



## WALULANG Sangang Candra as an Idea of Creating Mix Media Performance

Dwi Adi Nugroho; Trisno Santoso

Master of Art Creation Program, Postgraduate Program of Indonesian Art Institute of Surakarta, Indonesia

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### **Abstract**

This artwork creation research is entitled: “Walulang”; Sangang Candra as an Idea of Creating Collaborated Puppet, Dance, and Karawitan Performance or “Wayang Ngluru Piwulang”, building on the cultural teachings in Javanese classical advice. Sangang Candra tells about the fetal life for nine months in the womb viewed from Javanese people perspective as the source of art work creation inspiration. The creation perspective focuses on the collaborative performance of shadow puppet (Wayang kulit bayangan), wayang golek, dance, and karawitan. Work creation was done using Roland Barthes’ semiotic concept to see the Javanese philosophical content by identifying denotative, connotative meanings, and myth. Work creation results in mix media performance entitled Walulang (Wayang Ngluru Piwulang), telling about the story of Bratasena’s birth from the process before his parents’ marriage to his birth to the world.

**Keywords:** *Sangang Candra; Mix Media Performance; Semiotics*

### **Introduction**

Wayang Ngluru Piwulang is a medium of expression to express or to reflect a series of fetal life growth process in the womb as the reminder to the people. Building on cultural teachings in Javanese classical advice (*wejangan*), *Sangang Candra* tells about the beginning of fetal existence to his birth to the world, in Javanese perspective as the source of inspiration in creating work. The creation perspective focuses on mixed media performance. Mixed media in visual art refers to the art work, the creation of which uses more than one media, including *wayang kulit bayangan (sandosa)*, *wayang golek*, dance, and *karawitan*.

The performance inspired with fetal life in the womb corresponding to Javanese advice: *Eka Candra Mungkara Durga* (a woman will really miss and always want to be close to her husband in the first month), *Dwi Candra mungkara dadu* (a lump of flesh enters into a woman’s womb in the second month), *Tri Candra mungkara Gana* (the lump of flesh will change into fetus in the third month), *Catur Candra Mungkara Buja* (the fetus has right and left hands in the fourth month), *Panca Candra Mungkara Karna* (it has right and left ears in the fifth month), *Sat Candra Mungkara Pada* (it has right and left legs in the sixth month), *Sapta Candra Mungkara Balik Buwana* (its position changes from the head above in the seventh month into the head below in the eighth month), *Hastha Candra Mungkara Minggu* (the fetus is on meditating position as it sees God to get supply to live in the world in the eighth month), *Nawa*

*Candra Mungkara Buwana* (the fetus will be born to the world in the ninth month) (Suyanto, interview on November 11, 2020).

The explanation in the paragraph above encourages this art work creation to know further the symbolical values of Javanese culture. Therefore, it is important to do contemplation encouraged by the author's love to puppet (*wayang*) and all aspects encircling it. The media to be used in this work performance is not far from the three forms of *wayang*: *kulit*, *golek*, and *wong*. Meanwhile, the shadow projecting media used is leather symbolizing the origin of *wayang* according to the work creation telling about the origin of human.

## Method

This research used *sanggit* reinterpretation method, through some creation procedures: (1) creating *wayang* shape (form) and character, (2) writing script and scenes of performance, (3) artistic creating process including experiment, contemplation, and exploration, and (4) work embodiment. Thus, the created work can produce representatively a performance inspired with “*Sangang Candra* (nine months)”. The concept used to read the sign is Roland Barthes' semiotic theory approach. Roland Barthes' semiotic theory is used to explain denotative, connotative meanings, and myth in creating *Walulang* artwork.

## Informants

Table 1 presents short biography of informants.

