

Lakon Punakawan as a Form of Religious and Cultural Transformation of Javanese Community

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Abstract: *Wayang* (puppet shows) for the Javanese people are a source of culture and tradition, philosophical values as well as religious teachings. It developed into a means of socio-cultural-religious transformation of da'wah, especially for Sunan Kalijaga. In the wayang, some *lakon* (plays, scenes, episodes) are taken from the epic story of the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and other ancient literatures. Meanwhile, wayang characters that resonate the Javanese people are Punakawan. The cultural and religious transformation brought by the lakon can be seen in the meaning and naming of Punakawan. In addition, the displayed role contains an elegant religious message wrapped in culture. Employing qualitative research using the analysis method, steps taken done to write the paper are; first, observing the theological and social revolution of the Javanese society, which is animist, dynamic, and paganist towards monotheistic mysticism. The second is the shift phenomena of Javanese Hindu ideology towards the Islamization of Java through an egalitarian concept of Islam. The third is the interpretation of young people's anxiety through the distinctive voices of criticism. The result of this research is the disclosure of written descriptions of the characteristics of the practice of Javanese society through the process of cultural and religious transformation in the interpersonal play of Punakawan.

Keywords: cultural and religious transformation; Javanese Islam; *lakon*; *Punakawan*; *wayang*.

Introduction

Wayang is one of the cultures in the form of traditional arts owned by the Indonesian nation. *Wayang's* various kinds are leather shadow puppets, wooden puppets, and traditional drama performances. But, in this study, *Wayang* was intended for leather shadow puppets. *Wayang* is art considered a bridge to be cultural and religious transformation, especially in the civilization of Javanese society. *Wayang* is a performance art in the form of a symbolic communication picture of human behavior in religious and cultural practices. This proves that puppetry is philosophically a form of mirroring human character, behavior, and life.¹ The main is that *Wayang* is not only an aesthetic art for the community but also a cultural ethics art that is communicated symbolically and as a means of moral and behavioral messages for the Javanese.

In every *Wayang* show, of course, there is a message of moral kindness in the form of religious teachings and various important information for the community and entertainment for the community. Then, the message and information are delivered and presented through the characters carried by each puppeteer at each performance.² The narration of the mastermind is generally sourced from folklore, *Wiracarita Populer*, and *Naskah Gubahan*.³ However, often the narrative is modified with the political, social, and economic conditions that occurred at that time. Hence, this is what makes *Wayang* continue to be able to adapt and innovate to the times.

Historical facts provide information that in the classical art of the Nusantara people, *Wayang*, which previously contained the concept of worshipping the spirits of the ancestors wrapped in Hindu traditions, was then used to spread Islam by the saints. As with Sunan Kalijaga, using *Wayang* as a sinkretic process of religion and culture with innovations and interesting dialogues is then presented to the community.⁴ So in the *Wayang* show, indirectly, there is friction between the culture and ideology of Hinduism into a code of conduct taken through religious teachings (Islam).⁵ This is the strategy of the saints in spreading Islam as an effort to be pursued through the Javanese cultural route. The spread also began with an expedition to conquer Blambangan, which later became a cultural identity between Islam, Mataram, dan Hinduism.⁶ This is due to the Walisongo attempting to incorporate elements of Islamic values into the puppetry play. The elements are symbolically conveyed through the social message of Islamic society, both the system of government, the socialization of neighbors, to the private realm, namely forming family life patterns and also patterns of personal life.⁷

¹ Asrul Anan dan Siti Juwariyah, "Analisis Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Karakter Wayang Punakawan," *Al Murabbi: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 2 (2017): 325–40.

² Tri Ratna Herawati, "Analisis Nilai Karakter Dalam Wayang Kulit Dengan Lakon Puspito Manik Sebagai Sumber Belajar Sastra Siswa Smp," *Jurnal Skripta* 5, no. 1 (2019): 83–96.

³ Tim Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI, "Ensiklopedia Islam Nusantara," *Direktorat Pendidikan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam*, no. Edisi Budaya (2018): 378.

⁴ Erli Mujiningsih, Erlis N. Yetti, "Sunan Kalijaga dalam Novel Babad Walisongo dan Kisah Dakwah Walisongo," *Bahasa dan Seni* 43, no. 2 (2015): 213–26.

⁵ I Gusti Ngurah Seramasara, "Wayang Sebagai Media Komunikasi Simbolik Perilaku Manusia Dalam Praktek Budaya Dan Agama Di Bali," *Mudra Jurnal Seni Budaya* 34, no. 1 (2019): 80–86, <https://doi.org/10.31091/mudra.v34i1.640>.

⁶ I Nengah Duija, *Tokoh Sabdopalon: Rekonstruksi Pemaknaan Politik Kebudayaan Hindu-Islam*, 2015.

