



## Textual and Contextual Analysis of the Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa Performance of the Kulandara Geni Play, Directed by Widayat in 2014

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### Abstract

*Kulandara Geni* is one of the episodes in the *wayang* (puppet theater) narrative produced by artists in Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa in 1967. This play is a composite story derived from the Mahabharata epic, featuring its own uniqueness and strengths. The difference lies in the characters of Punakawan, who serve as humorous attendants and play a significant role, becoming a model for derivative stories to this day (*babon*). Additionally, the differences include the social criticism (*madang miring*) that is implicit within it. In 2014, the story of *Kulandara Geni* was produced again by Ngesti Pandawa and presented at WOSBI in the RRI Surakarta Auditorium, directed by Widayat. The *Kulandara Geni* play directed by Widayat has characteristics aligned with socio-cultural developments. In relation to this, the article aims to describe the textual and contextual aspects of the *wayang orang* performance with the *Kulandara Geni* play directed by Widayat as presented by Ngesti Pandawa. Through this, it is hoped to provide an overview of the presentation style and the various socio-political circumstances surrounding it. This research employs qualitative data analysis methods with an ethnocoreology approach. Data analysis is conducted by combining general interpretations and conducting in-depth studies with a multidisciplinary perspective. The research findings reveal various elements of the textual and contextual structure of the *Kulandara Geni* story.

**Keywords:** *Wayang Orang; Ngesti Pandawa; Textual; Contextual; Kulandara Geni Play*

### Introduction

*Wayang orang* is a branch of performing arts presented in the form of traditional Javanese theater, combining the arts of drama and dance (Supendi, 2007). According to Hersapandi (1999), *wayang orang* is a multidisciplinary blend of *karawitan* (traditional Javanese music), *tembang* (Javanese poetry), dance, and theatrical drama, combined into a grand and highly refined performance. Initially, *wayang orang* or *wayang wong* performances were an integral part of court arts, presented only to the royal family and high-ranking officials in the kingdom. However, over time, *wayang orang* evolved into a form of commercial performing arts (Hersapandi, 1999; Lindsay, 1991; Puguh, 2023; Samodro & Sarwanto, 2019). This shift is evidenced by the emergence of various art groups that present *wayang orang* outside

the palace. These groups sell tickets and have a style of presentation that differs from the traditional palace *wayang orang* (Brandon, 1967).

Ngesti Pandawa is one of the commercial *wayang orang* (traditional Javanese theatrical) groups established on July 1, 1937, in Madiun (Puguh et al., 2019; Widiatoro et al., 2017). The existence of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa today represents the successful transmission of a cultural legacy passed down from ancestors to future generations. This group became very popular and succeeded in becoming one of the centers of *wayang orang* performing arts in Java, especially when initiated by Sastro Sabdo (Jazuli, 2019; Lanjari, 2016; Riyanto & Mataram, 2018). Puguh, Amaruli, and Utama (2017) state that in its journey as a *wayang orang* performing arts group, Ngesti Pandawa established the city of Semarang as its final destination after previously holding traveling performances (*tobong*). According to them, Hadisoebeno, who served as the Mayor of Semarang, strongly supported the existence of Ngesti Pandawa.

Ngesti Pandawa began presenting *wayang orang* performances at GRIS in 1954. These performances received a positive response from the public, resulting in a consistently large audience. Spectators were always enthusiastic to see the actors in the *wayang orang* performances, leading to the emergence of many famous artists from Ngesti Pandawa. The development of the *wayang orang* performances at Ngesti Pandawa prompted the local government to renovate GRIS. The building, which initially resembled a makeshift structure, was renovated to become more suitable for presenting *wayang orang* (Puguh et al., 2017).

The existence of Ngesti Pandawa in the community has made it consistently productive in providing innovation or creativity in the stories (*lakon*) of *wayang orang* performances. This aligns with the opinion of Bambang Budiono (interview on May 5, 2019), who stated that Ngesti Pandawa has several popular and special stories. According to him, each of these stories has different characteristics and serves as a distinctive feature of the Ngesti Pandawa *wayang orang* style. Based on the interview with Djoko Muljono on May 4, 2019, who is the leader of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa, it was revealed that there are several stories that are the result of innovation or creation by their predecessors, including *Subadra Larung*, *Janaka Sendang*, *Parta Dewa*, *Tali Rasa-Rasa Tali*, *Gareng dadi Bathara Guru* or *Kulandara Geni*, *Semar Barang Jantur*, *Gatutkaca Kembar*, *Petruk Dadi Ratu*, *Bambang Sembotho*, *Gondang Jagad-Gondang Dewa*, and *Endang Werdiningsih*.

In *wayang orang* performances, the storyline or narrative serves as the foundation for determining various formative components, such as dramatic structure, music (*karawitan*), movement patterns, costume design, character traits, and more. Similar to *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet) performances, *wayang orang* is an art form that embodies values of entertainment (*tontonan*), guidance (*tuntunan*), and order (*tatanan*) (Cahya, 2016; Widyastitieningrum & Herdiani, 2023). In this context, the storyline holds a crucial position regarding the values it expresses (Wicaksono, 2012). Pramutomo (2019) argues that *wayang wong* (*wayang orang*) performances have both textual and contextual aspects that reflect the communication of meaning. According to him, the textual aspect of the story's narrative with its dramatic structure can carry specific meanings. These meanings relate to the contextual aspect, which involves elements outside the text that allow for symbolic practices. Therefore, the storyline, as the foundation of creation, holds a significant position in both textual and contextual aspects, as stated by Pramutomo.

*Kulandara Geni* is one of the episodes of the *wayang* story produced by the artists of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa in 1967. This story is a *carangan* (an original variation) derived from the Mahabharata epic, with its own unique characteristics and strengths. The difference lies in the role of the Punakawan, the clown servants, whose humor plays a significant role and has become a model for derivative stories until now (*babon*). This is one of the characteristics of Ngesti Pandawa in presenting *wayang orang* performances. In addition, the difference is also in the subtle social criticism (*madang*

*miring*) implied within it. In 2014, the story of *Kulandara Geni* was produced again by Ngesti Pandawa and presented at WOSBI (Wayang Orang Seribu Bintang) in the RRI Surakarta Auditorium, directed by Widayat. The *Kulandara Geni* play, directed by Widayat, features characteristics that are aligned with socio-cultural developments.

