

Structuralism and Post-structuralism in case studies of wayang kulit purwa and Eblek interactive wayang performances

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Abstract. This paper explores two wayang performances: the purwa shadow puppet show and the Eblek interactive wayang show. The research compares the concepts behind the two performances. The Wayang Eblek Interactive show was developed based on inspiration taken from wayang kulit purwa. This qualitative research method applies the Levi-Strauss structural analysis approach. Behind human work is not just wishful thinking but the form of values or meanings that subconsciously form individual thought ideas. In the early stages of the research, it was used to analyze the structure of the wayang kulit purwa and wayang Eblek performances with a performance concept inspired by post-structuralism pioneered by Jaques Derrida. At the end of the research by using this method, several exciting findings emerged which revealed a contradiction in the staging structure of the two performances are looked very different. Although the development of wayang in Indonesia needs to follow the SENAWANGI (Indonesian Wayang National Secretariat) guidelines for preserving traditional wayang, the development of wayang performances in the current format is also a priority in its development to accommodate the tastes of the younger generation of audiences.

1 Introduction

Indonesia has a rich heritage of traditional theater known as Wayang. "Wayang" originates from the Javanese language, meaning shadow or imagination, symbolizing "spirit." Wayang art is a form of theatrical performance that has gained worldwide recognition, earning the title of "Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" by UNESCO on November 7, 2003 [1].

The tradition of Wayang performances can be traced back to the kingdoms of Kediri, Singasari, and Majapahit on the island of Java since 1500 BC [2]. These performances were initially exclusively performed upon royal request, but they have since become famous, featuring stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Wayang performances are delivered through various media, including grass, paper/cardboard, wood, cloth, leather, and even Wayang orang.

Wayang is an art that beautifully merges Hinduism and Islam, seamlessly adapting to the Indonesian culture. In the 15th century, as Islam began to spread in Indonesia, portraying God as a figure was strictly forbidden. That condition led to a transformation in the way wayang was performed and presented. Religious leaders introduced a new form of wayang golek, with three dimensions, eventually evolving into the two-dimensional wayang kulit purwa made of buffalo skin [2]. Only the shadows of these figures were shown, rather than the original figures themselves. As a result,

the natural forms found in temple reliefs were transformed into imaginative forms still present in wayang today.

The origins of wayang kulit purwa can be traced back to a significant moment in history. A large screen measuring 125 x 600 cm, known as a kelir, is used during the performance. An oil lamp, or blencong, is hung before the screen to illuminate. The audience enjoys watching shadow puppet figures behind the screen while listening to gamelan beats.

Wayang is more than a mere spectacle - it holds invaluable guidance for life. In Javanese culture, wayang is interpreted as "wewayangane ngaurip," signifying the shadow of human existence from birth to death [2]. The term wayang is derived from the Javanese language, specifically "wewayangan," which means shadow. Wayang kulit, commonly known as wayang purwa, is a form of art that depicts humans and other characters for theatrical performances.

The research delves into the evolution of wayang performances which are currently undergoing significant changes in their presentation. Contemporary wayang shows have emerged, infused with modern elements and interactive performance concepts that deviate from traditional art norms. These developments include shortened show durations, improvised storytelling, new forms of wayang creations, varied formats and materials, and alternative lighting arrangements apart from blencong. Over 100 types of wayang have been and continue to be developed and

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enjoyed by the Indonesian people in different regions of the country [2].

Various contemporary wayang performances have emerged, such as Wayang Kancil by Ki Ledjar, Wayang Measure by Ki Sukasman, Wayang Bocor by Eko Nugroho, Wayang Tavip by Muhammad Tavip, and more. The research compares the wayang kulit purwa show with the interactive Wayang Eblek show, designed for children's audiences and has a relatively short duration. The Wayang Eblek performances are held in elementary schools in Jakarta and Tangerang to bridge the gap in introducing wayang culture to the younger generation in big cities. It would be interesting to analyze the extent of these bursts of creativity in more depth for the research.

2 Research method

The research analyzes cultural phenomena with a qualitative approach using the Levi-Strauss analysis technique through a structural analysis system, focusing on the relationship between structural elements in wayang purwa performances. The analysis is based on Strauss' approach to reveal that social structures are not related to empirical reality but to models built according to this empirical reality [3]. Through Strauss' structuralism, we are invited to see something behind human creations, such as wayang performances. In a wayang performance, it is no longer a work of wishful thinking but in the form of values or meanings that unconsciously form the puppeteer's ideas or thoughts. Thus in a puppet show, according to Levi-Strauss' view, there is a system with structures regulating it. Next, the researcher compared the classical wayang kulit purwa show with an interactive wayang Eblek show for children, using the post-structuralism analysis approach of Jaques Derrida to dismantle the stable structural arrangement of the wayang purwa show and free the structure from factors that subordinate the structure of the wayang purwa show.

