



Educational and Philosophical Values of Wayang Bengkong Kajar Village, Lasem District, Rembang Regency

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v10i11.5244>

Abstract

Wayang Bengkong art is a traditional art that still exists in the Rembang community. The uniqueness of Wayang Bengkong art is that this performance is staged using only three puppets, namely Mbah Bengkong, Raden Panji, and Sri. This puppet tells the story of life admonitions that aim to give good advice in living life. The purpose of the study was to describe the educational value contained in the performance of Wayang bengkong Lasem, Rembang Regency. This study used a qualitative approach that produced descriptive data. Educative values in this art can be translated into beauty values (aesthetics) and expediency values (Religious, Social, Ethical). These values are in line with the values that Wayang Bengkong Lasem is trying to convey, which is called Lao Tse teachings. This Lao Tse teaching includes the mind, mind (including spiritual), and physical. The implementation of these educative values is carried out through these three teachings. The teaching means that in living his life, man must take care of his mind, mind, and body to do things that lead to good. The art of Wayang Bengkong Lasem has good positive values to be taught to the next generations of the nation. Advice for local governments should pay more attention to traditional arts that still exist today. Do not let this art become extinct because of the lack of public knowledge about this art.

Keywords: *Wayang Bengkong; Educational Value; Traditional Art*

Introduction

Art is the result of cultural creativity that lives to develop in the community. The embodiment of an art is a reflection of the personality of the character and living habits of the local community. Traditional art is the result of human works, creations and charities that originate from aspects of feelings, namely aesthetic feelings that are local in the sense that they are only favored by certain communities and are also born or created from the group. Today many of the regional arts have developed following the times, so we are no strangers to seeing modernization in a local culture or art.

Rembang is one of the small cities located in the north of the island of Java. It is located directly adjacent to the Java Sea. Rembang is also the border between Central Java province and East Java province. Rembang Regency has various kinds of arts that develop in the community. One of these arts is Wayang Bengkong.

The art of puppetry contains elements of life value. Wayang is very useful for the people of Indonesia. Through puppet performances, images or examples of human life on this earth can be seen so that it is often said that puppets are spectacle entertainment that contains guidance to understand the order (Walujo, 2000: 83). The types of puppets in Indonesia are also diverse with different characteristics and stories in each region. One of the existing puppets is the bengkong puppet located in Rembang Regency.

Wayang Bengkong is one of the puppets of the klithik type. It is called klithik puppet because the basic material of bengkong puppet is flat wood. Wayang bengkong is inherited from generation to generation by one family from Kajar Village, Lasem District, Rembang Regency. Wayang Bengkong is performed by a puppeteer with 3 figures named Mbah Bengkong (Gen Hong), Bagus Panji, and Sri (Kecruk). Wayang bengkong is performed when residents have things such as marriage, circumcision, earth alms, and so on. The story that is told is an admonition and lecture that is in accordance with what event is being held by the owner of the hajjat and is positive.

Wayang bengkong is a type of klithic puppet that has a uniqueness compared to other puppets. In wayang performances, in general, gamelan musical instruments are accompanied, but in bengkong puppet performances accompanied by the music used, namely the mouth sounds of the niyaga. Wayang Bengkong accompaniment is acapella because it does not use any musical instrument but directly from the mouth of the Niyaga. The Niyaga try to represent the accompaniment of gamelan through their mouths. Some act as kendang, kenong, sinden, and also gong.

Wayang bengkong is usually performed when the community is carrying out events such as circumcision, marriage, and earth alms. The story presented by the puppeteer is a story that contains advice and advice that is in accordance with the ongoing event. But in recent years, the existence of wayang bengkong in Rembang Regency began to be threatened with extinction with reduced public interest and increasingly rapid technology. People prefer other alternative entertainment that is more efficient and modern. If the people of Rembang Regency themselves lack interest in their own culture, it is feared that there will be extinction of the culture, one of which is wayang bengkong. Considering that at this time there is only one puppeteer who performs wayang bengkong. So there needs to be an effort to reintroduce wayang bengkong to the people in Rembang Regency.