This article aims to describe the textual and contextual aspects of the *wayang orang* performance of the *Kulandara Geni* play directed by Widayat, presented by Ngesti Pandawa in 2014. Through this description, it is hoped to provide an overview of the presentation style and the various socio-cultural conditions surrounding it. *Wayang orang*, as a cultural product of Javanese society, serves as a cultural text that is inherently connected to various contexts. This research is considered important in providing an understanding that *Kulandara Geni*, as one of the stories in the *wayang orang* performance presented by Ngesti Pandawa, has a symbolic practice space. This symbolic practice space is related to the contextual aspect that is shown through *madang miring* or subtle social criticism. As a form of performing art, the textual aspect plays a significant role in expressing this social criticism.

## **Method**

Regarding the research objectives, this study uses an ethnocoreological approach that relies on qualitative data. Ethnocoreology is a discipline that studies non-Western ethnic dance. The foundation of ethnocoreology essentially stems from the thesis that dance is culture, and culture is dance. This is because ethnic dance, which lives and develops within a society, is a cultural product. Therefore, the presence of dance is a cultural text of the local community that cannot stand alone (Pramutomo et al., 2016). The *Kulandara Geni* play, directed by Widayat and presented by Ngesti Pandawa in 2014, is part of the cultural products of the Javanese community. As a cultural product, the *wayang orang* performance is related to the contextual aspects surrounding it. According to Putra (1998), these contextual aspects are connected to various other phenomena within the relevant culture. He suggests that the arts, including dance as a social phenomenon that emerges in a specific context, have a relationship with various current phenomena in society. A dance work can be connected to political activities, ecology, and various changes that are taking place.

As a discipline that studies dance as a cultural text of the local community, ethnocoreology essentially originates from anthropology. However, over time, there have been differences between the two disciplines. According to Soedarsono (2007), the difference lies in the types of research used. The field of anthropology often relies on field research or ethnography, whereas ethnocoreology can utilize both field and non-field research methods. Non-field research in ethnocoreology is applied to studies involving ethnic dance that is rarely or even no longer presented but is still known by the community. This is exemplified by the performance of the *wayang orang Kulandara Geni* during the WOSBI event in 2014, which has not been presented again. Therefore, regarding the study object that cannot be directly observed, this research relies on data sources from non-field research.

The primary data source in this research is obtained through an archival study, which is adopted from a historical approach. Archives hold a significant position as a source of information and a center of memory in historical studies. Archives are records of activities, thus playing an important role in uncovering historical events (Alamsyah, 2018). In this case, archival studies are used to examine various phenomena in society related to the contextual aspects that influence the textual aspects of the *Kulandara Geni* play directed by Widayat. The archival study involves reviewing various ethnographic reports that can include archives, documents, research results, journal articles, newspapers, magazines, etc. The document collection from Ngesti Pandawa titled “*Kumpulan Lakon atau Cerita Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa*” serves as one of the primary data sources for examining textual aspects. Additionally, the primary data source used to analyze textual aspects is a video of the *Kulandara Geni* performance. This video is divided into seven parts accessible through the following links: <https://youtu.be/NXqznegT9s8>,

<https://youtu.be/r7XHV7qOhi8>, <https://youtu.be/Pk68xSiK7yQ>, <https://youtu.be/EBkSnhTE4dU>, <https://youtu.be/kD1LF98mhXc>, <https://youtu.be/UvgCkSrCtJk>, and [https://youtu.be/usx\\_i68vYKk](https://youtu.be/usx_i68vYKk). Interviews were also conducted for verification and to obtain in-depth data to reveal textual and contextual aspects. An interview study was conducted with the artists of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa, especially those involved in the performance of the *Kulandara Geni* play directed by Widayat in 2014.

### The Kulandara Geni Play in Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa

The story of the *Kulandara Geni* work is one of the characteristics of the Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa performance, which is considered *lawasan* (stories produced in the past). This can be observed from the accompanying distinctive features. Sumarbago states,

*“lakon lawas kui gampang titikan e, pokokke yen ono lagune mbah Narto wes kui genah karya ne wong-wong lawas mbiyen”* (Sumarbago interview, May 9, 2019).

Translation:

The old story (by Ngesti Pandawa) has characteristics that can be shown through the presence of songs by Ki Narto Sabdho. Therefore, it is certain that this work was created by people of the past.

According to Sumarbago's account, it shows that in the presentation style of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa, particularly in the traditional performances, the works of Narto Sabdho, who at that time served as the composer, are closely associated. In addition, a key characteristic lies in the roles of the Punakawan characters, which are integrated into the dramatic structure. The Punakawan characters in the Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa performances serve as guides or intermediaries within the presented stories. In this regard, the Punakawan will always appear and hold a significant role in every performance (Sainah, 2010).

The humorous character of Punakawan holds a significant position in the *Kulandara Geni* performance. Nala Gareng, one of the Punakawan characters, serves as a magnet or attraction for fans of the *wayang orang* performance with this play. The creative process in the production of the *carangan* story of *Kulandara Geni* was carried out by several Ngesti Pandawa artists, including Sastro Sabdho (the ideator), Koseni (the designer of the dramatic structure), Soepardjo (the director), Narto Sabdho (the composer), Sastro Sudirdjo (the management team), Soemarno Sabdho (the main actor playing Nala Gareng), and Darmosurono (playing Semar). The initial creation of the story *Kulandara Geni* aimed to provide a creative space for Soemarno Sabdho, who is well-known as the character Nala Gareng. Soemarno Sabdho is very familiar to the public as he has been one of the famous advertising stars portraying the character Nala Gareng. This means that the background of the creation process of the play *Kulandara Geni* leverages the popularity of Soemarno Sabdho, who is associated with the character Nala Gareng.

