

Conference Paper

The Sacrality of *Wayang Beber Remeng Mangunjaya*: Roland Barthes's Semiotics Study

Yusuf Ahmadi, Hadjar Pamadhi, and Kasiyan Kasiyan

Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Sleman

ORCID:Yusuf Ahmadi: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8016-255X>**Abstract**

Wayang Beber is inseparable from the Indonesian people's journey as they embrace the Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic cultures. This performing art show is an embodiment of acculturation between Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Javanese. Wayang Beber Kyai Remeng Mangunjaya is a type of Wayang Beber found in This article discusses how the semiotics of Roland Barthes can be used to reveal the significance of the *Wayang Beber Remeng Mangunjaya*. Through this study, the author examines the denotative and connotative meanings of the *Wayang Beber*. The results show that the denotative meanings are defined based on the puppet's history and how the sacred *Wayang Beber Remeng Mangunjaya* is obtained. Contrastingly, the connotative meanings are expressed through visual and narrative terms.

Keywords: *Wayang Beber Remeng Mangunjaya*, semiotics, performing arts

Corresponding Author:

Yusuf Ahmadi

yusuf.ahmadiiii@gmail.com

Published: 1 March 2021

Publishing services provided by
Knowledge E

© Yusuf Ahmadi et al. This article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#), which permits unrestricted use and redistribution provided that the original author and source are credited.

Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the ISOLEC Conference Committee.

1. Introduction

The Indonesian nation is a nation that are known to store millions of natural resources in it and is recognized in the eyes of the world as a nation that has a diversity of arts and cultures. The arts and culture of this nation are the work of the nation's ancestors that have been passed down from generation to generation to the current generation. Each region certainly brings its own art and culture which makes this nation diverse, but from this diversity it explains that the Indonesian nation is a rich and united nation in the name of differences. The continuous and very complex development of the era has had a profound impact on art and culture, this is emphasized by the discovery of many future generations who have forgotten or even don't know their own arts and culture. However, there are also many cultural arts that still exist today, one of which is wayang. Wayang is a performance art of the nation's ancestral heritage originating

OPEN ACCESS

from the island of Java. Wayang is a *masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity* which has been recognized by other countries. According to Serat Centhini, this masterpiece art was originally created by King Jayabaya of the Pamenang (Kediri) kingdom. Meanwhile, according to WJS Purwodarminta, wayang is a proverb of Wong (human depiction) with wood or leather to make a story happen. Wayang in Indonesia has many kinds. Haryanto (1988), classifies wayang into eight namely, wayang madya; wayang gedog; wayang nemak; charming puppets; wayang babad; modern puppets; wayang mask; and wayang beber. Of the eight puppets, wayang beber is the most distinctive and unique type of wayang. Unlike other types of puppets, wayang beber uses stretched images as objects.

One of the *beber* puppets which is quite old is Wayang Beber Remeng Mangunjaya, whose authenticity is still stored in Gelaran Hamlet, Bejiharjo Village, Karangmojo District, Gunungkidul Regency. The play Remeng Mangunjaya according to RM Sayid, it was completed during the reign of Sunan Pakubuwono II (1660). Wayang Beber Gunungkidul Remeng Mangunjaya is also closely related to rituals beber wayang scrolls cannot be opened carelessly at any time because they are considered sacred, rolls are only opened at certain times, except with the conditions “sajen” and “uborampe among-among”. When performing the beber puppet show, the dalang sits in front of the screen and by using a pointing (long stick) he plays the story while pointing to the pictures being told. Wayang Beber Remeng Mangunjaya is also still being performed at the area several times for thanksgiving, supitan and ruwatan. Locals still consider the existence of Wayang Beber Remeng Mangunjaya as a sacred object. If it is to be performed, a series of ceremonies must be held, with all the offerings. Demi to maintain its sustainability, every time this type of puppet must be cleaned and cared for properly accompanied by traditional ceremonies.

One way to study or find the meaning of a work of art is using semiotic studies, in the discussion of the wayang works by Remeng Mangunjaya This writer uses a semiotic study from Roland Barthes. Semiotics of Roland Barthes explain that the meaning of something or in this case is a work of art, exists three meanings, namely denotative, connotative and mythical. Denotative meaning is meaning which is taken from how the artwork is manifested, the connotative meaning is meaning which is taken when we see the artwork or visually, while myths arise when the connotative meaning is interpreted the same and is believed by many people.

From the description above the authors are interested in digging deeper into information about Wayang Beber Remeng Mangunjaya with its history and sacredness as well describe it through a study of semiotics from Roland Barthes which is focused

on denotative and connotative meaning. This writing is considered important because after all Wayang Beber Remeng Mangunjaya is not only a work of art but also as a work hereditary culture that should still be developed.

