher advises students not to treat new students differently because Sawahlunto is a multicultural city.

Participant Number 06 appeared with the manuscript *The Dark Story of Orang Rante and Mbah Suro* (2021), which tells of the journey of coal mine workers to Sawahlunto. The story describes the violence and suffering experienced by forced laborers in the mines during the colonial period. It is told through the voice of Si *Mbah* (Grandma), who recounts these events to her grandchild, who is searching for the history of Sawahlunto for a history assignment. *Tonel* performers then dramatize each story that Si *Mbah* tells her grandchild.

Participant Number 08 in *Sawahlunto City Tourism* (2021), tells the story of a group of women who welcome home an acquaintance from a trip to Jakarta, the nation's capital. When the acquaintance was asked for souvenirs, it turned out that the food she claimed was a souvenir from Jakarta was a special food from the city of Sawahlunto itself. These women used this situation to introduce various tourist attractions in Sawahlunto City, which are not inferior to those in other places.

Participant Number 09's work, entitled *Sawahlunto Heritage of the World* (2021), tells the story of the meeting of four old friends. Their conversation becomes a way to explore the history of Sawahlunto based on memories of the city's past. It starts from when Sawahlunto was still the City of charcoal. They speak the source of coal, of Dutch colonialists who brought indentured coolies from various ethnicities, and of how they became the inhabitants of the city.

Participant Number 10 tells a story about the *Diversity of Tourism in the City of Sawahlunto* (2021). It begins with a husband and wife talking about their boredom at being at home. Husband and wife see on Facebook and tick-tock that their neighbors have traveled widely. But they don't have to go far because there are many tourist spots in Sawahlunto. The two finally decided to tour Sawahlunto, including the *Goedang Ransoem* and *Societeit*, starting from *Waterboom*.

The next performer, Participant Number 11, presented a story entitled *Sawahlunto Heritage of the World* (2021). It tells the story of a group of women talking to their friends who have returned from overseas and want to know what's new in Sawahlunto city. Even though they have lived overseas for a long time, they have not forgotten the *Tansi* language, as evidenced by fluency in using the language. Their friends retain the language because *Tansi* is an identity marker of where they come from.

### **Tone/ Dramatic Genre: Satire and Parody of the *Tansi* People**

Based on events from the performance acts submitted by the participants, there are several unique characteristics of *Tone/*'s dramaturgy as postcolonial theatre. The main trait is the use of irony as a method of scene-building. For example, Participant Number 02, offers a script entitled *Differences that Unite* (2021), which begins with a scene where students play puzzles. The puzzle is a game commonly used by the traditional people of *Tansi* to fill their spare time, but it has aspects of wordplay and simple logic.

- Pelajar 1 : *Aku ada teka-teki ciek na. Siapa yang bisa nakok brati hebat dia mah.*
- Pelajar 2 : *Teka-teki apa yang ke kecekan tu? Cepatlah sebuti ha! Biar tak jawabi ha.*
- Pelajar 3 : *Memang nak, kok misala aku bisa nakok, ke kasi apa aku? Nantik aku lah panek-panek mikir, ndak ada ke kasi apa-apa lagi. Males lah!*
- Pelajar 1 : *Ee tenang lah ke. Kok dapek ke njawab ha, tak bayari goreng ke kabeh!*
- Pelajar 3 : *Betul ke ni? Ini ke ndak ngicuh?*
- Pelajar 1 : *Eee, ndak lah! Caya aja lah ke ma aku.*
- Pelajar 3 : *Cepatlah stek ha! Ben tahu lagi aku kaya apa teka-tekinya.*
- Pelajar 1 : *Ha, dengar ya! Pasang kuping ke beduo ya! Aku ngecek ndak ngulang-ngulang do. (Diam) Buah apa yang paling gede'?*
- Pelajar 2 : *Buah yang paling gede'? Buah raksasa lah!*
- Pelajar 1 : *Salah! Asal ja ke mah. Ayok! Cepat njawabnya! Jan lama-lama. Nanti hadiaha angus. Baru pada mloyo ke!*
- Pelajar 3 : *Hmm, apa ya? Pasti wa loh! Kan banyak tu wa loh yang guede-guede kayak di tivi di luar negri tu ha.*
- Pelajar 1 : *Apa lah?! Masak wa loh. Angger a ke mah. Cobaklah pikerin lagi ma ke! Masak aku yang ngasih teka-teki, aku lagi yang njawab? Tu hadiaha untuk aku deweknyo. Tak kasih waktu satu menit lagi ha.*
- Pelajar 2 : *Pasti semangka!*
- Pelajar 3 : *Iya, semangka!*
- Pelajar 1 : *Masih salah! Lama, salah lagi. Ndak gitu do. Biarlah aku njawab lagi kok gitu. Mau tahu jawab a apa? Buakul! Guede' kan?*
- Pelajar 3 : *Ada-ada aja jawab ke mah! Buakul tu ndak buah tu do. Pantes lah aku ndak bisa njawabi nyo do.*
- Student 1 : *I have a little riddle. Who can guess what it means? It's excellent.*