The character of Nala Gareng in the *Kulandara Geni* play, which was directed by Widayat in 2014, has been maintained. The popularity of Sumarbago as the character of Nala Gareng was leveraged by appointing him as the main actor in the performance. At that time, Sumarbago became the unparalleled character of Nala Gareng. In fact, Sumarbago inspired the emergence of the Nala Gareng character in various cities across Indonesia, influencing aspects such as vocal techniques, mannerisms, and makeup styles (Wulandari & Slamet, 2017). This indicates that the character of Nala Gareng continues to be upheld as a draw for the audience of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa.

The Mahabharata epic serves as the narrative orientation for the *Kulandara Geni* performance. Sri Paminto Joko Legawa (interviewed on May 4, 2019) explained that this story originates from Bathara

Kala, who wants to seek humans to be his prey. However, not all humans can be considered prey; only those who are in a good and peaceful state (*sukerta*) can be chosen. According to him, in this story, the Pandawa are part of Bathara Kala's prey. In relation to this, Bathara Kala seeks help from his mother, Bethari Durga. Bethari Durga agrees to assist her son by asking for help from her husband, Bathara Guru. Bathara Guru is willing to help his son by disguising himself as Prabu Kulandara Geni and shedding his divine attire. The divine garments of Bathara Guru are then found by Nala Gareng, who utilizes them to transform himself into the leader of the gods in heaven. Related to Legawa's account, two values are expressed: the love of parents for their children and the common people (*abdi dalem*) who can become leaders of the gods.

### Textual Aspects of the Kulandara Geni Play

*Wayang orang*, as part of performing arts, is a multilayered entity that can be qualified into textual and contextual aspects (Soedarsono, 2007). The textual aspect views a *wayang orang* performance as a physical phenomenon related to its form or appearance (Hadi, 2007). The form or appearance of the *wayang orang* performance is a complex discursive event consisting of various intertwined expressive elements, organized into an entity (Soedarsono, 1999). This means that the textual aspect consists of various elements hierarchically arranged into a cohesive whole. The textual aspect of *wayang orang* is always associated with the text of the play and its style of presentation (Wicaksono, 2012). The text of the story determines the division of scenes or dramatic structure, characterization, dialogue, atmosphere creation, stage setting, gamelan music, choreography, visual tricks (spectacles), costume design, and so on.

The *Kulandara Geni* play, in its original creation by the earlier artists of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa, consisted of ten scenes in its storyline. Widayat then interpreted and transformed it into seven scenes based on various considerations. The presentation style of the *Kulandara Geni* play also exhibits significant differences. Initially, the presentation emphasized dialogue and songs, which were later innovated to prioritize visual aspects, especially choreography. This means that the choreography aspect has a more dominant proportion compared to dialogue and songs. The choreography is constructed with various movement patterns that tend to be attractive. Additionally, the difference is also evident in the addition of the character Wisanggeni as the protagonist or mediating character (resolver), which was not present in earlier presentations. This indicates that as the younger generation inheritors of the *Kulandara Geni*, they preserve it by providing innovation or creation. Such innovation has a positive impact on the continuity of the *Kulandara Geni*, which has become one of the characteristics of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa.

Widayat, in directing the *Kulandara Geni* play, presents the characters of Bathara Kala and Bethari Durga in the first scene as an introduction to the problems. These two antagonistic characters are the sources of conflict in this play. Like most wayang orang performances, the *Kulandara Geni* play directed by Widayat is divided into three *pathet*: Pathet Nem, Pathet Sanga, and Pathet Menyura. Pathet Nem consists of two scenes, Pathet Sanga consists of two scenes, and Pathet Menyura consists of three scenes.

#### a. Pathet Nem

##### - Scene I. Setra Gandamayit

*Bethari Durga kaadep Bathara Kala, rembag Bathara Kala ngaturaken panalangsa nyuwun dahar tiyang sukerta. Bethari Durga paring sarana dumateng Bathara Kala sedya bakal kasembadan waton saged nyirnakaken tiyang bogasampir. Bathara Kala bidhal tumurun ing ngarcapada. Budalan para yaksa kapandekan dening Bathara Kala.*

## Translation:

Bathara Kala approached Bethari Durga, expressing his grievances and asking for permission to devour impure humans (*sukerta*). Bethari Durga granted him the means to do so, on the condition that his request would be fulfilled only if he could annihilate the *bogasampir* humans. Bathara Kala then descended to the mortal world, leading the journey of the *yaksa*.

Table 1. Scene I *Setra Gandamayit*

Character	Atmosphere	Description
- Bethari Durga - Bathara Kala - <i>Yaksa</i> (giant) warrior	The atmosphere built in the <i>Setra Gandamayit</i> scene is tense, supported by dim, reddish lighting, with musical accompaniment using traditional songs as a representation of the <i>dalang's</i> narration.	The <i>Setra Gandamayit</i> scene marks the beginning of the story's introduction and the exposition of the background issues that will unfold in the play <i>Kulandara Geni</i> . The character of Bathara Kala is the primary cause of these issues.

The dialogue points in the *Setra Gandamayit* scene focus on the character of Bethari Durga as follows:

*Bethari Durga* :“*Sedyamu bakal kasembadan, Yen siro isoh merjaya wong bogasampir ngger*”

The choreography in the *Setra Gandamayit* scene features the character Bathari Durga positioned at the upper level, while the *yaksa* warriors use movement patterns that create the impression of forming distinct lines. Long fabric is used as the stage setting, symbolizing power and grandeur. Following this, Bathara Kala enters, and all the *yaksa* warriors move to the right side of the stage, using lower-level movements, while Bathari Durga remains at the upper level. Bathara Guru's son (Hwyang Girinata) and Bathari Durga desire to consume human *sukerto*, such as the Pandawa. However, the Pandawa are still under the protection of the *bogasampir* humans. Bathara Kala descends to earth in search of these *bogasampir* humans. The *yaksa* warriors perform synchronized *rampak budhalan* movements together with Bathara Kala.

*Bogasampir* is a half-god, half-human being. The character referred to as *bogasampir* is Semar (Bahri, 2019; Setyoko & Supanggih, 2018). Bathara Guru's strategy to eliminate the *bogasampir* human is considered the concern of the elders. In Javanese, there is a verse or rhyme that says, “*anak polah bapa kepradah,*” which means that when a child desires something, the parent supports it. In Widayat's interpretation, Bathara Guru's plan as the father of Bathara Kala is not shown, which in the traditional Javanese theater (*tobong*) is referred to as *digedong*.