Table 1. List of Informants

Name	Age	Occupation	Address
Blacius Subono	67	<i>Dalang</i> (puppetry narrator) and Cultural Expert	Surakarta
Suyanto	61	<i>Dalang</i> and Lecturer of	Surakarta
Wahyu Santoso Prabowo	68	Lecturer and cultural Expert Budawan	Surakarta

## Discussion

*Walulang* artwork builds on Javanese cultural perspective in interpreting the human birth event. Javanese people believe that a life phenomenon occurring when the soul (spirit) is present in the fetus passes through a series of cycles occurring in the womb. The holy soul (spirit) initiates the life in the fetus growth cycle in the second month. The cycle is corresponding to Javanese people advice or teaching (*wejangan* or *pitutur*), reflected on the *bubak kawah* rite. The *wejangan* can be the foundation of life as the control of attitude, the means of reminding and creating personality to young generation (child).

The meaning arising from the process of creating *Walulang* work can be seen from the whole performance form, including dance, *wayang*, and *karawitan*, using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory containing three semiotic elements: (1) denotative meaning, (2) connotative meaning, and (3) myth.

### Denotative Meaning

Denotative meaning is the original one approved as the representation of an actual form. Denotative meaning in the *Walulang* work creation lies on the sequence or outline of story. The first scene shows an event where Pandhu and Kunthi met each other, got married, and kunthi was pregnant for nine months as explained in the *wejangan of Eka Candra Mungkara Durga* (a woman will really miss and always want to be close to her husband in the first month, *Dwi Candra mungkara dadu* (a lump of flesh enters into a woman's womb in the second month), *Tri Candra mungkara Gana* (the lump of flesh will change into fetus in the third month), *Catur Candra Mungkara Buja* (the fetus has right and left hands in the fourth month), *Panca Candra Mungkara Karna* (it has right and left ears in the fifth month), *Sat*

*Candra Mungkara Pada* (it has right and left legs in the sixth month), *Sapta Candra Mungkara Balik Buwana* (its position changes from the head above in the seventh month into the head below in the eighth month), *Hastha Candra Mungkara Minggu* (the fetus is on meditating position as it sees God to get supply to live in the world in the eighth month, *Nawa Candra Mungkara Buwana* (the fetus will be born to the world in the ninth month), in which Bratasena's birth indicates that the fetus has been born.

The order of scenes is a denotative meaning or the actual meaning occurring in the *Walulang* performance presentation, telling about Bratasena's birth. Those meanings are then explored in such a way that becomes the performance text studied using Javanese semiotic.

### Connotative Meaning

The connotative meaning is a more-indepth interpretation on text related to theology, ideology, and culture underlying the physique (Saussure in Tinarbuka, 2003:37). In this “*Walulang*” performance, the connotative meaning lies on the dramatic structural construct and symbols existing in the acts of *sabet*, *catur*, and *karawitan pakeliran*, including the use of puppet doll. In detail the connotative meaning builds on the followings:

The position of *Dalang* (narrator) is in the center while singing *pathetan manyura ageng*. In this scene, the position of narrator is represented as the manifestation of God in explaining the beginning of story. Two *kayons* represent two characters existing in the life: good-bad, man-woman, light-dark, etc. This dualism is represented as the original creation of Adam and Eve as the first humans residing the world, and this work will tell about the process of human birth to the world.



**Figure 1.** Scene of story beginning (Photograph: reproduced by Dwi Adi Nugroho)

The next scene represents the characters of Pandhu and Kunthi who met and fell in love each other through the movement of shadow and also features the figures of Pandhu and Kunthi in the silhouette puppet.



**Figure 2.** Pandhu and Kunthi as the central characters (Photographs: Krisna)

The scene shows Pandhu who embarked on falling in love to Kunthi finally framed in the *kayon*. Following the encounter of Pandhu and Kuthi.



**Figure 3.** The encounter of Ragajati and Sukmajati in spirit realm (Photograph: repro Dwi Adi Nugroho)

The next scene features Ragajati and Sukmajati characters. The characterization of Ragajati and Sukmajati builds on Javanese philosophy about the origin of human beings (*Suksma*), stating that human being has been created since his father and mother meet each other in a falling-in-love event. Such *Suksma* is called *Suksma Mulat*. Literally, *mulat* means sight, implying that human being is created since the first sight between Mother and Father that then grows the feeling of love (Surya Saputra 1983, 13).