⁷ Eko Setiawan, "Makna Filosofi Wayang Purwa Dalam Lakon Dewa Ruci," *Kontemplasi: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 5, no. 2 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.21274/kontem.2017.5.2.399-418>.

Local cultural practices with those combined that are rooted in Javanese society with the religious values of “Islam” is certainly not easy. This is because the cultural and social strata of Javanese society at that time were strongly influenced by humans who were considered contemplative and holy and had mystical abilities, they were priests; *Pendeta*, *Guru*, *Biksu*, *Wiku*, *Resi*, and *Empu*. Thus, this shows that the culture and religion of the Hindu-Buddhist period only focused on mystical and religious life. Through the puppet shadow art “*Wayang Kulit*” brought by the Walisongo, *Animism*, *Dynamism*, and *Paganist* traditions were transformed into *Mistik Monotheistic*.⁸ The first step to create cultural acculturation is replacing Hindu theology with Islamic theology. Therefore, the form of communicative proselytizing of *Wayang* became an effective transformation effort carried out by the *Wali Songo*, especially Sunan Kalijaga to help accelerate the pace of Islamization in Java.⁹ In the process of transformation, *Wayang* transforms into a creative story with a creative story full of Sufistic messages. Then, the mystical aspects attached to the *Lakon* shadow puppetry are processed with Sufistic teachings that guide the community through symbolic messages aimed at drawing closer to Allah Swt.¹⁰

In general, the tradition of puppet performance contains the philosophical values of life, good and bad guidelines, cultural practices, and religious values in everyday life.¹¹ However, the guidelines are easier to understand if there is an intermediary between *Lakon* characters in the puppetry. Why is that to understand the message of culture and religion, the character of the *Lakon* occupies several layers of important roles, namely socio-cultural, cultural phenomena, and theologic religion? The *Lakon* that until now has been favored and used as a *Tauladan*, figured and role model by the Indonesian people in the puppet shadow performance is *Punakawan* consisting of *Semar*, *Nala Gareng*, *Petruk*, and *Bagong*.¹²

The Interesting is, according to history, this *Punakawan* figure was created differently by the early Islamic preachers from the version in the XI century. The means, by Sunan Kalijaga *Punakawan*, is modified to the means of proselytizing Islam in Java.¹³ The *Wayang* art taught by Sunan Kalijaga is certainly very different from the previous classical leather puppet shadow art, which was full of Hindu and Buddhist teachings. For example, *Punakawan* figures are synonymous with *Semar* and his children in puppetry. Since the *Majapahit* period, the *Punakawan* figure was identical to the *Sabdopalon*. Although there are slight differences in names, the two figures have similar backgrounds in developing cultural and religious acculturation.¹⁴ This happened during the historical transition of Hinduism to Islam, thus behind the socio-cultural-religious changes in Java.

The *Punakawan* figure, according to the version of the saints, consists of The word *Semar* comes from the Arabic word *Simaar* and *Ismar*, which means firm, sturdy, strong, and not wavering. *Semar* is described as a wise human being and has extensive knowledge of both physicality and mental knowledge. Meanwhile, *Nala Gareng* comes from the word *Nala Khairan*

⁸ Prof. Dr. G.J.W. Drewes, *Perdebatan Walisongo Seputar Makrifatullah*, 202M.

⁹ Fuad Falakhudin, “Dakwah Wali Songo dan Islamisasi Di Jawa,” *Dakwah Wali Songo Dan Islamisasi Di Jawa* 15 (2011): 11.

¹⁰ Tim Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI, “Ensiklopedia Islam Nusantara.”

¹¹ Tim Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI.

¹² Anan dan Juwariyah, “Analisis Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Karakter Wayang Punakawan.”

¹³ Sri Mulyono, *Apa Dan Siapa Semar* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1982).

¹⁴ Duija, *Tokoh Sabdopalon: Rekonstruksi Pemaknaan Politik Kebudayaan Hindu-Islam*.

which means to obtain goodness. *Gareng* is described as a human being who is incompetent in speaking but ingenious and has a broad idea of thinking. Later, *Petruk* came from the word *Fat-Ruk* which means leave. *Petruk* is described as a talkative character but has no advantages whatsoever. Later, *Bagong* came from the word *Albaghoya* which means a bad thing.¹⁵ Meanwhile, *Bagong*, one of *Punakawan*, is *Semar's* representative character. *Bagong's* character is intelligent and likes to criticize but with a distinctive tone of criticism accompanied by *Humor*.¹⁶