## - Scene II. *Sanggar Pamujan Ngamarta*

*Dewi Srikandi lan para putri atur puja mring Jawata umbul donga kasarung datengipun Bathara Kala, rembag dados prang lan para putri mundur, katrenjuh Raden Wisanggeni Bathara Kala los/oncat.*

## Translation:

Dewi Srikandi and the princesses were worshiping or offering praise (prayers) to the gods. Before they finished their worship, Bathara Kala arrived. The discussion between Srikandi and Bathara Kala led to a battle. Srikandi and the princesses were defeated, but then Raden Wisanggeni arrived, causing Bathara Kala to flee.

Table 2. Scene II *Sanggar Pamujan Ngamarta*

Character	Atmosphere	Description
- Dewi Srikandi - Bathara Kala - Raden Wisanggeni - <i>Bedhayan</i> - <i>Yaksa</i> (giant warrior)	There are two atmospheres created in the <i>Sanggar Pamujan</i> scene:  1. The first is a serene atmosphere depicting people in worship. The lighting is made slightly dim to highlight the smoke from the offerings carried by the dancers, with female vocals accompanying the music to support the atmosphere of worship.  2. The second is a warlike atmosphere that creates a sense of chaos, depicting a battle between Dewi Srikandi's group ( <i>bedhayan</i> ) and Bathara Kala's group, followed by a fight with Raden Wisanggeni. The lighting is made red and bright, with the accompanying music louder and giving a sense of intensity.	The scene of <i>Sanggar Pamujan</i> represents the emergence of the core problems and the conclusion of the story introduction in the play <i>Kulandara Geni</i> . The character Bathara Kala is the central figure in the story introduction.

The point of dialogue in this scene from *Sanggar Pamujan* is with the character Raden Wisanggeni:

*Wisanggeni: "Jeneng keblasuk dalanmu Kala"*

*Bathara Kala: "Pie...."*

*Wisanggeni: "Mangertio yen tow ing jagad kui kaperang dadi 3 (telu) Indraloka, Janaloka, Ariloka. Indraloka kui jagade dewa, Janaloka jagade manungsa, dene Ariloka kui jagade lembut lan sak bangsamu. Mulo kliru dalanmu teko neng kene kala"*

*Bathara Kala: "Banjur Karepmu pie..."*

*Wisanggeni: "Ojo gawe gendra ana ing jagade manungsa mulo age balio"*

*Bathara Kala: "Yen ora gelem bali kowe arep opo?"*

*Wisanggeni: "Klakon ketaman mantram saktiku kowe..."*

The choreography of this scene depicts Dewi Srikandi and the princesses (*bedhayan*) performing a worship ritual with dance movements oriented towards *bedhaya* dance. The movements are executed simultaneously (*rampak*) and appear gentle. In this section, incense is used as a prop, along with various formations and floor patterns to enrich the space. Bathara Kala approaches from the right side, and the *yaksa* warriors come from various directions to clarify the atmosphere of chaos at the worship site. The movement patterns reflect the giants in a scattered formation. The battle between the two groups is portrayed with movement patterns that create sharp lines and varied formations. This section uses songs to emphasize the warlike atmosphere of both groups.

Dewi Srikandi and the princesses (*bedhayan*) experienced defeat. The defeat of Dewi Srikandi and her troops is depicted with a retreat to the right side of the stage, and then Raden Wisanggeni enters. Upon witnessing this event, Wisanggeni saves Dewi Srikandi and fights against Bathara Kala and his

soldiers. Bathara Kala and his soldiers are defeated and return to the heavens. The choreography depicting Bathara Kala's defeat utilizes a group of female dancers (*bedhayan*) as a symbol of the power of Wisanggeni's mantra. Related to this presentation concept, there is an innovation in the use of group dancers as a visualization of the strength of a heirloom in the form of a mantra. Thus, the group dancers not only represent humans (soldiers or troops) but also inanimate objects.

## b.Pathet Sanga

### - Scene III. Klampis Ireng

*Kyai Semar mbegegeg den adep putra ketiga rembag menggalih pengimpenipun Klampis Ireng katrajang banjir bandang, Masya Petruk lan Bagong kang kalising bebaya, Gareng merdikaken pengimpen bilih Gareng dumugi pejah. Datengipun Raden Gatotkaca lan Raden Abimanyu nanjihaken pawartane Kyai Semar ingkang dangu mboten sowan, dereng rampung kang karembag datengipun Prabu Kulandara Geni rembag arsa mbekakak Kyai Semar pinangka tumbaling Praja Ngawuwu Langit, katrajang Raden Gatotkaca lan Raden Abimanyu.*

Translation:

Kyai Semar explains to his three sons (Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong) who have gathered to discuss his dream. Semar dreamed that Klampis Ireng was affected by a flash flood. In the flood, only Petruk and Bagong were safe from danger, while Gareng did not survive the disaster. Before the discussion was finished, Raden Gatotkaca and Raden Abimanyu arrived to ask why Kyai Semar had not come for a long time. While the discussion was still ongoing, Prabu Kulandara Geni arrived wanting to take Kyai Semar as a sacrifice for Praja Ngawuwu Langit. Raden Gatotkaca and Raden Abimanyu then attacked Prabu Kulandara Geni to defend Kyai Semar.

Table 3. Scene III *Klampis Ireng*

Character	Atmosphere	Description
- Semar - Gareng - Petruk - Bagong - Raden Abimanyu - Raden Gatutkaca - Prabu Kulandara Geni	There are two atmospheres created in this scene:  1. First, the atmosphere is sad but still wrapped in a strong sense of humor.  2. Second, this scene builds a tense atmosphere when Prabu Kulandara Geni expresses his desire to make Semar a sacrifice. Nevertheless, there is still a sense of humor from the character of Punakawan.	The scene presents the issues faced by Semar through his dream. In this scene, Klampis Ireng emphasizes the emergence of a significant problem that is about to occur (rising action).

