

Wayang In Javanese Mythology: Cultural Communication Through Surakarta Wayang Wong Sriwedari (WWS) Community on Social Media

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Abstract: *Wayang Wong* is a culture which continues to live and thrive in Sriwedari Park, Surakarta, for 107 years. It's a culture which was born in 2011 and survives and grows in the society because it has philosophical, artistic and moral values, so that it doesn't only provide entertainment but also lessons for people. *Wayang orang* is an adaptation of shadow puppet which emerged earlier in the society and was even considered religion by Javanese people. *Wayang orang* performance is an art performance which combines dance, theatre, literature, voice and pentatonic music harmoniously and is filled by aesthetic values (*edi-peni*) and moral philosophical lessons (*adi-luhung*). There are four analysis units used in this paper, which are puppets as mythology, character, story, puppet master and directing. Cultural communication by *Wayang Wong Sriwedari* (WWS) community on Facebook is done by a group of volunteers who are considered successful in contributing in increasing the number of audience and attention of public policymakers in the preservation of *wayang orang* as a part of the national cultural wealth.

Keywords: *Wayang Orang*, Cultural Communication, Cultural Value and Social Media.

INTRODUCTION

The currently popular *wayang* (puppets) isn't an original creation of Indonesians, although some experts claim that *wayang* arrived from India, there was original *wayang* in Indonesia. In a written source, *Serat Sastramiruda*, *wayang purwa*, the origin of the current Javanese *wayang*, was created by King Jayabaya in Kediri Kingdom in 869 Saka (967 AD) and *wayang kulit* (literally shadow puppets) performance accompanied by gamelan was developed in 1145 Saka (1223 AD) in the reign of Prabu Suryamisesa of Jenggala Kingdom. After the collapse of Majapahit, Demak Kingdom created *wayang* made of buffalo hide and it continued to grow in Islamic Mataram Kingdom (Hastjarjo, 2012: 158). However, it's undeniable that Mahabarata and Ramayana epics which are popular in modern Javanese *wayang* today came from India. Interestingly, *wayang* from native Javanese culture integrated with Hindu culture and when Islam came later, *wayang* became a tool for spreading the religion and successfully made Islam a part of Javanese

culture. The philosophy of *wayang* performance can be an educational media to develop tolerance (Rahardjo (et al), 2012: 76).

Javanese puppet show became popular and was adapted into theatre to become *Wayang Wong* (literally human wayang) which was introduced into the world of arts in Islamic Mataram Kingdom, especially in Surakarta and Yogyakarta. At first, *wayang orang* was only available for limited performances in palaces. *Wayang Wong Sriwedari* was introduced and popularized as an art in Pakubuwono X era and at almost the same time, Kadipaten Mangkunegaran also introduced *wayang orang* for the public in a national radio community, SRV (*Solosche Radio Vereniging*) in 1930s, which was the origin of Surakarta Station of Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI).

This paper focuses on the development of *wayang orang* in Sriwedari and *Wayang Wong Sriwedari* (WWS) community which tries to socialize *wayang orang* Sriwedari to allow it to survive and grow. It's interesting because it's a pity if a culture which has *edi-*

peni (aesthetic) value and *adi-luhung* (philosophical and ethical) value disappears today. *Wayang Wong Sriwedari* has existed since 1911. The peak of *Wayang Wong Sriwedari* was in the 1970s when it produced legendary figures which were Rusman, Darsi, Suroho, and Mrajak. Today, *wayang orang* must compete with modern culture, such as television, musical performances and entertainments on social media. However, amid the decreasing number of audience of *Wayang Wong Sriwedari* (WWS) a group of people joined forced in a facebook group *Wayang Wong Sriwedari* (WWS) and successfully increase interest and draw the attention of policy makers to preserve the noble culture.