Several literature reviews can distinguish the peculiarities of this study. *First*, the analysis of Islamic educational values in the character of the *Punakawan* puppet written by Asrul Anan contains the disclosure of *Punakawan* characters in puppetry and its implementation in Islamic education.¹⁷ *Second*, the creation of a sculpture with the theme of the *Wayang* figure *Punokawan* as a character booster for the people of tourist villages in Malang was written by Istiar Wardhana, who fit *Punakawan* as a figure and also became a medium for character education for the general public.¹⁸ *Third*, the book was written by Sumarsam entitled interpreting wayang and gamelan: cross-meeting Javanese, Islamic, and global.¹⁹ Two examples of the above theme are research conducted by previous researchers, with the object of the research material being *Punakawan*. Meanwhile, another example of the research has similarities in the symbolic revelation and religiosity in puppetry in seeing socio-political and cultural changes with the development of modernity. However, researchers have yet to obtain significant results related to studies that researchers will later use to find traces of cultural and religious transformation in the Javanese community through *Lakon Punakawan*.

There is a need for an appropriate method and approach to understand the symbolic sources regarding the development of cultural and religious transformation in Java. Thus, researchers use the analysis method to look at cultural communication patterns in the Javanese community. Therefore, the communicative behavior used by Javanese society does not only stop at the language of interaction with fellow people. More than that, it concerns the impact of interactional analysis and role identity so that it later becomes a theoretical concept. The theoretical concept becomes a change in cultural behavior, traditions, and religious behavior.²⁰

This article not only took *Punakawan* characters as legend figures, fictional figures, acculturation figures, puppetry figures, engineering figures, and others. However, the cultural characteristics produced through this characterization provide color to the cultural history of the Javanese people. *First*, the process of penetration of Islam mentally, spiritually, and materially in social interactions that were previously still heavily influenced by Hindu culture. *Second*, the identity of *Punakawan's* role reflects *Wong Cilik* but has a religious character. Thus, this is what is used by the saints to teach *Tawhid*, *Tasawwuf*, and Spiritual and other religious rituals.

¹⁵ Anan dan Juwariyah, "Analisis Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Karakter Wayang Punakawan."

¹⁶ Anan dan Juwariyah.

¹⁷ Anan dan Juwariyah.

¹⁸ Ponimin dkk., "Kreasi Seni Patung Bertema Figur Wayang 'Punokawan' Sebagai Penguat Karakter Masyarakat Desa Wisata di Malang," *Karinov* 3, no. 3 (2020): 164–73.

¹⁹ Sumarsam, *Memaknai Wayang Dan Gamelang: Temu Silang Jawa Islam Dan Global*, Cetakan ke (Yogyakarta: Gading, 2018).

²⁰ Kiki Zakiah Darmawan, "Penelitian Etnografi Komunikasi: Tipe dan Metode," *Mediator: Jurnal Komunikasi* 9, no. 1 (2008): 181–88, <https://doi.org/10.29313/mediator.v9i1.1142>.

Method

This article employs qualitative research using a historical approach through a literature review referring to the activities or activities of social interaction within society.²¹ Researchers in this study focused on the disclosure of Lakon Punakawan through the characters' meaning and the expressions expressed by the puppet master through Lakon Punakawan in the leather puppet shadow show. Furthermore, the identification of the Lakon Punakawan as an event of cultural and religious transformation in the Javanese community has been done.

According to researchers, there are three cores of cultural and religious transformation in the Javanese community covering socio-cultural, religious, and political.²² *First*, the researcher looked at the process of changing the social culture of the Javanese people in the socio-cultural realm through the modification of Lakon Punakawan in proselytizing carried out by the saints. The change in colonial culture in Javanese society, which was previously Hindu Buddhist, seems more *Animism* and *Dynamism* towards *Mistic Monotheistic*. *Second*, it analyzes the Javanese people's social activities as a form of shifting Javanese Hindu ideology towards the Islamization of Java through the egalitarian concept of Islam. The process of Islamization certainly changed the indigenous Javanese people's behavior and beliefs, which lasted for a very long time in the 14th to 18th centuries. Thus, the process also led society to the 20th Century of Islamic modernism.²³ *Third*, the Lakon Punakawan was carried out by the puppeteers as a form of interpretation of "*Wong Cilik*" anxiety through the distinctive critical voices.²⁴

This study has several methodical elements used by researchers;²⁵ *first*, the historical, descriptive method of analysis is used to provide an interpretation of historical phenomena and includes historical literature in looking at the forms of cultural and religious transformation in society. The first step taken in this method is to find some data related to the role of *Lakon Punakawan* in puppetry as a tool to transform culture, as a tool for people's inner conflict, and as a tool for preaching. Thus, the function of the *Lakon* changes culturally regarding the community's beliefs and the traditions of the existing community. *Second*, of course, the role of *Lakon Punakawan* in Javanese puppetry provides information about the transformation and change of the general paradigm of the Javanese people related to culture and religion. Thus, the sociological approach to understanding the changes in Javanese society through the Punakawan puppetry as well as changes in social interaction, religious interaction, and political interaction.²⁶ Furthermore, researchers looked for previous research data, related research, and research that has similarities in material objects and formal objects. Then, from the results of the data that has been collected, it becomes material for literature review in the article. Furthermore, from some

²¹ Monika Herliana, "Aktivitas Komunikasi dalam Upacara Pemberkatan Pernikahan Agama Khonghucu (Kajian Studi Etnografi Komunikasi)," *Nusa: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa dan Sastra* 14, no. 3 (2019): 303–17, <https://doi.org/10.14710/nusa.14.3.303-317>.