3 Result and discussion

The research compares structuralism and poststructuralism by studying wayang kulit purwa performances and interactive wayang Eblek performances. We will analyze the former structurally and the latter as a product of the development of wayang kulit purwa shows, which have changed in popular concepts as representations of post-structural thought forms. We can see the fundamental difference between the two schools of thought by studying these performances. To begin our discussion, we will first analyze the wayang kulit purwa performance as the primary source of inspiration for contemporary wayang in Indonesia.

3.1 Structural analysis of Purwa Wayang performance

The wayang kulit purwa show, based on the Mahabharata and Ramayana epics, has been a popular

form of entertainment and mass communication since the Kingdom of Demak. Its approximately seven-hour duration has changed and improved over time, but the show's identity has remained intact. It is remarkable how the wayang performances have adapted to the changing times while retaining their cultural significance.

In the structuralism approach, a text is seen as a structure consisting of intertwined elements and then builds the text as a whole. Thus it can be understood that in a wayang kulit purwa performance, using a structural analysis approach aims to dismantle and explain in more detail the interrelationships and interweaving of all the performance elements, ultimately producing a complete meaning. The basic assumption of structuralism is to see various problems as a network or system structure [4].

When analyzing the structure of the wayang kulit purwa show, it is essential to differentiate it from the structuralist theory of Levi-Strauss, which categorizes structures into surface and deep structures. During the performance, various supporting elements are visible on stage, and their relationships can be built based on their external or empirical characteristics.

The wayang show consists of several components that can be observed, including the puppeteer, singer, gamelan player, assistant puppeteer, screen, oil lamp, Wayang Sempingan, Wayang Dudah, puppet box, Debog, and gamelan device. These elements make up the surface structure of the show. However, a deep structure is also not visible from the outside but is built based on the external form. By analyzing the internal systems, we can gain a better understanding of the fundamental divides the elements contained in the wayang kulit purwa performance to create a performance system consisting of specific components or parts arranged according to rules to produce particular meanings while these elements are;

1. Performers (puppeteers, assistant puppeteers, musicians, waranggono (singer))
2. Physical performances (screen, blencong (oil lamp), gamelan, debog (banana tree), wayang box, sumping puppet, dudah puppet, ricikan puppet).
3. Physical equipment to support the show (lighting, sound system)
4. Equipment for non-physical performances (catur (puppeteers voice), sabet (puppet gesture), musical instruments).

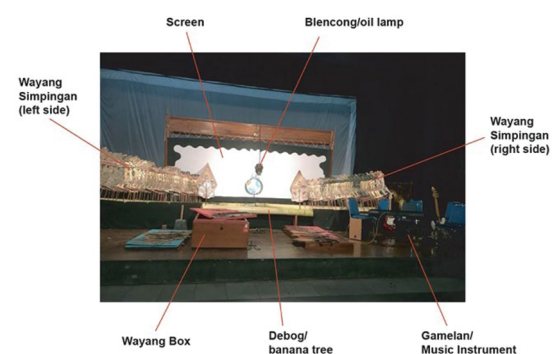


Fig. 1. Physical performance of wayang purwa.

In the traditional wayang kulit purwa show, the puppeteer has many roles to fulfill. They are not only the

director, but also the art director, performance manager, illuminator, educator, and entertainer. The puppeteer, referred to as Purbawisesa, holds the authoritative position and oversees the performance. This hierarchy is crucial for the show's success.

In a wayang performance, we can observe the hierarchical structure of the actors' roles. The play's structure can also be described in Figure 2, with each performance divided into three interconnected storylines. These storylines are integral to the entire story and cannot be separated. The structure of wayang plays is built on levels comprising a series of events [3].

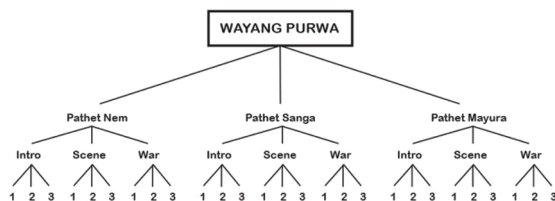


Fig. 2. Wayang purwa performance divided into three interconnected storylines.