THE HISTORY OF WAYANG ORANG SRIWEDARI

As previously mentioned, the history of *wayang orang* is inseparable from the role of Mataram Kingdom in Surakarta and Yogyakarta. The history of *wayang orang* performance for people outside of the palaces started from Sriwedari which is then known as *Wayang Wong Sriwedari* (WWS). Sriwedari Park, or previously known as *Bonrojo* (King's Park) was built in the reign of Paku Buwono X (1893-1939). The name Sriwedari comes from a myth in *wayang* story on a garden of paradise which moves to the earth, so the name is easily recognizable and was popular among people. In the beginning, Sriwedari Park was built in 1899 as a place for pastime, entertainment and retreat of the royal families, containing plants and pets, then equipped with *wayang orang* theatre. A commercial *Wayang Wong Sriwedari* (WWS) community was then established and could be enjoyed by the public. In terms of development of art for the public via radio, especially *wayang orang* in Kadipaten Mangkunegaran, it was one of the concerns of Mangkunegoro VII on the development of Javanese culture in the national struggle era. The birth of the first national broadcasting agency, SRV (*Solosche Radio Vereniging*) on 1 April 1933, broadened the broadcast of Javanese arts and cultures as parts of national culture across the country and even to other countries. The role of

Surakarta RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia) in supporting and maintaining the spirit of independence was done by broadcasting various traditional cultures, including *wayang orang* to develop a national identity (Puguh, 2017: 145).

The growth of *wayang orang* in the society at that time was quite rapid so that *wayang orang* wasn't only performed in Sriwedari, but also in Balekambang, *Alun-alun* and even by community groups in villages, which is known as *wayang wong tobong*. The popularity of *wayang wong tobong*, which is a mobile stage, happened almost at the same time as the popularity of other travelling theaters such as *ketoprak tobong* in southern Central Java and *ludruk tobong* in East Java. However, there is a difference between *wayang orang* and *ketoprak*. *Wayang* represents ethical and aesthetical values of more refined culture because it came from palaces while *ketoprak* and *ludruk* were born among common people. In refined culture, symbol plays an important role, as well as communicates cultural values using high-context communication. *Wayang orang* is an adaptation of Ramayana and Mahabharata epics which manners, majesty and grace along with unity, orders, and harmony, as well as myths on the dependency of creatures in the universe to the Creator (God) (Tebba, 2007: 156).

The development of *wayang orang* in the era of struggle for independence to the 1970s is interesting. For example, in Semarang, *Ngesti Pandawa wayang orang* community was established in 1937 and officially closed in 2001. The decline of *Ngesti Pandawa wayang orang* performance started since the death of its leader, Ki Sastro Sabdo, who was replaced by Ki Narto Sabdo. However, Ki Narto Sabdo was busy with *wayang kulit* performances, so since early 1970s, it declined and finally closed performance (Rinardi, 2002). In Jakarta, specifically around Pasar Senen, *Wayang Orang Bharata* group was established. In 1963-1999, *WO (Wayang Orang) Bharata* performed every night, however it then only performed every Saturday night before it finally disbanded. Therefore, today the only *wayang* group that still performed every weekday, except Saturday night all year long

is *wayang orang* Sriwedari. However, the number of audience and people's attention to *Wayang Wong Sriwedari* need to be improved. The efforts of community groups to socialize and promote *wayang orang* should be appreciated to preserve *Wayang Wong Sriwedari*.

WAYANG MYTHOLOGY IN THE LIFE OF JAVANESE PEOPLE

Wayang lives in the mythology of Javanese people in Central Java and East Java in the following aspects: 1). Every opening of a performance is accompanied by praying. Prayer is intended to make the *wayang* performance go smoothly from start to finish. The prayer is said by the *dalang* or symbolized by *gunungan*. Symbolically, *gunungan* is a picture or stylization of a mountain which narrows down at the top. *Gunungan* in performance serves to signify time change or scene change and to open or end the performance. All ornaments in *gunungan* portray the universe, or life from birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, old age and the end of life (Rusdy, 2015: 97). As an opening, *gunungan* is often portrayed as the narrowing down of prayer to the Almighty because *wayang* performance is held in certain event and the performance tries to convey spiritually, implicitly and explicitly the wishes of the people who *nanggap* (hire) the *wayang* performance.