²² M. C. Ricklefs, "Mengislamkan Jawa," 2012.

²³ Ricklefs.

²⁴ Ahmad Pramudiyanto, Supana Supana, dan Muhammad Rohmadi, "Characteristic of Wong Cilik on Wayang Kulit Wanda of Panakawan Figures," *Humanus* 17, no. 2 (2018): 174, <https://doi.org/10.24036/humanus.v17i2.100683>.

²⁵ Kaelan, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Bidang Filsafat* (Yogyakarta: Paradigma, 2005).

²⁶ Nurani Soyomukti, *Pengantar Sosiologi: Dasar Analisis, Teori, Dan Pendekatan Menuju Analisis Masalah-Masalah Sosial, Perubahan Sosial, Dan Kajian-Kajian Strategis* (Jogjakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media., 2014).

similarities between formal objects and material objects, they are then recalled by researchers to get a bright common thread of difference and become a novelty in this study.

Lakon Punakawan

Lakon becomes an important element in puppetry; lakon identities function as a medium of communication, symbolic offerings, harmony, societal norms, social confirmation, and religious ceremonies.²⁷ The *Lakon* presented by the puppeteer is sourced and shaped like the prose *Gancaran* or *Syair*. In the form of a *Balongan Lakon*, some are sourced from Naskah Lakon, which has been prepared to start from writing technical instructions for performances, dialogues, Karawitan, Sulukun, and others.²⁸ Thus, the *Lakon* becomes a dish with different shades.

Etymologically, *Punakawan* comes from two words. *First*, *Puno*, which means to understand, and *Pana*, which means light.²⁹ *Second*, the word *Pono* or *Kawan* means *Kanca*, friend, brother, or Pamong.³⁰ Based on these two words, the complete meaning of *Punakawan* is a friend who shows the way of light (read: kindness), as well as a brother who can nurture and guide towards the goodness and wisdom of life in the world. *Punakawan* is *pamong yang tanggap ing sasmito lan limpat ing gratiho*. That is, as a friend who has intelligence, inner discernment, wisdom, breadth of knowledge insight, and speech and words that are by following with deeds. *Punakawan* can also be interpreted as a friend who understands kindness and is wise and a pearl of wisdom.

In the Indonesian Wayang Encyclopedia, *Punakawan* or *Punakawan* is often also used by puppeteers with the term *Wulucumbu*. *Punakawan* is also called *Wayang Prepat (Parepat)*³¹ because the *Lakon* consists of *Papat* or four characters. They are the *Pamong* of the Knight, commonly called *Punakawan Tengen* or right, consisting of; *Semar*, *Petruk*, *Gareng*, and *Bagong*. In addition, *Punakawan* has a counter-play that usually accompanies *Sabrang* characters, namely; *Togog* and *Bilung Sarawita*, *Cangik Limbuk*, and *Cantrik*. The character is often referred to as *Punakawan Kiwo* or left.³²

In puppetry, the *Punakawan* figure is not only found in the Mahabharata or Ramayana. However, this figure is an original Indonesian figure that existed before the *Madya* era, which is proven through several shreds of evidence on the reliefs of *Panataran* temple, *Tegawanggi* temple, and *Sukuh* temple.³³ *Punakawan* is characteristically embodied in an unprofessional form as a typical *Lakon* in the *Wayang Kulit Nusantara* performance. These characteristics are applied in roles or plays with their deeds, uniqueness, and also speech style. Thus, often *Lakon Punakawan* is referred to as *Wayang Dagelan* because puppeteers often use this *Lakon* as a means to *Ndagel*

²⁷ Bambang Harsrinuksmo, *Ensiklopedi Wayang Indonesia*, ed. oleh M.A. etc. Drs. H. Solichin, Drs. Suyanto, S.Kar., 2016.

²⁸ M.A. etc. Drs. H. Solichin, Drs. Suyanto, S.Kar., "Ensiklopedi Wayang Indonesia," 2016.

²⁹ *Ensiklopedi Nasional Indonesia* (Jakarta: Delta Pustaka, 2004).

³⁰ Anan dan Juwariyah, "Analisis Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Karakter Wayang Punakawan."

³¹ Mulyono, *Apa Dan Siapa Semar*.