The play is divided into three pathet (series of tones) whose areas have been determined, giving rise to certain impressions and feelings. Each pathet will always be divided into three sequences: jejer, scenes, and wars. The three pathets are:

1. **Pathet Nem** is a composition of gending musicality composed dynamically and is unstable, like the character of frail people who are weak and not yet established in their mindset. Describes the initial phase of human life that starts from searching for identity full of turmoil in youth before growing up. In pathet nem, there are rows of scenes at the beginning of the play, usually showing the king and his courtiers. The scene that appears is the king discussing with the courtiers the fundamental problems of the kingdom to find the best solution. Followed by the stage of saying goodbye to the empress to solve the problem in question; usually, there is a scene of the initial war between the knights and the giants.
2. **Pathet Sanga** is a musical arrangement with a quiet, calm, and stable nuance. This pathet sanga nuance describes the beginning of human awareness to reach enlightenment of the meaning of life or the old phase of human life. In the pathet plot, it is evident that the atmosphere of a hermitage or wilderness is depicted. Usually, a scene arises because of the appearance of a punakawan character who is funny and entertaining. The puppeteer will insert messages about the meaning of life and even the message entrusted by the ruler. Continuing the battle between the knights and the giants will also color the scenes in this plot.
3. **Pathet Mayura**, a musical arrangement of three tones, describes the human journey of reaching a heightened awareness before ultimately facing the creator. This sequence represents the completion of the entire play.

The wayang kulit purwa performances are divided into sections, including jejer, scenes, and wars. The puppeteer behind the scenes is responsible for a systematic approach that is further divided into three parts: janturan (description), gunem (dialogue), and sabetan (action). These performance divisions reflect the tasks that the puppeteer must carry out, relying on their skills in speaking and moving the puppets. The success of the puppeteer is measured by their ability to describe the story (janturan), bring the puppets to life with dialogue and sound effects (gunem), and give the motion and agility of the puppets (sabetan).

The hierarchical structure of the wayang kulit purwa performance demonstrates a firm grip on the system. The performers, other than the puppeteer (pengrawit and wreggana), are merely operators of the system. Individually, they do not stand out.

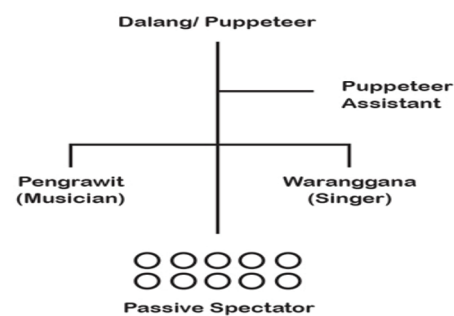


Fig. 3. The hierarchical structure of wayang kulit purwa.

The wayang kulit purwa show showcases stories from the Mahabharata and Ramayana epics through puppetry. The performance represents human life and conveys guidance through a spectacle. The number of story plays is limitless and continuously grows with the development of carangan plays [5]. The Mahabharata epic is a commonly performed play depicting the story between the Pandawa and Kurawa families. The play highlights a dichotomous thinking model or binary opposition between the protagonist Pandawa and the antagonist Kurawa family. The performance employs oppositional logic, portraying one party as correct (Pandawa) and the other as wrong (Kurawa) in a black-and-white manner.

Post-Structuralism analysis of wayang Eblek performance

Wayang Eblek is an interactive puppet show explicitly dedicated to children, inspired by the wayang kulit purwa show, which is divided into several story sequences, which are then visualized and arranged into several series of scenes. These sequences may consist of single panels that can be disassembled and reassembled like a puzzle. Children, as spectators, can be involved in composing scenes with the guidance of the puppeteer and instruction manual. Performance locations can use a classroom or multi-purpose hall in schools.

When analyzed in the post-structuralism, the concept of the Eblek wayang show refers to Jaques Derrida's thought with the term difference or slipping of meaning; the sign seems to be allowed to float freely.

Signs are not fixed but vary and move, and a definition can also fall if you read a text [6]. The role of the puppeteer in the Eblek puppet show undergoes logocentric deconstruction; the puppeteer is not the highest authority holder. All performers have the same contribution; storytelling can be done independently by the audience in an interactive manner. No fixed rules exist; signs work creatively according to the performance situation.



Fig. 4. Physical performance of wayang Eblek.

The Eblek wayang performance is packaged interactively with a duration of only about 30 minutes by raising the story of the Babad Wanamarta from the Mahabharata epic. The show's elements are almost the same as the wayang kulit purwa show, using a screen (projector), a projector instead of a blencong, and a small puppet box. Some elements in the wayang purwa show are omitted, such as gamelan instruments and pengrawit (gamelan musicians), wayang simpingan (the arrangement of the puppets on either side of the screen), but several elements are modified with a different appearance. The role of the puppeteer is replaced by the instructor/teacher as the show guide.