- Student 2 : What kind of riddle do you mean? Hurry up and say it!  
Let me answer.
- Student 3 : But first, indeed, if I could answer, what would you give me? I can't be bothered to think. If you will not provide me with anything else. I'm Lazy!
- Student 1 : Hey, calm down. If you can answer, I'll pay for all your fries!
- Student 3 : Is that right? You will not lie, right?
- Student 1 : No! Trust me.
- Student 3 : Hurry up a bit! Let me know what the puzzle is.
- Student 1 : Well, listen! (Un)plug your ears, both of you! I will mention it once and will not repeat it. (Silence) What fruit is the biggest?
- Student 2 : The biggest fruit? It's a giant fruit!
- Student 1 : Wrong! You are just random. Let's go! Quick answer! Time is not extended. Later, the prizes are forfeited. You just stared!
- Student 3 : Hmm, what is it? It must be a pumpkin! There are lots of giant pumpkins on TV abroad.
- Student 1 : What is it?! Where do pumpkins come from? You just answer as you like. Think again! I'm the one who gave the riddle, and I'm the one who answers? It means the gift is for myself. I'll give you one more minute.
- Student 2 : Definitely watermelon!
- Student 3 : Yes, watermelon!
- Student 1 : Still wrong! You took so long to answer, wrong, anyway. Never mind, then. Let me answer then. Want to know what the answer is? *Buakul*<sup>15</sup> (basket)! Big right?
- Student 3 : What's up with your answer! *Buakul* (basket) is not a fruit. No wonder I can't answer then.

The appearance of this game in *Tone!* is ironic because the generation of their age no longer play such puzzles. Their contemporary lives have been impacted by the existence of electronic gadgets, as a marker of the ongoing revolution 4.0. This is also a form of neocolonialism, where people in developing countries are controlled through technology so that they continue to be mere users, and that means they continue to be exploited. Students no longer play mind and language games similar to the traditional puzzle because electronic and social media games have replaced them.

Irony was also seen in the performance by Participant Number 08, who presented a story entitled *Sawahlunto City Tourism* (2021). Irony appears through the scene about souvenirs. This topic ridicules the character of some of the *Tansi* people themselves, who prefer shopping and traveling to other places and forget the potential that exists

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<sup>15</sup> He uses a pun because 'bakul' in Indonesian sounds similar to 'buah kul' (buah: fruit)

around them. In fact, in the city of Sawahlunto, various cultural riches and tourist spots are no less enjoyable. The irony starts with the arrival of a lady who has just returned from a trip to Jakarta with her child.