³² Sunarto -, "PANAKAWAN WAYANG KULIT PURWA: Asal-usul dan Konsep Perwujudannya," *Panggung* 22, no. 3 (2012): 242–55, <https://doi.org/10.26742/panggung.v22i3.74>.

³³ Harsrinuksmo, *Ensiklopedi Wayang Indonesia*.

or practical joke.³⁴ The presence of *Lakon Punakawan* in the world of puppetry is not only characteristic of *Ndagel* but also as a play carrying the concept of divinity, religious concepts, and philosophical concepts in puppet stories.³⁵

In the time of *Majapahit*, *Punokawan* were named *Nayagenggong* and *Sabdopalon*. However, in its development, the term of reference to the four *Lakon Punakawan Tengen* in each region later became different. For example, in West Java, *Punakawan* consists of *Semar*, *Cepot*, *Gareng*, and *Udel* or *Dewala*. Then, in South Kalimantan, *Punokawan* consists of *Semar*, *Lak Garing* or *Parcumakira*, *Petruk* or *Galiparjuna*, and *Begung*. At the same time, East Java is generally the same as Central Java, namely; *Semar*, *Petruk*, *Gareng*, and *Bagong*. However, the difference is in the placement of *Semar* and *Bagong*'s plays as special characters. It is marked by the symbol of the removal of the two puppets indicating the start and completion of the puppet shadow show.³⁶

Some differences in mentioning the character's name show that the four *Punakawan* characters also have different sequences and characteristics. *First*, *Semar* is a major *Punakawan* in the world of puppetry. Because *Semar* is a very old figure, who is domiciled as a god who descended in the world.³⁷ *Lakon Semar* in Javanese culture is a combination of Wayang, ideology, and mythology. That is to say, *Semar* is interpreted in many forms, including as a god, man, *Danyang*, *Jin*, and even *Demit*. This is evidenced by various kinds of fibers such as; *Serat Pustakaraja Purwa*, *Serat Paramayoga*, and *Serat Manikmaya*, which generally tell the origin of the mention of *Semar* are not the same.³⁸ However, in general, *Semar* is described as the incarnation of *Sang Hyang Ismaya*, the son of *Sang Hyang Tunggal*. *Sang Hyang Ismaya* was ruled by his father to descend into the world of "earth" to become a *Pamong* for good, virtuous humans, so *Ismaya* used the names *Semar*, *Smarasanta*, *Janabadra*, *Batara Ismaya*, *Batara Tejamaya*, *Jatiwaswesa*, and *Badranaya*. Meanwhile, *Togog* is the incarnation of *Sang Hyang Antaga*, who is ruled to be the civil servant of an evil human being.³⁹ This contains a deep symbolic meaning in the contrast between the value of good and bad in human beings that contradict each other, are the opposite, or can even become side by side.

Second, *Gareng* is *Semar*'s first child. *Gareng* has the full name *Nala Gareng*. *Nala* means heart, while *Gareng* means crisp or *Kering* in Indonesian. Philosophically *Nala Gareng* comes from *Naala Qorin*, which means to acquire many companions, and *Nala Khairan*, which means to obtain goodness.⁴⁰ Other names of *Gareng* are *Cokrowongso*, *Pegat Waja*, *Wiryatmeja*, *Ronggo Cethut*, *Brojo Lintang*, *Pancal Pamor*, *Kuda Parawana*, and *Pandupragola*.⁴¹ *Lakon Gareng*, in puppetry, is depicted as a character with an ugly and flawed physical form. The hair of the head is very little, the body is short and hunched, cross-eyed, the nose is like a small

³⁴ Harsrinuksmo.

³⁵ Harsrinuksmo.

³⁶ Harsrinuksmo.

³⁷ Wisma Nugraha R Christianto, "Peran Dan Fungsi Tokoh Semar-Bagong Dalam Pergelaran Lakon Wayang Kulit Gaya Jawa Timuran," *Humaniora* 15, no. 3 (2003): 285–301.

³⁸ Raden_Ngabehi_Ronggowa, *Serat_Paramayoga_Part_II.pdf*, t.t.

³⁹ Harsrinuksmo, *Ensiklopedi Wayang Indonesia*.

⁴⁰ Anan dan Juwariyah, "Analisis Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Karakter Wayang Punakawan."

⁴¹ -, "PANAKAWAN WAYANG KULIT PURWA: Asal-usul dan Konsep Perwujudannya."

eggplant, stiff elbows, limping legs, and the heels are affected by *Pathek* disease or *Frambusia*.⁴² However, behind his physical imperfections, *Gareng* depicts a human being who must be careful in living life. The hand of defect that describes man must continue to strive no matter what results are obtained, and the results are left to God. Crossed eyes mean is man must be able to take advantage of what God has given him to see the reality of life.