2). *Wayang* contains the dreams and lives of people, whether in *janturan* (presenting the beginning of story) which is said by *dalang* when the first *jejer* (scene) opens the story. It's considered sacred, containing prayers and exultations to the beauty of nature created by God Almighty (Rusdy, 2015: 87). An example of *janturan* for *wayang kulit* performed by Ki Nartosabdo is: "..... *Dhasar negara panjang, apunjung, pasir, wukir, gemah ripah, loh jinawi, karta, tata raharja. Panjang dawa pocapane, punjung luhur kawibawane. Pasir samodra, wukir gunung. Pranyata negari Hastina ngungkurake pegunungan, ngeringaken bengawan, nengenaken pasabinan, ngayunaken bandaran ageng. Gemah kathah para nangkuda kang lumaku dedagangan anglur selur than ono pedhote, labet datan ana sangsayne margi. Aripah kathah para janma*

manca negari katrem bebale wisma salebeting kitha Negari Astina, jejel apipit, bebasan aben cukit tepung taritis papan wiyar kaingal rupak. Loh subur tukhul kang sarwa tinandur, jinawi murah kang sarwa tinuku. Karta para kawula ing padusunan nungkul ing pangolahing tetanen, ingon-ingon kebo, sapi, pitik, iwen tan ono cinancangan rahina aglar ing pangonan lamun bengi teka bali marang kandhange dhewe-dhewe. Raharja tegese tebih parangmuka karena para mantri bupati wicaksana limpating kawruh tan kendhat denya ambudidaya kaluhuraning sang narpati. Marmaning negara astina jeneng anempuh bebasan gedhe obore, padang jagade, dhuwur khukuse, adoh kuncarane. Ora ngemungke kanan kering kewala, senjata praja ing mahapraja katha ingkang samya tumungkul datan sarana lawan bandayuda, amung kayungyung poyane kautaman. The free translation of the *janturan* is: "..... Indeed it is a vast country, consisting of beaches and fertile hills, orderly and safe. It has a long story, admired for its nobleness and authority. Sand of the sea, hills and mountains, the country of Hastina has mountains in the backdrop, in the middle of it a large river flows and supports rice fields, and it has large ports. *Gemah* because many merchants carry their goods walking in line down endless roads. *Aripah* many people from abroad love to live and settle down in Hastina, so the population is large, making a vast space looks small. *Loh* fertile land where any plant grows, *jinawi* cheap and therefore affordable. *Karta* the villagers cultivate various agricultural crops, keep various livestock who are left to look for food in the day and return to their sheds at night. *Raharja* because there is no crime as the officials are wise, knowledgeable, and responsible in performing their duties for the kingdom. Hastina is widely known like a large illuminating torch with smoke rising high so that it's seen from distant lands. Not only nearby countries, many large countries respect it, not because they're conquered by war, but because they're fascinated by its excellence". In *wayang orang*, the *janturan* is summarized as required and depends on time duration.