1.1. Roland Barthes Semiotics study

Roland Barthes is an important figure in the development of the science of semiotics. Barthes is known as the successor figure of the structuralist Ferdinand De Saussure in the field of semiotics. Barthes argues that language is a sign system that reflects the assumptions of a certain society in a certain time (Sobur, 2013). The essence of the analysis is the meaning of denotative, connotative and mythical. The first level meaning system is called denotative, and the second level meaning system is called connotative. Denotative reveals the meaning that is clearly visible to the naked eye, meaning that denotative meaning is the true meaning. Meanwhile, the second level of connotation reveals the meaning contained in the signs. The third Barthes analysis is about myth. Myth in this case is an event that exists and develops in the minds of the community because of the social or cultural influence of the community itself on something, by paying attention to and interpreting the correlation between what is seen in real (denotative) and what is implied by it (connotation). Furthermore, Barthes also developed the semiotics of the myth system to study cultural phenomena. However, in writing this paper only focuses on denotative and connotative signs.

1.2. Wayang Beber

Wayang Beber is a wayang art that emerged and developed in Java during pre-Islamic times and is still developing in certain areas on the island of Java. It is called wayang beber because it is in the form of sheets (beberan) which are formed into figures in the puppet stories both Mahabharata and Ramayana. Wayang beber appeared and developed on the island of Java during the Majapahit kingdom. The pictures of puppet characters are painted on a piece of cloth or paper, then arranged scene by scene sequentially according to the sequence of the story. According to the Sastro Mirudo Book, Wayang Beber was made in 1283, with Condro Sengkolo, Gunaning Bujonggo Nembah Ing Dewo (1283), Then continued by Putra Prabu Bhre Wijaya, Raden Sungging Prabangkara, in making beber puppets. Wayang Beber also contains many Panji stories, namely Panji Asmoro Bangun's Love Story knitting their love with Dewi Sekartaji Putri Jenggolo / Dewi Galuh Candra Kirana.

Wayang Beber is only performed for ruwatan or nadar ceremonies. This puppet is in the form of a painting on paper, with a romance like a wayang kulit purwa, only the eyes are visible. The puppets' attitudes vary, some are sitting cross-legged, walking, fighting and so on. Before performing the Wayang Beber performance, a kind of ritual must be performed to honour the ancestors. The ritual is in the form of burning incense in the presence of offerings or offerings. The incense burning ritual is accompanied by a prayer performed by the puppeteer, only then can Wayang Beber be played by opening one of the participants or being held / spread. One scroll contains 4 scenes, so when the first scene is shown, the third to fourth scenes are still in position rolled up. Then if it moves from one roll to the next, the peg to the right of the mastermind is removed first, then the new roll peg is installed, then unrolls the new roll while closing the previous roll, and finally installing the peg in the storage area.

2. Method

The type of research is a qualitative descriptive study. Moleong (2012), states that "qualitative research is research whose data is in the form of words, holistic and complex descriptions". Meanwhile, according to Nazir, the descriptive method itself is a method used to examine the status of a group of humans, an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought, or a class of events in the present (Prastowo, 2012). This research also uses Roland Bathes' semiotic approach to study Wayang Beber Remeng Mangunjaya which is focused on denotative and connotative meanings.

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1. The denotative meaning of Wayang Beber Remeng Mangunjaya

The existence of the Beber puppet cannot be separated from the journey of the Indonesian people during the Hindu and Buddhist times. The art shows a real acculturation between Hinduism, Buddhism and Java. The values of acculturation appear from the story that runs in the puppet. It is estimated that since the XI century, wayang beber began to be developed in Java. The stories in the wayang beber that relate to the Hindu Buddhist kingdoms in Java, especially Central Java and East Java also convince that this puppet was inspired by the greatness of the Hindu Buddhist kingdoms. Wayang Beber Kyai Remeng has a variety of uniqueness in its stage journey. Not everyone has

the right to perform this puppet, perhaps especially in relation to the durability of the puppet. Only the descendants of the family who own the puppet have the most rights to perform the beber wayang. Historically, this has faced various obstacles, especially not all family descendants have the same talents and abilities in performing the beber wayang.

At the beginning of its appearance, wayang beber was a ritual performance. As with ritual performances, wayang beber is held in a certain ceremonial context where the show becomes a medium that links the sacred and the profane. Sacred means holy or related to spiritual things that connect the world microcosm and macrocosm. Profan deals with social and entertainment functions for the community. Where humans are in a system that is influenced by forces outside of themselves. Wayang beber as a show has two meanings important, namely as a spectacle as well as a guide. That play that unfolds is a life that has values to be used as guidance. Early in his presence in Gunungkidul, Wayang Beber with the play Remeng The Mangunjaya was brought by Prince Kajoran who was later saved by Ki Cremoguno. Previously, the beber puppet belonged to the Kasunanan Surakarta Palace. 1740-1743 is predicted to be the beginning of his presence in Gunungkidul. Imagine in Gunungkidul play the play Kyai Remeng or Remeng Mangunjaya, hence the name puppet beber Kyai Remeng Mangunjaya. Wayang beber Kyai Remeng Mangunjaya consists of 8 rolls; some contain the story of Jaka Tarub, the story of Syech Bakir, the story of the war between Resi Puyung Aking against Kyai Remeng (Haryono, 2009). Mangkunegara VII from Surakarta never intended to buy a puppet beber from the owner, but it is not allowed. The reason is that the beber puppet is an heirloom that has been passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, Mangkunegara VII ordered the duplication of wayang beber Jaka Kembang Kuning in 1939. Then proceed with making duplications Remeng Mangunjaya in 1941.