Third, Petruk is Semar's second child in Indonesian puppetry. Petruk has many names, including *Udawala*, *Dawala*, *Dublajaya*, *Jengglongjaya*, and *Pentung Pinanggul*. Leather Puppet Shadow Purwa and traditional drama performance, Lakon Petruk, depicts a character with a tall body, a big neck, and a long nose with a jovial character and is proficient in all kinds of *Gending*. This is the reason why, in the scene, *Goro-Goro* Petruk has always been the main star. The characteristic possessed by Petruk can also be seen in the communication that contains Lawakan and innuendo directed at the community.⁴³ Philosophically *Lakon* Petruk's is an improvement over the creation of the less-than-perfect *Gareng*. Petruk is a physically perfect figure because, with long legs and hands, a high nose, and a slim body depicts a perfect human being. However, perfection analogizes that human beings with advantages (read: treasures) must like to do charity and give alms to others. Based on this, Petruk is often named *Kanthong Bolong*. In addition, Petruk's most important attitude is exemplified by humans to put their soul and body to God sincerely, selflessly, and do good sincerely.⁴⁴

Fourth, *Lakon* Bagong in Punakawan is the shadow of Semar. According to history, at first, Semar, a human servant in *Marcapada*, complained of frequent loneliness, so he asked Sang Hyang Tunggal to be given a companion friend. Later, *Sang Hyang Tunggal* said, "your most loyal friend is your shadow" then, the shadow of Semar turned into a figure of a creature similar to Semar, but smaller, later called Bagong.⁴⁵ That is, Bagong is the embodiment of Semar, which is spelled out. This is what makes the *Lakon* of Semar and Bagong in the Javanese *Wayang* tradition placed in a special position, the position of the two is placed opposite *Gunungan*. Semar is on the left side while Bagong is on the right side. That is why Semar and Bagong are essentially the only ones with an essential role in leather shadow puppet performances. Often, the *Lakon* Bagong represents Semar's role by intermediary symbolically the life of human society with gods.⁴⁶

Although, *Punokawan* in each region has a different mention of the name. For example, in the *Gagrak of Banyumas* with Surakarta and Ngayogyakarta, there are differences in naming figures. The Surakarta and Ngayogyakarta versions of Bagong remain called Bagong, while in Banyumas, it is named *Bawor*.⁴⁷ However, in general, *Lakon* of Semar and Bagong and other members of *Punokawan* have the same function: maintaining, caring for, guiding, and providing solutions to problems that are difficult for humans to solve in the world.

⁴² Harsrinuksmo, *Ensiklopedi Wayang Indonesia*.

⁴³ Harsrinuksmo.

⁴⁴ Anan dan Juwariyah, "Analisis Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Karakter Wayang Punakawan."

⁴⁵ Harsrinuksmo, *Ensiklopedi Wayang Indonesia*.

⁴⁶ R Christianto, "Peran Dan Fungsi Tokoh Semar-Bagong Dalam Pergelaran Lakon Wayang Kulit Gaya Jawa Timuran."

⁴⁷ Adhi Purnama, "Nilai Moral Lakon 'Semar Mbangun Kahyangan' Sanggit Ki Eko Suwaryo," *Jurnal Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Jawa* 05, no. 03 (2014): 96–106.

Cultural and Religious Transformation

Culture and religion are two identical issues as a guide to life for human beings. Culture is an ethical norm agreed upon by society, while religion is a religious norm derived from a God agreed upon (read: believed) by man. Let's look at the development of culture and religion in Java. We will see the strength of the *Hindu Kejawen* cultural and literary traditions that have been rooted for generations. This has become a culture attached to the body of the Javanese people until now. However, over time and with the development of the times, there was a process of acculturation by mixing Hindu culture with Islamic culture in Java. Thus, the teachings of Islam began to be combined with the local culture, which could be well received in the end.⁴⁸ The guardians use *Suluk*, *Serat*, *Tembang*, and others.⁴⁹ In addition, the guardians took a more exciting approach and were easily accepted by the community by puppet means.

In the process, acculturation went well and was humanist with the existence of this puppet facility. Why is that because the puppet show presents an art performance and three dimensions of values: aesthetics, ethics, and philosophy? In addition, *Wayang* has the ability of *Hamot*, *Hamong*, and *Hamemangkat*.⁵⁰ This means that in addition to the dimensions of value possessed by the puppet, the puppet can absorb and filter and accept other cultural inputs, then be displayed into a new value that matches the development of the puppet itself. So, it is not surprising that many puppeteers collaborate the language of contemporary communication with the original tradition of the classical *Wayang Nusantara*. Thus, puppets can anticipate the development of the times to the present.