3). *Lakon/wayang* story is often described as *wewayangan* or shadows of daily lives of people, the happiness and the sadness, as well as the good and the bad. In general, the audience's motivation in watching *wayang* is gaining lesson on human life. The elderly even watch *wayang* for contemplation and to look for aspirations in life. Essentially, *wayang* audience knows the plots and characters but repeating *wayang* stories is like relearning moral lessons of human life. Watching *wayang* is a learning activity and a way to advise oneself, a reflection on problems in daily life. The major plots of *wayang* always end with the victory of the right over the wrong. The ends of some stories are moral messages that *lelakon* (events) are the will of the almighty and they're expected to be *koco benggala* (mirrors) in life in the future, so that the stories can serve as examples in life and to avoid bad stories. 4). *Wayang* characters in Mahabharata and Ramayana epics are separated into two sides, the good/right side and the bad/wrong side. In Mahabharata, the right side is represented by Pandawa in the Amarta Kingdom, while the bad/wrong side is Kurawa in Astina Kingdom. Kurawa try to take control of Pandawa's ending in the epic war *Bharatayudha* which is won by Pandawa. In real life, some Javanese families display *wayang* characters they admire. Characters which are often displayed because they're considered good examples are Puntadewa (honesty), Kresna (intelligence), Werkudara (firmness), Semar (teaching, love, nurture), Anoman (perseverance in duty), and Kumbokarno (nationalism). 5). *Wayang* characters live in the minds of Javanese people and some people identify with certain characters and even display the characters in the living. There are hundreds of characters in *wayang*, but not all came from Mahabharata and Ramayana. Some *wayang* characters came from pre-Hindu *wayang* or from Javanese culture. Semar, for example, is thought to be a god which lives on earth as a human to be the *pamomong* (a man who accompany life) of the good characters (protagonists), while others are *pamomong* of the evil characters (antagonists) such as Togog and mBelung. Semar has sons called Gareng, Petruk, and

Bagong. They're called *punokawan* (loyal servants) and don't exist in Hindu Mahabharata and Ramayana. It means *punokawan* are the creations and results of acculturation of pre-Hindu, Hindu and Islamic cultures. 6). *Wayang* stories and characters are restricted by *pakem* (standard plots), but every region has *gagrak pedalangan* (storytelling style). There are at least four *gagrak* in Javanese *wayang* which are *gagrak Surakarta*, *gagrak Ngayogyakarta*, *gagrak Banyumasan*, and *gagrak Jawa-Timuran*. *Gagrak pedalangan* are results of innovation and cultural adaptation which produces an entertainment which suits varying Javanese subcultures. *Wayang* is a result of cultural adaptation of the journey of the art of Javanese people, which was originally *wayang kulit* before turning into a theatre art performed by human.

COMPONENTS OF WAYANG ORANG PERFORMANCE

In this paper, there are four components of discussion to help us understand why human *wayang Sriwedari (Wayang Wong Sriwedari)* has a special place in Javanese culture, especially among the people Surakarta. The components are: Character; Story or *lakon*; Myth; and *Dalang*/Directing.

Below are the descriptions of the components: **Character**. There are hundreds of characters in *wayang orang*. Purwadi (2007) records 280 characters of *wayang purwo* who have *pakem* (standard) stories. It should be noted that beside *wayang purwa* (beginning), there are *wayang madya* (middle) and *carangan* stories (new stories which don't disturb the main plots in Ramayana and Mahabharata). In *wayang orang* performance, it's possible to make new names and stories, similar to theater drama but with the tradition and system of *pewayangan*. *Wayang* characters are generally classified into good characters (protagonists) and evil characters (antagonists). In Ramayana, the good side is represented by Prabu Ramawijaya and the evil side by Prabu Rahwanaraja. Meanwhile, in Mahabharata, Pandawa family is the right and good side and Kurawa are the opposite.