- Ibu 1 : *Memang ke pulang Rantau bawa oleh-oleh apa?*  
 Pemuda : *Mak, Mak, keluarin oleh-oleh kita mak!*  
 Ibu 2 : *Ini oleh-olehnya. Bagi berdua aja sama ke ya.*  
 Ibu 1 : *Tak liek lu, Lek. Agak curiga aku.*  
 Ibu 3 : *(Setelah mengamati oleh-oleh itu) Alah! Kita dikibuli sama dia nih!*  
 Ibu 1 : *(Ikut mengamati oleh-oleh) Eh, dasar! Ngibul ke! Ini ada di Selunto ni! Yang bikin Lelek aku. Kok enak aja ke bilang bawa dari Jakarta?*  
 Ibu 3 : *Ini di Sikalang ada nih!*  
 Ibu 2 : *(Tertawa) Jadi ke mau tahu dimana aku mbeli?*  
 Ibu 3 : *Di mana ke mbeli?*  
 Ibu 2 : *Tempat Mbak Lastri! (Tertawa)*  
 Ibu 1 : *E, alah! Makanya jadi orang jangan ngibul! Udah gaek, masih ngibul ke. Tunggu sebentar! (Berjalan ke arah penonton) Aku mau kasih pak jurinya. Biar ngerasain tempe buatan Sikalang. (Memberikan tempe kepada salah seorang juri) Silakan dicicip, Pak.*  
 Ibu 1 : *Dengar ke! Jangan sekali-kali coba ngibul! Dari Jakarta bawa tempe? Yang ada tempe di sini dibawa ke Jakarta. Yang ada tenun-tenun di sini dibawa ke Jakarta. Ngaku-ngaku lagi ke.*  
 Ibu 3 : *Ke, kok mbawa oleh-oleh, di Gudang Ransoem tu ada tahu. Ke goreng, ke kirim ke Jakarta. Biar tahu kawan-kawan ke.*  
 Ibu 2 : *(Malu-malu) Besok kalo aku mbalik ke Jakarta, ke gorengkan ya?*  
 Ibu 3 : *Ya. Boleh.*  
 Ibu 1 : *Tu baru namanya yang buah tangannya yang unik. Ndak ada di Jakarta do! Gudang Ransum! Seluruh dunia yang ada Gudang Ransum ya di sini! Huh! Ngibul! Ngicuh! Sama aja dua beranak.*  
 Ibu : *Makanya, Mak. Besok ajak aja aku jalan-jalan di Selunto ni. Nggak usah di luar-luar sih, Mak.*  
 Ibu 1 : *Udah disuntek belum, ke?*  
 Ibu 3 : *Ngapain ke nanya-nanya?*  
 Ibu 1 : *Ya, harus lah! Ke tempat wisata, disuntek dulu.*
- Lady 1 : *Did you bring souvenirs back from overseas?*  
 Young Man : *Mom! Take out our souvenirs, mom!*  
 Lady 2 : *These are our souvenirs. Just for the two of you.*  
 Lady 1 : *I'll see first, Auntie. I'm a bit suspicious.*

- Lady 3 : (After looking at the souvenir) Huh! This Lady conned us.
- Lady 1 : (Participates in observing the souvenirs) Wow, what a fraud! You are deceiving! This thing is from Sawahlunto! The person who made it is my Aunt. How come you said you brought it from Jakarta?
- Lady 3 This item is made in Sikalang!
- Lady 2 : (Laughs) So you want to know where I bought it?
- Lady 3 : Where did you buy it?
- Lady 2 : At Mbak Lastri's shop! (Laugh)
- Lady 1 : Oh, no! That's why people don't like to lie! You're old but still like to lie. Wait a moment! (Walking towards the audience) I want to give to it the jury. Let them taste the *tempe* made in Sikalang. (Gives the *tempe* to one of the judges) Please taste it, Sir.
- Lady 1 : Listen up! Never try to cheat! Bringing *tempe* from Jakarta? What happened was that *tempe* from here was brought to Jakarta. What happened was that the weaving here was brought to Jakarta. How dare you admit otherwise.
- Lady 3 : If you want to bring souvenirs, look for them at Goedang Ransoem. Try to cook it. Then you send it to Jakarta so that your friends there know.
- Lady 2 : (Shy) One day, when I go back to Jakarta, will you fry it for me?
- Lady 3 : Yes. I will do it for you.
- Lady 1 : You can only name it as a unique souvenir. There won't be one in Jakarta! Goedang Ransoem! In this entire world, the Goedang Ransoem exists only here! Huh! Fraudster! What a joke! Mother and son are both scammers.
- Young Man : That's why, Mom. Next time, if you want to take me for a walk, let's walk around Sawahlunto. We don't have to go far, Mom.
- Lady 1 : Have you been vaccinated yet?
- Lady 3 : Why are you asking?
- Lady 1 : Yes, you have to! To visit a tourist spot, you must be vaccinated first.