The world of puppetry has always been synonymous with Javanese people who describe concrete human life that contains ethical norms. The unique characters in the puppets signify the diversity of human personality traits and dispositions. In principle, if you talk about *Wayang*, you speak of humans or Javanese people. Thus, we can see the transformation of culture and religion in Java through three aspects; First, the change in the theological culture of Javanese society was strongly influenced by *Animism-Pantheistic* life. This is because the position of religious leaders at that time was very dominating. Thus, the inhabitants of Java in the 13th century generally embraced the Hindu-Buddhism religion.⁵¹

Javanese society evolved from a stage of belief and identity to a mystical synthesis in the 18th and early 19th centuries. It is characterized by the arrival of Islam, considered a simple religion in terms of worship ceremonies and religious rites. In addition, Islam has very easy entry requirements, without classifying strata in society. Thus, the procession of Islamic transformation in Java went very fast.⁵² Sunan Kalijaga and several other guardians implemented the transformation effort using wayang facilities. *Wayang*, which is identical to the concept of worshipping the spirits of the ancestors as well as Hindu traditions, was changed by Islamic law. The teachings of *Monotheism* (read: Islam) were later accepted by all lines of small society to the

⁴⁸ Naufaldi Alif dkk., "Akulturasi Budaya Jawa Dan Islam" 23, no. 2 (2020): 143–62.

⁴⁹ Alif dkk.

⁵⁰ Harsrinuksmo, *Ensiklopedi Wayang Indonesia*.

⁵¹ Falakhudin, "Dakwah Wali Songo dan Islamisasi Di Jawa."

⁵² S Soebardhi, *Islam Di Indonesia* (Prisma, 1978).

nobility.⁵³ *Wayang*, made initially with paper in human form, was later transformed by the Wali with goatskins in characters typical of local culture but of Islamic value.⁵⁴

Although *Lakon Punakawan* existed long before the Islamic culture's emergence, evidenced through ancient relics in the form of reliefs on temples. However, the distinctive character was later utilized and deposed by the saints. The main reason for the saints is to see the meaning of *Punakawan* in Arabic بونوكاوان (*būnūkāwān*) which means goodness; this is then adapted to Islamic *Shari'a*.⁵⁵ Firstly, character is named Semar in Arabic مسمار (*mismār*) meaning nail, which is expected to be the cultivation of *Monotheistik Tawhid* into the understanding of Javanese society, which is synonymous with Hindu-Buddhism. The nail that sticks in the belief that there is no God but God. The second *Lakon* is called Gareng, in Arabic قرين (*qarīn*) which means friend. This means that, in Islam, ones must also pay attention to friends in life as friends always invite kindness. The third figure is Petruk, in Arabic فاترك (*fātrūk*) which literally means to leave. فاترك can also mean abandoning deeds that deviate from the rules of godliness, both *Animism*, *Dynamism*, and also *Paganism beliefs*. The fourth is Bagong, in Arabic باق (*bāqin*) which means eternal, or البغي (*al-bagiya*) which means consideration of good deeds and bad deeds. Thus, what is expected of this play can give the message that humans can distinguish between good and bad.

All the elements of the means of acculturation prove that *Wayang* became an artistic path that attracted people's attention at that time. Because it is impossible to acculturate Hindu culture into Islamic teachings without a persuasive approach but with force. Therefore, efforts are needed to combine the character of the Javanese with the meaning and message of Islamic characters embedded in every *Lakon Punakawan*. Then, in every *Lakon*, there is a story full of Islamic messages so that proselytizing through wayang art indirectly affects society's culture in interacting with God and humans. Furthermore, by attracting the public's attention, *Lakon Punakawan* is considered more flexible in proselytizing and positively impacts the spread of Islam in Java. In the end, the theological transformation is symbolic using wayang media, especially in *Lakon Punakawan*, into a persuasive communicative approach to public relations acceptable to Javanese society.

Secondly, in addition to the meaning of Islamic characters in the *Lakon Punakawan*, there is a message inserted by Sunan Kalijaga in the *Lakon Pandhawa*, namely as a symbol of the pillars of Islam and Semar with three wise messages.⁵⁶ Often, at puppet shadow shows, *Lakon Pandhawa* (Yudhistira, Bima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sadewa) must be complete and complete. Because, each *Lakon* is an understanding of the pillars of Islam that must be believed and practiced (Shahada, Prayer, Fasting, Zakat, and Hajj).⁵⁷ Then, the message conveyed by *Lakon Semar's*; *oyo ngaku pinter yen durung bisa nggoleki lupute awake dewe, oyo ngaku unggul yen ijeh seneng ngasorake wong liyo, oyo ngaku suci yen durung biso manunggal ing gusti* (Don't claim to be wise if you

⁵³ Hanum Jazimah Puji Astuti, "Islam Nusantara Sebuah Argumentasi Beragama Dalam Bingkai Kultural," *INJECT (Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication)* 2, no. 1 (n.d.): 27–52.