Lakon/Story and Myth. *Lakon*/wayang story is *wewayangan* (the shadow story of human being), which is description of human life from birth, childhood, adolescence, study period, adulthood, marriage, family life, work, old age and finally departure from the physical world. In *wayang orang*, story of the birth of a character is called *lakon lahiran* (human birth), e.g. *Gatutkaca Lahir*, *Lahire Wisanggeni*, *Bima Brongsong*. Stories of the adolescence of a character, when they fall in love and marry are *lakon Lesmana Wuyung*, *Gatutkaca Gandrung*, *Gatutkoco Krama*. Stories on adulthood and work life are *Gatutkaca Krida*, *Gatutkaca Winisuda*, *Bimo Kruda*. Stories which are considered to represent the spirituality and myths of Javanese although they're commonly found in every *wayang* story, can be found specifically in *lakon lebet* (stories containing religious philosophies), e.g. *lakon Dewa Ruci*, *Bima Suci*, *Arjunawiwaha* and *Begawan Ciptaning*. Plots in *wayang lebet* stories are generally about looking for the God of *Sangkan Paraning Dumadi* (the origin of human and where they will return to). After finding it, they try to retreat and exil themselves to devote themselves to God but they're asked to return to fulfill their duties as *satria* devoted to their countries for public welfare. *Lebet* stories produce the concept of *satria-pinandita* Javanese leader, which is a leader who doesn't only have the ability and skills to govern a country but also has good spirituality. Although characters and *lakon* are surrealist art, they're rationalized as reality (Barthes, 2006: 320). **Dalang/directing.** In *wayang kulit*, *dalang* has a central role in storytelling and conveying messages. *Dalang* in *wayang orang* is a storyteller and he sits with the musicians. Scenes and dialogues are performed by humans. The role of a director beside understanding story is also directing *wayang kulit* scenes so that they can be performed in accordance with stage format story. Thus, quality of directing and totality of actors in performance determine the success of the performance. A *wayang orang* performance involves 40 to 55 actors and *pengrawit*. A *jejer sepisan* (opening scene) can involve 10 to 15 roles on stage.

Holding a performance which involves many people requires skill and determination to coordinate aspects, as well as skill as *wayang orang* director. The skill of a director, according manage performance includes casting in accordance with character, voice of actors (*antawacana*), knowledge on dance, knowledge on stage setting, makeup and costume, and understanding on *karawitan* (pentatonic orchestras) and various types of accompanying *gending* (song and rhythm) Sriyadi (2010).

ACTIVITIES OF WAYANG WONG SRIWEDARI (WWS) COMMUNITY

It's a pity if an activity which involves so many people with varying tasks and which is acknowledged as a beautiful and noble art doesn't receive any attention from the society. Complaints on the small number of audience are often heard, but in holidays, the number of audience increases sharply. It's partly due to socialization by virtual community *Wayang Wong Sriwedari* (WWS) on *Facebook* which was created on 24 March 2012. There were 4.005 members in the group in early February 2018. People from varying layers of the society are committed to preserving *wayang wong* in Sriwedari. Their activities are 1). Socializing *lakon* of wayang every month and every night, except on Sunday nights. It includes informing group members that there won't be regular performance because a performance is held in Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII) Jakarta since the only regular *wayang orang* performance left is the performance in Sriwedari Park. 2). Considering the importance of socializing *lakon* as effective promotion, the admin of the group made *Sosialisasi Wayang Wong Sriwedari* (WWS) page which is often linked to WWS page. Socialization of *lakon* of wayang is important because people like or avoid certain *lakon* for their own reasons. Generally, people know the plot of every *lakon*, but they want to watch it when they want to. 3). Having discussions which is in accordance with the spirit of the group to preserve the art of *wayang orang*. The discussions are managed by an admin who will delete posts which aren't in line with

the voluntary spirit of the community members in the group. 4). Sharing artistic pictures, *wayang* picture, pictures related to activities in Sriwedari Park and information on other Javanese cultures. They also discuss *wayang* stories and the significance of the lakon for the society. Sharing of experience with people who miss *wayang orang* performances they watched in their childhood, whether they now live out of town or even abroad, is possible via internet.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper observes the declining interest in *Wayang Wong Sriwedari* (WWS) which is a cultural site and valued art which should be preserved. The City Government of Surakarta through the Department of Tourism has contributed a rather large amount of public fund, but the number of audience was low. If this continues, *Wayang Wong Sriwedari* which is the last *wayang orang* group which performed every day, except on Sunday nights, may disband. Therefore, WWS shouldn't be viewed only from the business perspective but also cultural conservation and preservation. The efforts of facebook group *Wayang Wong Sriwedari* are voluntary efforts to socialize the importance of *wayang orang* as a beautiful, philosophical and ethical culture.

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