There are two points of dialogue in this scene, namely from the characters Semar and Kulandara Geni. The first point of dialogue is from the character Semar about a dream that is discussed as follows:

*Kyai Semar: "Ironing impen, Klampis Ireng kui ketaman banjir bandang.... Ketekan banjir bandang kui kabeh podo kalap, anak-anaku telu kabeh podo tak ranggeh, tak saut, mrucut mung kowe Nala Gareng, kowe kalap, sopo wae sing diimpekne kalap bakal e mati..."*



The second point of dialogue as a sign of the emergence of a problem in this play is expressed by Prabu Kulandara Geni:

*Kulandara Geni: "Kyai Semar yen wes tekan prajaku, rehning prajaku wektu dino iki keno pagebluk, kawulaku akeh sing lara, akeh sing mati, aku biso langgeng nggonku dadi ratu, ora ono rubedo ning sarat saranane Semar kudu tak bekakak"*

Semar, in front of his sons Nala Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong, explains his dream in which the Klampis Ireng area experiences a flash flood disaster. In the dream, Semar is able to save Bagong and Petruk, but Nala Gareng cannot be saved. Nala Gareng is swept away by the flood. From this dream, Semar interprets that the Klampis Ireng area will be affected by a major disaster and that Gareng will die in that disaster.

The choreography begins with Semar standing silently on stage, followed by Nala Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong entering from the right side of the stage. The movement patterns are typical of the characteristic *gara-gara* scenes of each Punakawan character. After that, Semar awakens from his contemplation and shares his dream. Nala Gareng cries upon hearing Semar's statement. Nevertheless, the atmosphere in this scene maintains its humorous tone, characteristic of the Punakawan characters. Subsequently, Raden Gatutkaca and Raden Abimanyu arrive with a mandate to inquire about Semar, who has not come to Ngamarta for a long time. Before their conversation is finished, Prabu Kulandara Geni enters, intending to make Semar a sacrifice in the Kingdom of Ngawuwu Langit.

#### - Scene IV. Margi or Strat

*Raden Gatotkaca, Raden Abimanyu prang kaliyan Prabu Kuladara Geni ksatriyo kalih kasoran yudo, kendang. Punokawan kabujung dening Prabu Kulodara Geni saenggo Gareng los saking papan.*

Translation:

Raden Gatotkaca and Raden Abimanyu fight against Prabu Kulandara Geni. Raden Gatotkaca and Raden Abimanyu are defeated in the battle. Prabu Kulandara captures the Punakawan, but Gareng manages to escape from the place.

Table 4. Scene IV *Margi* or Strat

Character	Atmosphere	Description
- Semar - Nala Gareng - Petruk - Bagong - Raden Abimanyu - Raden Gatutkaca - Prabu Kulandara Geni	The atmosphere created in this scene is tense and lively due to the battle between the two knights and Prabu Kulandara Geni.	In this <i>Margi</i> scene, it clarifies the impact of a significant problem that occurs and becomes a conflict (complicated action).

Raden Gatutkaca and Raden Abimanyu fight against Prabu Kulandara Geni. However, both warriors are defeated in the battle. The Punakawan are pursued by Prabu Kulandara Geni, and Nala

Gareng is separated from his group. The battle is depicted with a movement pattern styled after traditional stage performances (*tobong*), creatively designed without losing its characteristics. In this scene, no dialogue is used.

### c. Pathet Menyura

#### - Scene V. Wana

*Nala Gareng pisah kaliyan Punakawan, judeging penggalih lajeng nemu busana keprabon agemaning Bathara Guru, datengipun para Jawata ngupadi Bathara Guru, kepanggih Gareng kang sampun ngagem busana Bathara Guru, Lajeng Gareng kaboyong ing Khayangan.*

Translation:

Nala Gareng got separated from the Punakawan, and in his confusion, he found the royal attire (*busana keprabon*) of Batara Guru. When the gods came looking for Batara Guru, they encountered Gareng, who was already wearing Batara Guru's attire. Then, Gareng was taken to the heavens.

Table 5. Scene V Wana

Character	Atmosphere	Description
- Dewa Brahma - Dewa Indra - Nala Gareng - The gods	A sad and tense atmosphere is portrayed as Nala Gareng gets lost in the middle of the forest, supported by the accompanying music. The dim lighting and the empty stage setting create the sense of being in the middle of a forest. Then, the mood shifts to one of joy and cheerfulness. The lighting brightens as the gods find Bathara Guru, played by Gareng.	In this scene, it remains the same, which is a consequence of the impact of a major problem that occurred and further complicates the situation.

Nala Gareng, separated from his brothers and lost in the forest, feels desperate. Gareng believes that the dream Semar had will truly come to pass. Nevertheless, Gareng's strength of will and self-confidence are so strong that, if it is not his destiny, he can avoid death. At that moment, Gareng finds Batara Guru's royal attire, and he quickly puts it on to escape from Prabu Kulandara Geni's pursuit. The gods, who are searching for Batara Guru, stop in the forest and find Gareng already wearing Batara Guru's grand attire. The gods, unaware that this Batara Guru is actually Gareng, immediately take him to heaven.

In the *Wana* scene, the choreography allows the character Gareng the freedom to explore the stage with his unique style. Humor is still evident in this scene, especially when Gareng discovers Batara Guru's clothing. The arrival of the gods is depicted with the *kalang tinantang* movement pattern performed simultaneously. Then, several distinct movement patterns are introduced to highlight the characters of Dewa Brahma and Dewa Indra.

#### - Scene VI. Margi

*Kyai Semar semedi lajeng salin wujud dados satriya aran Surya Bawana, panggih Prabu Kulandara Geni rembag trus prang kekalih badar jatining wujud Bathara Guru lan Kyai Semar, Semar mbujung.*

## Translation:

Kyai Semar meditated, then transformed into a warrior named Surya Bawana. Surya Bawana then met with Prabu Kuladara Geni. The two had a discussion and eventually fought. In the battle, both figures transformed into Bathara Guru and Kyai Semar. Bathara Guru fled, and Kyai Semar pursued him.

Table 6. Scene VI *Margi*

Character	Atmosphere	Description
- Semar - Prabu Kulandara Geni - Bathara Guru - Raden Surya Bawana	The atmosphere created is one of war, accompanied by <i>sampak</i> music and bright red lighting.	This scene represents the peak of the conflict from the complicated major issue (the climax).