**Figure 4.** The scene of Pandhu proposed Kunthi (Photograph: Repro Dwi Adi Nugroho)

Javanese culture has a philosophical perspective. This perspective views that when a man proposes a woman, a spiritual event occurs in the spiritual realm, the baby to be born from a marriage bond has had a name, *Sukma Langgeng*. The world *langgeng* means everlasting or a determination. In this event, the future baby to be born has had determination (Surya Saputra 1983, 14).

The next scene is *panggih* procession where bride meets bridegroom in Javanese culture. This Pandhu and Kunthi wedding procession is performed by male and female dancers as Pandhu and Kunthi characters. It is then followed with *balang gantal* procession, throwing betel leaves called *gondhang tutur* and *gondhang kasih* to each other. *Gondhang tutur* means advice implying that a man should guide his wife through life advices in the context of a man as the leader of household, while *gondhang kasih* means the feeling of love, implying that a woman should love her husband wholeheartedly as represented by throwing the betel leaf onto her husband's leg, meaning that the wife should be subjected fully to her husband's saying (Sudiyatmana 1990, 45).



**Figure 5.** *Panggih* Procession by dancers (Photograph: reproduced by Dwi Adi Nugroho)

The next scene following the wedding procession features the character of Sukmajati stating that both of them have been destined to be born from Pandhu and Kunthi marriage, followed with the scene showing love relation between Pandhu and Kunthi. Love relation between Pandhu and Kunthi is represented with love dance accompanied with *Ktw. Kinanthi Slendro Manyura*. *Kinanthi* means the desire to always be together, implying being together in building household and having descents by the representation of sexual intercourse between bride and bridegroom.



**Figure 6.** Fertilization Process (Photograph: reproduced by Dwi Adi Nugroho)

The fertilization process is represented using the music of *Ayak-ayak Slendro Manyura*; this circumstance represents sperms competing for ovary with each other. The visualization of scene features the narrators from behind the screen bringing *Kayon Wiji Jati* representing the sperms fighting against each other to go to ovary.

The next scene shows the fusion of sperms and ovum represented by the narrator as the manifestation of God in the center holding *Kayon Katresnan*, encircled by the composition of dancer movement representing flower petals. The flower petals symbolize the nobility of human as the God's messenger to be born to the world. As the manifestation of sanctity, the narrators wear white-colored costumes and bring the *putihan*-shaped *wayang*.



**Figure 7.** The Encounter of Ragajati and Sukmajati in the Womb (Photograph: reproduced Dwi Adi Nugroho)

Music used in this scene is *Ayak Slendro Manyura irama wiled*, ended with a scene representing the happiness and the love between Pandhu and Kunthi that makes her womb strong again. The music used for this scene is *Srepeg Slendro Manyura* composed in such a way to reveal firm and strong circumstance, symbolizing the sturdiness of Pandhu and Kunthi's womb.

The next scene shows the fetal development process from two-month gestation. In this age, the fetus is called *Dwi Candra Mungkara Dadu* representing as a flower beginning to blossom. At 3-month gestation, the fetus is called *Tri Candra Mungkara Gana*, fetus grows and starts to have nose, represented with a lump of fist-sized flesh.



**Figure 8.** The representation of fetus at three-month gestation (Photograph: reproduce by Dwi Adi Nugroho)

At four-month gestation, the fetus is called *Catur Candra Mungkara Buja*. At this age, it starts to have two hands and two eyes. This growth is visualized with the puppet moved on its hand parts with a half of its body.