Wayang bengkong has positive values that we should learn. The lack of regeneration and also attention from the Regional Government has caused this puppet to not be widely known in the local and national arena. The lack of public interest at this time causes Bengkong Wayang Art to be forgotten and eroded by the times. In this design, the author tries to describe the educational values contained in the performance of Wayang Bengkong so that people understand this art and help preserve the art of Wayang Bengkong so that it does not become extinct.

Research Methods

The type of research that researchers will use in this paper is qualitative where researchers will process every finding and learning phenomena that occur in descriptive form. The data collection techniques that researchers use are document studies, literature studies, observations and interviews. Documents will be obtained from researchers who document the learning and staging of Wayang Bengkong Lasem. Researchers will get literature study sources from related journals and books about the history of Lasem and books about art in Rembang Regency. In observation, researchers came directly and witnessed the process of staging Wayang Bengkong Lasem in Kajar Lasem Village, Rembang Regency. Last interview. Interviews were conducted with parties who have capabilities about the art of Wayang Bengkong, such as the puppeteer, Mr. Kamin, represented by Mas Wasis, Chairman of the History Lovers Society Forum (FOKMAS), Mr. Ernantoro. Data collection stage, data is collected as much as possible in various ways. Then the data is reduced to sort through the important data. After the presentation of the data, the collected and already reduced data is presented in the form of a description. Finally, the

conclusion, in this phase, the data that have been presented are analyzed and concluded.

Discussion and Results

1. Wayang Bengkong

Wayang has a very long history in its development in Indonesia. Wayang can be interpreted as walulang inukir (carved skin). Wayang in the Big dictionary Indonesian be interpreted as an imitation puppet made from carved leather, carved wood, carved wood, and so on that can be used to act out characters in traditional drama performances played by a puppeteer. Dalang acts as a narrator as well as the one in charge of playing puppet characters to match the storyline to be presented. The puppet show is also accompanied by gamelan accompaniment played by a group of *niyaga* with songs sung by *pesinden*. Wayang art involves many other elements of art in its performance. Wayang art includes acting, sound art, music art, speech art, literary art, painting and so on. So wayang is one of the most prominent peaks of Indonesian cultural arts among many other arts or cultures. Wayang culture also has a lot of meanings in its performances, such as means to teach education, *da'wah*, and entertainment.

Wayang is a traditional Indonesian art that mainly developed on the islands of Java and Bali. Wayang has also been recognized by UNESCO on November 7, 2003 as an amazing cultural work in the field of narrative stories and beautiful and very valuable heritage (Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity).

The most well-known puppet in Indonesia is shadow puppets, but puppets themselves have various types in their development. These puppets are classified based on the shape and form of the puppet itself. The types of puppets include shadow puppets, *golek* puppets, *beber* puppets, and *klithik* puppets. One example of a *klithik* puppet is Wayang Bengkong.

Wayang Bengkong is an original puppet from Lasem, Rembang Regency, precisely in Kajar Village, Lasem District, Rembang Regency, Central Java. This puppet has differences with puppets in general. In general, puppets are made of cow or goat skin, in contrast to that Bengkong Puppet has its own uniqueness. Wayang Bengkong is made of wood. In addition, Wayang Bengkong also only consists of three puppet figures, namely Mbah Bengkong, Raden Panji, and Sri. In addition, the gamelan sound that usually accompanies the performance is quite unique, namely through the sound that comes from the gamelan player's mouth so that it looks like *accapella*.

Wayang bengkong is a family heritage puppet, so only one family can perform the cultural art without interference from the government. This puppet has no story set in its performance. The mastermind of Wayang Bengkong is Mr. Kamin Munawar. Mr. Kamin is already old, this has resulted in him having obstacles in communicating so that all information about Wayang Bengkong is represented by the grandson and *niyaga* of Wayang Bengkong, namely Mas Wasis. From an interview with Mas Wasis as *niyaga* from Wayang Bengkong, Wayang Bengkong is a Bengkong Puppet known as wayang "*pakawulan*" or wayang *nadzar*. This myth has been going on for a long time.