Apart from ridiculing the tendency to view other people's assets as something more valuable, in the *Tonel* performance the character of the former colonized community is also put under scrutiny. The satire of this is shown by the scene of the female character in the story distributing her souvenirs to the jury, which represents an ironic form of bribery in order to win the competition. This scene is a way to break one of the characteristics created in the local population under the rule of the colonial

government; namely ingratiating oneself with the colonials and betraying their own nation.

The history of the arrival of various ethnic groups to Sawahlunto City was presented by Participant Number 10 with a performance entitled *The Dark Story of Orang Rante and Mbah Suro* (2021). The scene is of a class where the students are studying. The narrator mentions they are learning about Cultural History. One of the students returns home to begin work on the task. She tells her Si *Mbah* (grandmother) that she was assigned to write about the 'Orang Rante' history. Then Si *Mbah* starts telling her stories from memory. The scene shifts when the narrator mentions it is 1882. A man dressed in all black enters, followed by several women whose legs are chained and they are dragging a load. A man dressed in gray pushes them and occasionally whips them.

- Mandor : *Cepat jalan! Berdiri kalian! Berbalik!*  
 Tuan : *Kalian Eike tugaskan di sini untuk menambang batu bara. Tidak ada yang boleh menolak!*  
 Buruh 1 : *Tu kayak mana makan sama tidur kami, Tuan? Kalok kami kerja di sini?*  
 Tuan : *Buat makanan Yey tak perlu khawatir. Eike akan siapkan semuanya. Mandor, bawa mereka ke lobang!*  
 Mandor : *Siap, Tuan. Ayo!* (Para buruh mulai menambang)  
 Buruh 1 : *Ndeh. Lapar, e. Kapanlah kitak makan?*  
 Mandor : (Berteriak) *Tetap kerja! Ndak usah banyak bicara!*  
 Buruh 1 : (Kembali bekerja) *Eee. Panek e. Kapan lah siap a ni ha?*  
 Mandor : (Berteriak) *Cepat kerja! Jangan banyak alasan!*  
 Buruh 2 : *Capek, Pak. Istirahat sebentar, Pak.*  
 Mandor : (Mencambuk) *Tetap kerja! Cepat!*  
 Buruh 2 : (Memohon) *Ampun, Pak! Ampun, Pak! Tolong...,Tolong...*  
 (Mandor terus mencambuk, hingga Buruh 2 tak bergerak lagi. Mandor lalu membuka rantai di kaki Buruh 2, lalu menyeret kakinya keluar pentas. Para buruh terus bekerja. Seorang buruh membawa makanan ke pentas. Para buruh berebut makanan)  
 Mandor : *Ayo, makan! Berbaris! Jangan berebut! Jangan membuat kekacauan!*  
 Buruh 1 : (Sambil makan) *Ndeh. Saketek a lai ha. Apa yang mau dimakan kek gini ha?*  
 Buruh 3 : *Ndeh. Saketek a lagi. Kayak nasi makan kucing betul lah!*  
 Buruh 4 : *Dah tu. Jangan ngupek-ngupek. Nanti kanai cambuk, mau ke? Makanlah! Cepat aja makan!*  
 Mandor : (Berteriak) *Ayo, mulai kerja lagi!*  
 Buruh 1 : *Tapi, kami belum....*