**Figure 9.** The representation of fetus at four-month gestation (Photograph: reproduce by Dwi Adi Nugroho)

At fifth-month gestation, the fetus is called *Panca Candra Mungkara Karna*. It means that the fetal growth is almost perfect with the intact body segments. At this age, the baby has been able to hear anything. At six-month gestation, the fetus has had perfect shape. It means that it has had complete body segments. At this age, the sensitivity of baby as human is trialed with the quarrel with *kadang sekawan* or 4 elements of lust accompanying human being: *amarah* (anger), *supiah* (desire to be praised), *aluwamah* (hunger), and *mutmainah* (lust toward goodness). Inner conflict is represented as the war between *Ragajati* and four elements of lust.

The music used to represent the conflict between human and his lust is *Palaran Dhandhanggula* followed with *Palaran Pangkur Slendro Manyura*, representing *Ragajati* fighting against Lion, Bird,

Snake, and Elephant. Lion symbolizes anger, Bird symbolizes desire, Snake symbolizes sexual lust, and elephant symbolizes kindness. The next scene tells about the fetus at seven-month gestation, called *Sapta Candra Mungkara Balik Buwana*. At this age, the fetus begins to change its direction to get the way out.



**Figure 10.** Sapta Candra Mungkara Balik Buwana (photograph : Krisna)

The next scene represents *Hasta Candra Mungkara Minggu*, or the fetus at eight-month gestation. In this phase, the fetus is represented the one meditating and waiting for birth in some weeks. Therefore, the shape of puppet is represented on meditating condition.

The following scene is nine-month gestation. This scene represents Kunthi beginning to feel sick.



**Figure 11.** Kunthi feels sick (Photograph: reproduced by Dwi Adi Nugroho)



**Figure 12.** Pandhu fighting against life problems (Photograph: reproduced by Dwi Adi Nugroho)

The next scene shows the birth. White cloth brought by the Kunthi character symbolizes the ruptured amniotic membrane. The white cloth extended symbolizes the placenta that will wrap the fetus. The narrator enters into the white cloth and does explorative movement representing Baby Bratasena in the wrapping.



**Figure 13.** The Representation of fetus placenta (Photograph: Krisna)

The circumstance culminates, the music accompaniment played is *sampak slendro manyura*. Baby Bratasena gets out symbolized with the puppet doll brought by the narrator. The birth of Bratasena ends the performance series and the connotative meaning delivered in “*Walulang*” performance all at once.



**Figure 14.** Bratasena’s Birth (Photograph: Krisna)

## Myth

Myth is an interpretation developing according cultural view held by the mindset of certain community (Barthes in Rahmawati 2017, 3). *Walulang* work contains anything related to Javanese culture in viewing the process of human birth. The conception of human life origin called *Sangkan Paraning Dumadi* or the origin of a life. *Sangkan paraning dumadi* is an ideology indicating that human life is inseparable from God as the reality (2001, 121). The relation between human and God finally creates a conception that each phase of life becomes meaningful and is defined materially and spiritually.

The process of human birth raised in *Walulang* work builds on the event of Bratasena birth from the womb of Kunthi married with Pandhu Dewanata. The interpretation of myth can be seen from the birth of Ragajati and Sukmajati figures as the occult origin of Bratasena character.



## Conclusion

Having done a long process of creating “*Walulang*”, some conclusions can be drawn. “*Walulang*” work builds on Javanese perspective on the process of human birth that a baby should be in a mother’s womb for nine months. The method used is, among others, collecting data from written and spoken sources. Through Roland Barthes’ semiotic approach, the philosophical values of Javanese culture consist of three elements: connotative, denotative, and myth. Therefore, a mix media artwork is created, collaborating *wayang kulit*, *wayang golek*, dance, and *karawitan* as a collective unit, building a story themed the process of human birth.

The process of human birth raised in this work is the process of baby growth since the baby’s father and mother is in the process of getting close to each other, marriage, and nine-month gestation, and finally the fetus is born from human. The story used to frame this work is the story about the birth of Bratasena, the son of Prabu Pandhu Dewanata and Kunthi Talibrata.

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