In addition, Wayang Bengkong has a uniqueness in terms of music. Here the *niyaga* do not use tools such as gamelan etc. They used their mouths to help launch the Wayang Bengkong performance. The *niyaga* make gamelan sounds through their mouths. *Niyaga* spontaneously follow the musical accompaniment started by the puppeteer. The musical accompaniment of Wayang Bengkong doesn't have a clear standart, it just spontaneously follow the puppeteer.



Fig.1. Wayang Mbah Bengkong, Raden Panji, and Sri

The surrounding community believes that Wayang Bengkong is a sacred art and is believed to facilitate the *hajat* or desire possessed by someone who vows. The community believes that with the permission of Allah SWT Wayang Bengkong is a means to ask for *hajat* and blessings for a better life. For example, the vow is as follows: "if I succeed in having five cows, I will consider Wayang Bengkong". This is then associated with myths spread in the community around Mount Kajar.

In the process, when you will consider Wayang Bengkong, there is also a process. Some of the processes include preparing 40 *ketupat*, 40 *lepet*, and preparing traditional snacks. This means that all those involved in the performance, both responders, players, puppeteers, and attendees who come can get blessings through dishes that have been prepared by the host or Wayang Bengkong responders.

Researchers had the opportunity to see firsthand the performance of Wayang Bengkong on June 25, 2023 in Kajar Village, Lasem District, Rembang Regency. At that time Wayang Bengkong was responded to the celebration of circumcision of the son of mas Wasis. Mas Wasis himself is one of the heirs of Wayang Bengkong. He said that the son had a desire to see Wayang Bengkong directly when going to perform circumcision.



Fig.2. Interview with Wayang Bengkong Art Activists

The story presented at that time was only about the advice of how a man grows into an adult when he has passed puberty. The show only lasts about 15 minutes. It begins with prayer, then the opening by the puppeteer of Wayang Bengkong. At the end of the performance, Mr. Kamin as the puppeteer invited the audience to pray together to Allah SWT to pray for the son of Mas Wasis. After finishing, the event ended by eating *kupat*, *opor*, and *lepet* dishes together. This means that we must be grateful for all the blessings that Allah SWT has given and be fair to others by not discriminating between one and another.

1. The Educational Value of Wayang Bengkong

Art is a necessity for humans to achieve perfection in life, both spiritual and spiritual. To meet these needs, various efforts are made, ranging from beautifying themselves or bodies, equipment and objects of daily life, to residential buildings and the surrounding environment. History shows that the values of beauty are not only needed by modern societies with established lifestyles, but also by traditional and even primitive societies.

Folk art that grows and develops in the community is a demonstration art that contains various educational values. Daroeso (in Kuswarsantyo, 2007: 40) states that value is an appreciation or quality of something that can be the basis for determining one's behavior. Notonagoro (in Sunaryadi, 2012: 3) states that value consists of: material, vital, and spiritual values. While in spiritual values include the value of truth, beauty, and religious value.

Based on this understanding of values, the values contained in the art of Wayang Bengkong can be divided into beauty values and expediency values.

a. Aesthetic Value

The aesthetic value in Wayang Bengkong art can be seen from the shape or model of the puppet. This Bengkong puppet is made of wood and has existed since ancient times. Mas Wasis said that Wayang Bengkong has existed since the Majapahit era and is still preserved today. In addition, the sounded gamelan is also very interesting. Gamelan for the accompaniment of Wayang Bengkong is sounded acapella by these *niyaga* who number 5-7 people. They spontaneously follow the flow of the sound sounded by the puppeteer to form a harmonious and beautiful sound.

b. Expediency Value

The value of usefulness in Wayang Bengkong art includes religious, social, and ethical values.

1) Religios Value

Religious values are spiritual values. Religious values are derived from human beliefs or beliefs. Wayang Alang-alang art has religious values in its performance. Wayang Bengkong is sacred by the local community. This happened because in the past the art of Wayang Bengkong was used as a means of preaching and also conveying advice in living life.