Semar sees the situation becoming more complicated, and then he looks at his enemy with his divine eyes, allowing him to recognize the true form of his foe. In relation to this, Semar quickly transforms into a warrior named Surya Bawana to match the strength of his opponent. The battle between Surya Bawana and Prabu Kulandara Geni is fierce, and eventually, both return to their original forms. Prabu Kulandara Geni reverts to the form of Bathara Guru or Hyang Girinata, while Surya Bawana transforms back into Semar. Bathara Guru flees to the heavens to avoid Semar's wrath. Upon seeing Bathara Guru escape, Semar immediately chases after him to the heavens.

In this scene, there are essentially visual tricks (spectacles) that demonstrate the development of performing arts in Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa in terms of technology. These visual tricks are evident in the transformation technique (*malihan* technique), where one character changes into another. The visual tricks are executed using a transparent mirror, aided by lighting techniques. However, since the performance takes place outside the Ngesti Pandawa theater, the transformation technique uses a blackout technique where the lighting is turned off.

- Scene VII. *Kayangan*

*Para widodari beksan, datengipun para jawata lan Bathara Guru tiron, gegojegan sakwetawis, Katungko Bethara Guru (temen) lajeng kasusul datengipun Kyai Semar rembag, Bathara Guru njlentrehaken perkawis, lajeng datengipun Raden Wisanggeni atur waluyon bab kalimputing Bathara Guru lan para jawata. Bathara Guru nyuwun pangapura dumateng Semar nglenggana.... PURNA*

## Translation:

The *widodari* (celestial nymphs) are dancing, after which the *jawata* (gods) and a false Bathara Guru arrive. While they are joking, the real Bathara Guru comes in. The arrival of the true Bathara Guru is followed by Kyai Semar. Then, they engage in a discussion. Before the discussion concludes, Raden Wisanggeni arrives to inform them about the mistakes made by Bathara Guru and the gods. Bathara Guru apologizes to Semar for the errors.... THE END.

Table 7. Scene VII *Kayangan*

Character	Atmosphere	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nala Gareng</li> <li>- Bathara Narada</li> <li>- Bathara Brahma</li> <li>- Bathara Indro</li> <li>- The gods</li> <li>- Dewi Suprobo</li> <li>- Dewi Siprobowati</li> <li>- The celestial nymphs</li> <li>- Kyai Semar</li> <li>- Bathara Guru</li> <li>- Raden Wisanggeni</li> </ul>	The atmosphere created in this scene is joyful.	This final scene serves as an explanatory scene and includes a moral message.

The point of dialogue in this scene is Raden Wisanggeni explaining the solution to the problems being experienced:

*Wisanggeni: "Aja gampang nyelehake busana keprabon sak enggon- enggon, iku podo wae nyelehake tanggung jawab.... Wong cilik wenang elik-elik ning kudu liwat pranatan kang lumadi, aja dupeh balane akeh banjur ngrangsang kang ana dhuwur.*

This seventh scene begins with the celestial maidens in the heavens anxiously waiting for the arrival of Bathara Guru and the gods. Shortly after, the gods and the (fake) Bathara Guru arrive. The maidens and the gods feel happy because Bathara Guru has returned to the heavens. After that, the real Bathara Guru arrives, causing confusion among the maidens and the gods about the situation. Semar comes to the heavens searching for the real Bathara Guru, leading to a dialogue between the two. Semar explains that the (fake) Bathara Guru is his son, named Gareng. This situation arose because of the actions of the real Bathara Guru, which caused problems in the world. The real Bathara Guru apologizes to Semar. This *wayang orang* performance of the *Kulandara Geni* play concludes with the arrival of Wisanggeni, who explains the entire root of the problem. The choreography in this scene features the maidens using movement patterns oriented towards bedhaya dance, characterized by its gracefulness. In the closing part, all the actors gather in the center to form a "U" shape. Semar and Bathara Guru are at the center, while Wisanggeni, as the mediator, stands between the two characters.

### Contextual Aspects of the *Kulandara Geni* Play

Art as a product of a society's culture is always related to various contextual aspects surrounding it. This is because the creative process of symbolizing ideas and feelings, which is transformed through artistic activities, is inseparable from the socio-cultural context. The phenomenon of dance, as part of the actualization and symbolic-cultural representation, is connected to other phenomena in society (Hadi, 2007). In relation to this, Soedarsono (1999) explains that contextual analysis places art within the cultural context of its society, such as its social, political, and economic conditions. In the world of *wayang* (puppet), the interaction between textual and contextual aspects reveals the society's understanding of the meaning of a play (the story being told) (Widyaseputra, 2001).

Widayat, who served as the director, had a significant influence on the presentation of the *Kulandara Geni* play during the WOSBI event series in 2014. As the director, Widayat had aesthetic authority to apply *sanggit* to the *Kulandara Geni* play that would be presented. *Sanggit* can be understood as a creation or innovation in crafting a work of art, particularly in relation to *wayang*. *Sanggit* is a form

of creativity by a *dalang* (director) in expressing the essence conveyed through a medium (Asmoro & Suwondo, 2022). The *sanggit* of a play can be adapted or linked to the actual social context of its time. *Sanggit* is a creative form of artistic expression that can be inspired by socio-cultural changes (Wicaksono, 2012). This made the presentation style and contextual aspects of the *Kulandara Geni* play presented during the WOSBI 2014 event series influenced by Widayat's views and ideas. Therefore, Widayat's experience and artistic background had a significant impact on the textual and contextual aspects of the play.

In 2014, Indonesian society was holding elections to determine legislative and executive members (Setiawanto, 2014). During this democratic event, various socio-political phenomena emerged in society, such as money politics and riots caused by disputes over election results (Ihsanuddin, 2014; Kustiani, 2014; Prabowo, 2014). In fact, the election results led to divisions among communities that idolized their respective choices (Hendriyana, 2014; Pramono, 2014; Winarno, 2014). This socio-political situation in Indonesia became a contextual aspect surrounding the presentation of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa with the *Kulandara Geni* play directed by Widayat in 2014.