- Mandor : (Mencambuk) *Cepat! Mulai kerja lagi!*
- Foreman : Hurry up! Stand up, you guys! Turn around!  
 Controller : You guys, *Eike* assigned here to mine coal. No one can refuse!
- Worker 1 : So how do we eat and sleep, Sir? Shall we work here?  
 Tuan : Yey doesn't need to worry. *Eike* will prepare everything. Foreman, take them to the pit!
- Foreman : Understood, Sir. Come on! (The workers start mining)
- Laborer 1 : Ouch. I am hungry. When do we eat?
- Foreman : (Shouting) Keep working! Don't talk too much!
- Laborer 1 : (Back to work) Oh Lord. Very tired. When will this work be finished?
- Foreman : (Shouting) Hurry up and work! Don't make excuses!
- Worker 2 : Tired, Sir. Take a little rest, Sir.
- Foreman : (Whipping) Keep working! Fast!
- Laborer 2 : (Pleading) Forgive me, Sir!, Forgive me! Help! Help...  
 (The Foreman continues to whip until Laborer 2 no longer moves. The Foreman then opens the chains on Laborer 2's feet, then drags her feet off the stage. The workers continue to work. A worker brings food to the stage. The workers fight over food)
- Foreman : Come on, eat! March! Don't scramble! Don't make a mess!
- Laborer 1 : (While eating) My goodness. This is very little food. How are we going to eat like this?
- Laborer 3 : Oh Lord. So little. Just like food for cats!
- Laborer 4 : That's it. Don't sweat it. Later you get whipped. Is that what you want? Eat! Hurry up, eat!
- Foreman : (Shouting) Come on, start work again!
- Worker 1 : But, we haven't...
- Foreman : (Whipping) Quickly start work again!

The next scene depicts the workers talking about their unfortunate fate. One monologue is that she must survive and fight to be free and independent, so she doesn't die like her other friends. The narrator then interjects that they had lived like that for years, and goes on to describe how finally the coal mine was closed by the Dutch in 1923. The scene returns to Si *Mbah* and her granddaughter, who writes down the memories. Back in the classroom, the granddaughter relates Si *Mbah*'s stories to the other students.

The scene switches to The Foreman who is going to work. Another foreman came and reported that many workers had died in the mine. Shocked at this news, The Foreman decides he must free all the workers. The narrator tells how the Foreman, who initially worked for the Dutch colonials, then turned around and struggled to free the *Orang Rante* until he became a fugitive from the colonists. The scene returns to the

classroom as the teacher ends the story about The Foreman, who turns out to be none other than Mbah Surosentiko, the ancestor of the *Tansi* people who had an anti-colonial spirit.

The *Tonel* performers depict the condition of the mining workers in the Dutch colonial period as a parody of historical events. However, the *Tonel* performance did not present this colonial history in a way that tried to draw empathy from the audience, as befits a tragedy in Western dramaturgy. Instead, it is performed in a way that provokes laughter, even as the events depict a brutal history.

The choice to present colonial history as a form of parody, rather than tragedy, is important. Here we can recognize in *Tonel* performance a form of decolonization of dramaturgy. It is important to observe that in various traditions of dramatic performance in Indonesia these parody forms are widely used, while tragedy clearly originates from Classical Greek drama, the dramaturgy used and taught by the colonialists, and is still embedded in modern performing arts in Indonesia as colonial residue.

**Figure 2. *The Tansi community: past ancestors and present actors***



In the past their ancestors were under Dutch colonial oppression, in the present their descendants parody Dutch colonial dress styles in a tourism show. Image courtesy of KITLV and the Sawahlunto Cultural Office.

The Controller and The Foreman, for example, are depicted as characters that tend to be caricatural, both in terms of clothing and the way they walk and talk. While in historical records, all the miners are male; in the *Tonel* scene, all female performers are shown. This parody, according to Gilbert and Tomkins (2006, p. 19), is a form of dramatic resistance in postcolonial theatre because it presents a historical event related to colonialism in a way that tends to be caricatural or different from reality, which aims to dismantle the discourse behind the historical facts generated by colonialism.