Broadly speaking, it can be seen from the long history of Wayang Beber Remeng Mangunjaya is a cultural heritage from time to time in it contained sacred and profane elements. Sacred is a holy form because it is in the puppet beber is built with the element of belief, the previous people believed through this can get closer and even teach how to get closer to the creator. Therefore, as cultural heirs we should not carelessly in that case, our job is to preserve as well as develop. And Profan deals with social functions and entertainment for the community. Where humans are in a system that is influenced by forces outside of himself so through the beber puppet show the community can come together to tell daily activities, exchanging information and clearly maintaining mutual harmony.

3.2. The connotative meaning of Wayang Beber Remeng Mangunjaya

Wayang Beber Kyai Remeng Mangunjaya consists of four scrolls, each of which represents one act. One act consists of four scenes. Therefore, in total, Wayang Beber Kyai Remeng consists of sixteen scenes. Here is the information of innings, scenes, and the essence of the story in Wayang Beber Kyai Remeng Mangunjaya



From the play Remeng Mangunjaya can we interpret that the play would like to express the teachings about the values of life, such as the sincerity of love which is illustrated by figures Dewi Galuh Candra Kirana, he explained the sincerity of his love for Raden Panji Asmarabangun that his love is like nails, which will continue to grow even though it has been cut many times. This affirms that love which is based on sincerity will continue to grow even though it must pass through the obstacles in domestic life. The teachings of other life values are described by Raden Panji Asmarabangun or Kyai Remeng Mangunjaya to gain knowledge about a higher life, he is willing to sacrifice leaving his wife and kingdom and doing asceticism for who knows how many years. This confirms that this play wants to teach courage and sincerity to seek and gain knowledge even though you have to sacrifice property, property and even life. There are also values of life to fight evil and lust which act as a counterweight to truth. This is described by the figure of Prabu Klanasewandana who did not accept his defeat in a competition held by the King of Kediri and failed to marry Dewi Galuh Candra Kirana, finally he attacked the Kingdom of Kediri with his troops. But in the end it is the truth that will overcome the evil of *wrath*.

4. Conclusion

Wayang Beber is an art that has developed since the XI century AD. This period was the golden age of the Hindu Buddhist kingdom in Indonesia and coincided with the influence of the development of Islam. Wayang Beber Kyai Remeng Mangunjaya is apart from the beber wayang scrolls found in Gelaran Il Hamlet, Bejiharjo Village, Karangmojo

District, Gunungkidul Regency. The mention of Kyai Remeng refers to the storyline that tells of Panji Asmarabangun who disguised himself as Ki Remeng Mangunjaya and was played by being held or exposed.

Through the study of Roland Barthes' semiotics in this study, denotative and connotative meanings are obtained. The denotative meaning comes from the combination of history as well as the sacred and profane elements that built it, Wayang beber Remeng Mangunjaya through its long history and was created because of the public's belief in the Creator, who until now is believed to have magical powers in it so that rituals must be held by preparing offerings to play them. / ubarampe and the connotative meaning comes from the wayang beber Remeng Mangunjaya visually and the story plays which tells the story of Panji Asmorobangun. From these plays, teaches about life such as sincerity of love, sacrifice and fighting evil or lust are obtained.

References

- [1] Barthes, R. (2012). *Elemen-Elemen Semiotika. Terjemahan M. Ardiansyah*. Jogjakarta: IRCiSoD.
- [2] Gadamer, H. G. (2004). *Kebenaran dan Metode, terj. Ahmad Sahidah*. Jogjakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- [3] Moleong, L. (2017). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya Offeset.
- [4] Palmer, E. R. (1969). *Hermeneutics Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- [5] Kartika, S. D. (2004). *Seni Rupa Modern*. Bandung: Rekayasa Sains.
- [6] Susanto, M. (2011). *Diksi Rupa*. Yogyakarta: Dicti Art & Djagat Art House.
- [7] Suharyono, B. (2005). *Wayang Beber Wonosari*. Wonogiri: Bina Citra Pustaka.
- [8] Tabrani, P. (1982). *Meninjau Tata Ungkapan Bahasa Rupa dari Wayang Beber, sebuah Media Rupa Tradisional yang Langka, dari Telaah Tata Ungkapan Bahasa Rupa Media Rupa Rungu Modern. (A research report)*. Bandung: Institut Teknologi Bandung.