Reflecting on the phenomenon of the 2014 general elections, Widayat applied his *sanggit* to the *Kulandara Geni* play, which had previously been presented by Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa. The *Kulandara Geni* play initially contained implicit social criticism (*madang miring*) related to nepotism in governance (Sunarno interview, June 28, 2022). Through this, Widayat provided a lesson regarding poor leadership styles. Additionally, Widayat illustrated that leaders can come from various backgrounds or social classes. Below is an explanation of the contextual aspects in each scene of the *Kulandara Geni* play directed by Widayat in 2014.

### a.Scene I. Setra Gandamayit

In the opening scene (introduction), a communication between a child and a mother is depicted. In this communication, the child (Bathara Kala) expresses a desire to consume human beings (*sukerta*), specifically the Pandawas. As a mother, Bethari Durga approves and is willing to help, even though this goes against humanitarian norms. Bethari Durga devises a strategy to achieve this goal in order to fulfill her love for her son.

The strategy begins with the effort to eliminate the bogasampir or half-god humans. This is done because the *sukerta* humans (Pandawa) are always protected by Semar. Sunarno (interview June 28, 2022) explains that Semar is an incarnation of a deity named Sang HwYang Ismaya. Semar's duty is to be a servant or guide for good-natured humans like the Pandawa. The symbol of a servant in the world of *wayang* represents the depiction of the common people or the lower class society. However, despite being classified as lower-class society, Semar holds a significant position. Therefore, Bathara Kala and Bethari Durga, who are the rulers of darkness, devise a strategy to eliminate Semar from the order of human life.

The contextual aspects of the introduction scene of the *Kulandara Geni* play, viewed from a social life perspective, depict the practice of nepotism in leadership. Bathara Kala and Bethari Durga can be analogized as individuals in high positions within an organization who always have a thirst for personal interests. According to Sri Paminto Joko Legawa (interview, March 12, 2022), these two characters always justify various means to destroy the world for their personal gain. This is exacerbated by the attitude of Bathara Guru as the pinnacle of the hierarchy of authority among the gods, prioritizing family interests over the common good. Bathara Guru, as a leader, favors his son and wife, violating humanitarian norms. This means that Bathara Guru and Bethari Durga, representing an executive in an organization, make policies for personal gain that harm the interests of the community.

This section depicts an official who shamelessly seeks the sympathy of the people to achieve personal interests. This is generally done by implementing policies that camouflage and harm the public. In relation to the 2014 elections, there were issues of black campaign practices to gain the sympathy of

the people for personal gain (Bramantyo, 2014; Kartila, 2014; Purbolaksono, 2014; Wiwoho, 2014). In the *Kulandara Geni* play directed by Widayat, this is illustrated by the plans of Bathara Guru and Bethari Durga, who wish to eliminate Semar to achieve their personal interests. Semar is to be sacrificed as a scapegoat under the pretext of achieving prosperity in his homeland, Ngawuwu Langit, which is merely a camouflage.

### **b.Scene II. Sanggar Pamujan**

The second scene contains the story of the beginning of destruction on Earth caused by Bathara Kala by provoking Dewi Srikandi. The turmoil between them is unavoidable, and Dewi Srikandi is defeated in battle, later receiving help from Wisanggeni. For Bathara Kala, Wisanggeni becomes an obstacle that must be eliminated to fulfill his desires. However, in that battle, Bathara Kala is defeated by Wisanggeni. Sri Paminto Joko Legawa and Wiradyo (interview, May 19, 2022) state that in the world of *wayang*, the main enemies of the character Bathara Kala are Raden Wisanggeni and Sang Hyang Wisnu.

The figure of Bathara Kala in this scene represents the favorite child of a high-ranking official, characterized by greed and arrogance. This illustrates the behavior and temperament of a high-ranking official's child who feels they have authority and occupy the peak of social status (elite family). Consequently, they act as they please, violating the boundaries of humanitarian norms. This human greed becomes even more tragic when supported by government policies that prioritize family or personal interests.

### **c.Scene III. Klampis Ireng**

The third scene depicts the lives of the common people who live in peace, safety, and harmony. This state gradually disappears when a disaster occurs, namely a government policy that violates humanitarian norms. Prabu Kulandara Geni, as the antagonistic character, represents this. Prabu Kulandara Geni, who is none other than Bathara Guru (the father of Bathara Kala), implements policies that disturb the people to satisfy his son's desires. This certainly illustrates the abuse of authority for family interests or nepotism. Furthermore, this also relates to the practice of negative campaigning in the 2014 elections, as described in the first scene (*Setra Gandamayit*). The difference lies in the fact that the first scene represents a plan that is realized in the third scene.

### **d.Scene IV. Margi or Start**

The fourth scene depicts the battle between Raden Gathutkaca and Raden Abimanyu against Prabu Kulandara Geni. This represents the resistance against oppression carried out by leaders or political elites. However, due to their lower status and strength, they can be easily defeated. Semar and the other Punakawan characters attempt to strategize to avoid and prevent the disaster from escalating on a massive scale. According to Sri Paminto Joko Legawa (interview, May 19, 2022), this scene can be interpreted to mean that the main elements needed to ward off a disaster are not only found in physical strength but also in mindset, perspectives, and ideas.

### **e.Scene V. Wana**

The fifth scene tells the story of the character Nala Gareng, who becomes separated from the group and gets lost in the middle of the forest. This happens because Gareng flees from the pursuit of Prabu Kulandara Geni. However, with strong determination and high self-confidence, Gareng receives a gift. This gift takes the form of the divine attire of Bathara Guru, which allows Gareng to escape from the pursuit of Prabu Kulandara Geni. Gareng transforms into Bathara Guru, who is then taken to the heavens by the gods. Gareng, who is a servant, gains the confidence of the gods to be appointed as a leader.

The character of Nala Gareng in the *Kulandara Geni* play is very central and carries deep communicative meaning. The character of Gareng symbolizes the lower class of society who can rise to the peak of social status and gain the highest authority from the gods. This, of course, can be achieved through a long process with strong determination. This fifth scene relates to the contextual aspect of the democratic celebration conducted through the general election in 2014. At the time when the *Kulandara Geni* play was produced again by Ngesti Pandawa, the election resulted in something very historic for this country. It marked the transition of a national leader from the old government to a new one. The winning figure from the election came from the non-elite political class, directly elected by the people (Dewi, 2014; Maharani, 2014; Sunariyah, 2014; Turtiantoro, 2015). This has shattered the assumption that the leaders of this country can only come from the political elite and has broken the history of dynastic rule.