Let's look further behind the *Tonel* performances. First, irony appears as a primary technique, fitting with Fenwick's notion of the (2006), "promise of irony within post/colonial texts." Thus irony in *Tonel* becomes a dramatic strategy, as is often applied by postcolonial theatre (Diala, 2014; Friedman, 2020). Through irony *Tonel* offers two genres of performance. In line with Hutcheon's definition (1985, p. 49), these are: satire, which critically and caricaturally presents things that did not previously exist as objects; and parody, which, comically shows living things as objects. The *Tonel* audience can see the satire, for example, regarding the need to break the nature of *divide et impera* left behind by the Dutch colonials in the performance *Unifying Differences* (2021), by Participant Number 02. In *The Dark Story of People in Chains with Mbah Suro* (2021), by Participant Number 10, the audience is presented with a parody of history, which is not just an imitation and ridicule of colonial cruelty, but also a way to set an example for anti-colonial attitudes. The interesting thing is that this parody is done by adding a local aesthetic concept, in this case, the *Tansi* language style, thus, providing a way to override the colonial aesthetic concept (Hight, 1972, p. 68).

### **Dramaturgy of (New) *Tonel*: Recreolization of the *Tansi* Language**

Two processes take place simultaneously in *Tonel*'s performance, namely decreolization and recreolization, as a strategy for developing scenes. Through these two methods, the performers try to create a conversation in the *Tansi* language which presents an event, whether it's a riddle-playing event, gossiping event, or historical event. This means of creating scenes in *Tonel* is based on the motivation to display *Tansi* language skills, not just as standard, but also creatively adding new vocabulary. This method shows a completely different way of developing dramaturgy from the colonial *toneel* dramaturgy. Furthermore, it has paved the way for continued empowerment and pride for the *Tansi* people whose ancestors suffered under Dutch colonialism.

The process of decreolization, is when some elements of words that were previously creolized, as recorded in the *Tansi Language Dictionary* (Syafri, 2010), are then made non-standard in the *Tonel* performance. An example is the word '*ngibul*,' which comes from the Javanese '*kibul*,' which means to deceive. The creolized *Tansi* language should be '*ngicuh*' from the Minangkabau language, '*kicuah*,' which means deceiving. Several other examples can also be seen, where the words '*saya*' can be said '*tak*' in Javanese, while in creole *Tansi* it should be '*aku*.' Likewise, the term '*kamu*' or '*kowe*' in *Tansi* has become '*ke*.'

The process of recreolization is when several words not previously found in the *Tansi* creole language are modified and added as new elements to the matrillect (Camp &

Hancock, 1974, p.89), the *Tansi* language. An example is the word 'vaksen' from the word 'vaksin' and 'sontek,' which initially was the word 'suntik,' which means injection. Both emerged at the time of the *Tonel* performances as new vocabulary words in the daily life of the pandemic years, and are derived from modern medicine. In addition, there is also a transfer or acquisition of new vocabulary from the world of communication technology, such as 'cip' from the word 'chip' and 'gem' from the word 'games', as in the sentence: "Kecek ke maen gem, pakai cip-cip?" [Do you think it's playing online games, using all the chips?]

These two processes – decreolization and recreolization – indirectly become a formula in the embodiment of *Tonel*'s performance scenes. Thus, the dramaturgical model of *Tonel* performance is based on these two language techniques. Furthermore, through conversations containing aspects of decreolization and recreolization, the genre or psychological impact that the audience seeks, namely satire and parody, is realized through the creation of dialogue by *Tonel* performers.

The creole language in postcolonial theatrical performances is the language of resistance, and furthermore is a practice or performance of decoloniality (Gilbert & Tompkins, 2002, p. 184). Thus, the scenes in *Tonel* become an expression and a symbol of the resistance of the *Tansi* people. As an expression, the process of recreolization of the *Tansi* language shows that the *Tansi* people can add and subtract new types of words from their language, a form of subversion of the dominant language, namely Minangkabau. Meanwhile, as a symbolization, de/recreolization shows that the *Tansi* language is built and shaped by the *Tansi* people as their legacy.