2) Social Value

Social values are related to ethical education. Endraswara (2006: 113) stated that the essence of Javanese ethics that like to live in groups is reflected in the attitudes and actions of mutual cooperation and help. The attitude of mutual assistance, especially in rural Javanese communities, has united the community. The social value of Wayang Bengkong art can be seen from the gamelan acapella music players, puppeteers, and also the crew (general helpers). The number of performers is five to seven people, one mastermind, and also the crew, they work hand in hand together to prepare and display a compact and interesting spectacle in the show.

3) Ethical Value

Ethics is the rule of courtesy in association so that people can behave well (Endraswara, 2006: 112). Ethics in the art of Wayang Bengkong can be seen from the series of performances of the puppet. Wayang Bengkong teaches ethics from basic things such as respecting puppeteers when performing puppets. All audiences are expected to be able to see the performance solemnly so that the message from Wayang Bengkong can be conveyed properly.

In addition, Wayang Bengkong also has its own values and philosophical teachings. According to Mas Wasis, Wayang Bengkong has three important teachings in its performance. These three teachings are referred to as Lao Tse teachings. Lao Tse teachings themselves include three aspects, including:

a. Mindset

The system of thought has a relationship with the mind, reason and behavior of man. The mind can form strong beliefs and principles. Furthermore, we can also add new attitudes that are positive or negative. The intellect combines attitudes with the data we previously obtained so that the process of forming our thoughts and behavior is stronger and deeper. Thus, we will be able to adapt in the face of the outside world. The mindset becomes the guideline for how humans behave.

b. Soul and Body

Soul and Body are inseparable. This external beauty is perceived through our sensory organs, while inner beauty cannot be perceived through our five senses but rather through the heart. Wayang Bengkong presents performances that aim to provide an interesting spectacle outwardly, and also provide calm through positive advice and messages to fill the minds of the audience,

c. Temporal and Spiritual

Temporal is the human body. While the spiritual is the eternal, eternal essence of God, called atman. Atman means the soul or life of God Almighty. Wayang Bengkong teaches teachings for us to always take care of the physical and spiritual. Wayang Bengkong teaches Wayang Bengkong teaches us to always pray and surrender to Allah SWT. This is reciprocated at the beginning and end of the show. At the beginning, Wayang Bengkong performances always began with prayer by personnel from Wayang Bengkong. While at the end of the show ended with a prayer together led by the puppeteer intended for all the audience present and especially for people who were having the event event.

In the end, Wayang Bengkong has the values of beauty, usefulness, and also Lao Tse teachings that are important for us to learn. In addition, these values are also related to our efforts in preserving and maintaining this art. Do not let traditional arts like this be lost to the development of the times.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Wayang Bengkong is a puppet art originating from Rembang. Wayang Bengkong has existed since the Majapahit era. Wayang Bengkong itself is a folk art or the people of Lasem often refer to it as wayang pakawulan because this Wayang Bengkong Lasem is often performed as a form of one's gratitude for the hajjat that has been successfully achieved. This Bengkong puppet has a uniqueness in terms of accompaniment. The accompaniment of Wayang Bengkong Lasem does not use real gamelan like puppets in general but uses gamelan sounds that come from the mouth of humans or niyaganya.

Wayang Bengkong Lasem has educational values in its development.

The story presented by Wayang Bengkong Lasem is not a story about Mahabarata or Ramayana like puppets in general, but contains advice or advice delivered by the puppeteer through the three characters of Wayang Bengkong Lasem. The educative values in this art can be translated into the value of beauty (aesthetics) and the value of expediency. These values are in line with the values that Wayang Bengkong Lasem is trying to convey, which is called Lao Tse teachings. This Lao Tse teaching includes the mind, mind (including spiritual), and physical.

The existence of Wayang Bengkong Lasem art is quite worrying. This happens because the regeneration that occurs in the Bengkong Lasem puppet is quite long so it is rather difficult to deal with change. In addition, the lack of local government in developing and preserving this art is quite slow, and if this continues to be allowed then this art will eventually be forgotten and lost to modernization. Therefore, it is appropriate for the activists of the Bengkong Lasem puppet art and the local government of Rembang to work together in their efforts to develop and preserve this Lasem bengkong puppet so that its existence continues to exist and can be known more widely to the corners of this country.

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