Ali Marsudi (interviewed on July 12, 2022) argues that in the guise of Bathara Guru, Gareng can occupy the throne in the heavens and improve the situation. According to him, Gareng, who comes from the lower class, is capable of awakening the higher-ups in the heavens to always do good and maintain peace and safety in the world (*memayu hayuning bawana*). The divine attire of Bathara Guru worn by Gareng symbolizes the trust given by the people to lead justly and wisely.

#### **f. Scene VI. Margi**

The sixth scene features the character of Semar, who represents an intellectual figure skilled in reading situations and conditions. Additionally, Semar possesses a strong instinct in facing various potential dangers. Semar embodies the ability to strategize and is mature in planning. Initially, Semar follows the plot set by his enemies, but quickly takes action to resolve the issues. According to Sri Paminto Joko Legawa (interview on May 19, 2022), Semar depicts a seasoned activist who defends truth and virtue in the fight against injustice.

The contextual aspect depicted in that scene is when injustice occurs against the common people (the lower class) and is continuously allowed to happen arbitrarily; the result will impact the overall order of human life. This will even affect the growth of the younger generation, who become the nation's successors with a destructive mentality. Therefore, this needs to be opposed and eradicated for the sake of upholding truth and the welfare of society as a whole.

#### **g. Scene VII. Kayangan**

In this final scene, the atmosphere depicts the gods welcoming the return of their leader to their organizational structure. The leader's return encourages the subordinates to work with extraordinary enthusiasm. This will certainly have a positive impact on the quality of their work. The arrival of Bathara Guru (the original) who is being pursued by Semar creates a chaotic and confusing situation. This is due to the presence of a twin leader in the same domain.

The contextual aspects depicted in this section relate to the 2014 general election candidates. Fitria and Suyanto (2015) state that the democratic event, particularly the presidential and vice-presidential elections in 2014, had a different number of candidates compared to previous years. According to them, this poses a significant risk, leading to divisions among factions. These divisions also occurred among communities that idolized their respective candidates once the election results were announced (Hendriyana, 2014; Pramono, 2014; Winarno, 2014). The false Bathara Guru and the true Bathara Guru in this final scene represent the emergence of two leaders within a single organization, resulting in unrest. This situation can be calmed by the presence of a just and honest judge in the judiciary. Wisanggeni in the *Kulandara Geni* play can be one figure that represents this.

## Conclusion

The *wayang orang* performance with the *Kulandara Geni* play or *Gareng dadi Bathara Guru* is a work created by the artists of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa in 1967. This play is derived from the Mahabharata epic, which is very distinctive and can be used as one of the characteristic styles of presentation for Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa. The characteristics are evident in the Punakawan characters, who play significant roles and are integral to the story being expressed. Additionally, these characteristics can be found in the implicit social critique conveyed through the performance. In 2014, the *Kulandara Geni* play was presented again by Ngesti Pandawa at the WOSBI event, directed by Widayat. As the director, Widayat has aesthetic authority, allowing him to apply *sanggit* to the play. The *Kulandara Geni* play directed by Widayat possesses its own characteristics that are aligned with socio-cultural developments. This results in differences in presentation style and the communication of meaning.

The textual aspects of the *Kulandara Geni* play relate to the presentation style, while the contextual aspects are connected to the communication of specific meanings. These two aspects are fundamentally intertwined and cannot be separated. As a textual aspect, it must be able to represent the context that influences it. Contextual aspects can be related to various social, political, and economic conditions surrounding the artists. These conditions can then be responded to and expressed through textual aspects, manifesting as social criticism. In this regard, the *Kulandara Geni* play communicates meaning in the form of social criticism regarding the election of national leaders or those in authority. Widayat, as the director, responds to the socio-political conditions during the 2014 general elections. At that time, there was a division among the community, with each side idolizing its respective choice. This division escalated further when the election results were announced. Through the *Kulandara Geni* play, Widayat offers social criticism, urging the community not to be influenced by provocations and emphasizing that leaders can come from various backgrounds.

The meaning of communication conveyed by Widayat is expressed in the textual aspects of the *Kulandara Geni* play. The *Kulandara Geni* play directed by Widayat consists of seven scenes and includes the addition of a new character, Wisanggeni. In the play, Bathara Guru, who holds the highest social status and authority, represents a leader who prioritizes personal interests over the common good. As a result, the community prefers Nala Gareng, who happens to gain fortune, so that despite being a servant, he can become the leader of the gods.

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### Informants

- Ali Marsudi (55 years old) - Employee at RRI Surakarta and Chairman of the WOSBI 2014 Committee. Ngoro Tengah RT. 02 RW. 03 Triyagan, Mojolaban, Sukoharjo.

Bambang Budiono (52 years old) - Artist of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa. Rusun Bandung Bandawasa Blok J2 No. 5 Pucang Gading, Pedurungan, Semarang.

Djoko Muljono (78 years old) - Leader of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa. Perum Plamongan Indah Blok H5/20, Mranggen, Demak.

Sri Paminto Joko Legawa (52 years old) - Dance teacher and artist of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa who became the assistant director of the *Kulandara Geni* play in 2014. Perum Green Village Gg. Ceremai IV No. 209, Gunungpati.

Sumarbagyo (57 years old) - Artist of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa and actor for the character Nala Gareng. Jl. Arya Mukti Timur 9/384 Pedurungan Lor, Semarang.

Sunarno (68 years old) - Artist of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa. Rusun Plamongansari RT. 05 RW. 15 Pedurungan, Semarang.

Wiradyo (66 years old) - Civil Servant at the Semarang City Tourism Office and artist of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa who became the assistant director of the *Kulandara Geni* play in 2014. Perum Permata Garden Mangunharjo Blok A No. 12B RT. 12 RW. 1 Mangunharjo, Tembalang, Semarang City.

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