It means that de/recreolization is simultaneously a parody of the *Tansi* language, which occurs by accident, or to borrow Cohen's term (2017, p. 109), as a form of "unconscious parody." Parody of language also appears in attempts to create new rhymes by making sentences with rhymes similar to the dominant Minangkabau people. For example, in the sentence: "Ndeh! Alah panek-panek, makan saketek, gaji ndak pulo dapek!" [Ouch! I'm tired, I only a little to eat, salary either I don't get!]. Indirectly, this is both imitation or mimicry and mockery of the language style of the Minangkabau people, who rely on this rhyming style. This kind of language style has become the dramaturgy of modern theater in West Sumatra, for example, as seen in the works of Wisran Hadi (Pramayoza, 2022). Meanwhile, the audience can also see indications of the emergence of aesthetics from the ancestors of the *Tansi* people. The process of appropriation of the dominant Minangkabau tradition has also taken place, through reclamation of the *pantun* (rhyme) tradition, but this time to create a new tradition, namely *pantun* in *Tansi* language (Werbner & Fumanti, 2013).

In such dramaturgical processes, the *Tansi* language in *Tonel* performance becomes the ‘materiality of language’ that is ‘present’ and ‘re-presents’ the *Tansi* community, and is not just a ‘representation’ by the *Tansi* community (see Benitez & Lundberg, 2022, p.11). They borrow or even steal various idioms and stories as a strategy (Cuthbert, 1998) or revise existing materials, recycling them to create stories (Anderson, 2020).

### **Conclusion: Decolonial Performativity**

Thus, the use of the *Tansi* language as a creole in *Tonel* performance is not only a characteristic of this performance but also presents the *Tansi* people themselves as a creole society, one that was brought together in Sawahlunto under brutal conditions of colonialism – forced into hard labor in the coal mines, suffering food shortages, and under threat of various diseases. The motivation to display skills in using the *Tansi* language by the participants also becomes a method of developing the dramaturgy of the *Tonel* performances they present. The participants creatively added several new words to the *Tansi* language, they also stripped some of the words that had undergone creolization. It is important to see this attitude as part of the decolonization process, because while in the past the creolization of the *Tansi* language occurred out of necessity when in the colonial era ethnic groups were forced together under hard labor in the mining town, in the postcolonial present, it is done independently and with free will. The communication model of the *Tansi* language in *Tonel* is thus also a way of presenting the *Tansi* creole culture, or borrowing Anderson’s words (2020), a way of “speaking back”.

One of the exciting things about *Tonel* in the ‘Tansi Language Tonil Contest’ was how it was dominated by female performers. This fact seems to emphasize the role of women as the backbone of *Tansi* language and culture. It is also a form of direct decolonization of performing arts inherited from the colonial period where women were generally only used as objects and a target of lust. In contrast, in the *Tonel* performances women appeared as the main actors and played significant roles. This can be read as a strategy in “acting out” (and follows in the footsteps of their anti-colonial hero who was willing to act out or take action).

Another decolonizing component regarding *Tonel* performances in the ‘Tansi Language Tonil Contest’ was the appearance of performing groups with no names. The only identification for them is the Participant Number. This is a metaphor of the *Tansi* people themselves, whose ancestors came to Sawahlunto without identification. Their identities were stripped and replaced with prisoner numbers, which they took into death – for the numbers were stamped on their gravestones. This impression of namelessness deepens, because in *Tonel* performances there tends to be no fixation



on characters' names. This condition is an antithesis of various Western theatrical performances, including those that the Dutch colonials enjoyed watching at the *Societeit*, which are strict in character identification through the naming of *dramatic personae*. Thus, this can be seen as a decolonial strategy of non-naming which creates a dramatic atmosphere of "deathly silence".

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