As has been mentioned, the hierarchical arrangement of the Eblek puppet show no longer refers to the hierarchical structure of the wayang kulit purwa performance, which tends to be logocentric, that the puppeteer is a central figure (purbawisesa), but the hierarchy is removed so that the audience of the performance has the same position and contribution. Manuscripts are not an absolute power but are reconstructed to reach a common aesthetic point. The audience can be invited to interact in the show, not just be passive agents. Everyone can take an active role in it.

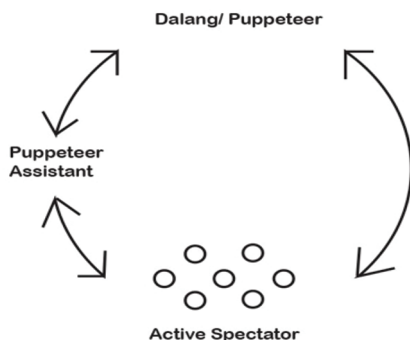


Fig. 5. The hierarchical structure of wayang Eblek.

As we all know, in wayang purwa performances, the dalang only plays shadow puppets as a means of communication, so in wayang eblek several puppet characters are put together in one scene panel divided into several series of story scenes. The audience is invited to participate actively in groups to get to know the characters and understand the story of the sequence of scenes.

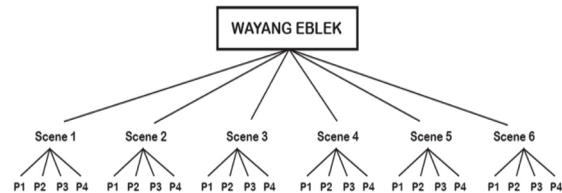


Fig. 6. Wayang Eblek performance divided into several series of story scenes.

In understanding story scenes, a method of reading panels and narration is needed so that the audience understands the course of the story and recognizes the wayang characters who play a role in it. Boards for scene sequences are packaged in boxes and equipped with a panel installation manual and a short synopsis book of scenes so children can study them independently.



Fig. 7. One wayang Eblek scene contains four panels which are arranged sequentially following the instruction manual.

Every line and shape of the wayang depicted on each panel has a meaning, not just a line. There, children will decode a graphic structure that underlies their recognition of perceptually prominent image objects such as wayang characters drawn on scene panels.



Fig. 8. In groups, the children put up panels in the order of the wayang story for the Eblek puppet show.

4 Conclusion

Based on the analysis, there are contradictory differences between the wayang kulit purwa show compared to the Eblek interactive wayang show. The two wayang performances represent a difference in the schools of thought of structuralism and post-structuralism. The researcher tries to conclude the analysis to see these-differences, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of wayang kulit purwa and wayang Eblek shows.

Wayang Kulit Purwa	Wayang Eblek
7 hours long (all night)	30 minutes long
Mass communication media is one way communication	Mass communication media is interactive
The story is taken from the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata	The story is taken from the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata
Having a structured show system consisting of several elements of the show such as: 1. Performers 2. Physical device performance 3. Physical equipment to support the performance 4. Non-physical performances	The performance system is inspired by wayang kulit purwa but removes and reduces many of the main performance elements.
Logocentric, the puppeteer is the central figure (Purbawisesa) with multiple roles: director, art director, stage manager, illuminator, educator, entertainer.	Logocentric deconstruction, the puppeteer is not the highest authority holder, all actors in the performance have the same contribution, the storytelling can be done independently by the audience in an interactive manner.
The script is an absolute authority taken from the Mahabharata epic with a structured and systematic wayang play structure. So that the actor only becomes an agent (operator of the system).	The script is not an absolute power, but is reconstructed until a common aesthetic point is reached.
Has a binder structure (pakem) so it is difficult to change.	There are no fixed rules, signs work creatively according to the performance situation

In the analysis that compares the two wayangs performing, this is, of course, not to cause conflict in preserving traditional arts, but as expressed by SENAWANGI (Indonesian Puppet National Secretariat) that wayang culture has the ability to "hamot, hamong, and hamemangkat (receiving, filtering and making something new) which means accepting input from other cultures, although it is not necessarily

absorbed but filtered beforehand and can be adopted into a unique value that is suitable for the development of the wayang itself [1].

SENAWANGI has separated the remarkable preservation of traditional wayang art to protect its standard structure. It also provides an open space for developing contemporary wayang to introduce classic art in modern packaging. Moreover, to support the introduction of wayang to the younger generation, the development of contemporary wayang performances does not threaten the classical wayang kulit purwa show. In closing the research, a 'naughty' quote from Jaques Derrida might encourage the development of wayang in Indonesia that 'don't stop being creative so it doesn't freeze into code...'

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