⁵⁴ Ummu Akbar, *Syiar 9 Wali Di Pulau Jawa: 9 Kisah Seru Pejuang Islam* (Jakarta: Mizan, n.d.).

⁵⁵ P Poedjosebroto, *Wayang Lambang Ajaran Islam* (Jakarta: Pradnya Paramita, 1978).

⁵⁶ Ashoumi Hilyah, "Akulturasi Dakwah Sinkretis Sunan Kalijaga," *Akulturasi Dakwah Sinkretis Sunan Kalijaga* 10, no. 01 (2018): 101–13.

⁵⁷ Bambang Marhiyanto, *Sunan Kalijaga: Sosok Wali, Filsuf Dan Budayawan* (Surabaya: Jawara, 2000).

can't find your fault, don't claim to be superior if you like to look down on others, and don't claim to be holy if you can't unite yet with God).

Semar's three messages became a form of contradiction with *Lakon Punakawan* as *Sabdopalon* during the Majapahit period. Why is it that *Lakon* *Sabdopalon* was created after Majapahit to smooth the transition of Hinduism to Islam in texts and performance arts, religious legitimacy, and also a symbolic expression of Hindu society in Blambangan Banyuwangi? Meanwhile, the *Lakon* *Semar* in *Punakawan* by Sunan Kalijaga is a symbol of *Tawhid* "*ojo ngaku suci yen durung biso manunggal ing gusti (Do not claim to be holy if you have not been able to be one with God).*" Based on this, there are five paths if the man wants to *Manunggal ing Gusti*, these paths are; (asy-syarī'ah) الشريعة *which means Sembah Raga (worship the body)*, (āt-tarīqah) الطريقة *which means Sembah Kalbu (worship the heart)*, (al-haqīqah) الحقيقة *which means Sembah Jiwo (worship the soul)*, (al-ma'rīfah) المعرفة *which means Sembah Roso (worship the taste)*, (al-mahabbah) المحبة *which means Sembah Tresno (worship the love).*⁵⁸

The puppet shadow show was previously a performance for the nobility, but when the puppet in the hands of the saints was shown to the general public. This is why Islam is accepted, one of which is because it has an egalitarian social system. The concept of *Walisongo* instilled in the *Lakon Punakawan* is about the ethics of life and diversity, then by teaching about "*Ibadah, Mu'amalah, Akhlaq.*" It is invested through Semar's words, "*ojo ngaku unggul yen ijeh seneng ngasorake wong liyo (don't pretend to be superior if you like to look down the others).*" That is, don't admit to a good society if you still like to consider others lower. We can see this in the change in Javanese-Hindu cultural ideology, which was felt previously to seem to be using social strata or castes in society turned into equality between people, from *Ningrat* to *Marat*.⁵⁹ Furthermore, the *Lakon* *Semar* *Mbabar Jati* used in the *Wayang Ki Anom Suroso* performance "*kasunyatan jati diri menungso neng duweni sifat loro neng manunggal (The reality of human identity is that it has two characteristics in the unity)*" contains meaning; *Firstly*, human beings are social beings who should not discriminate against social status and need each other. *Second*, man is a creature of a god whose good and evil towards others, society, and the state will be judged according to his deeds. The patricians and the people whom God will judge are based on the deeds done. This certainly shifts the understanding of strata and castes in Javanese society.

Thus, *Lakon Punakawan* can provide spiritual flushing as a process of taste so that they can distinguish between right and wrong and produce egalitarian Islamic characters in the form of behavior. The change in ideology is embedded in the symbol "*jawa digawa, arab digarap (Java had to be brought, and Arabs had to be done)*" The Javanese character is changed through a combination of Islamic elements in the *Wayang* that is accepted by the community.⁶⁰ The efforts of the saints, especially the Kalijaga Sunan, created a *Lakon*, then reconstructed the puppetry story from the Hindu tradition into an account related to Islamic proselytizing. For example, a modified set of *Gamelan* with the name *Gong Sekaten* or *Gong Shahadatain* requires people to pronounce *Syahadatain* when they want to see a puppet shadow show. This then became effective and acceptable acculturation for the Javanese people.

⁵⁸ Sri Mulyono, *Simbolisme Dan Mistikisme Dalam Wayang Sebuah Tinjauan Filosofis* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1978).

⁵⁹ Alif dkk., "Akulturasi Budaya Jawa Dan Islam."

⁶⁰ Alif dkk.

Third, *Punakawan* became a symbol of the *Wong Cilik* (lay people) through the figures Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong. Leather Shadow Puppet is a critical delivery with various performances of each *Lakon* in an engaging, entertaining, and conveying social criticism. This means that in the puppet story, there is always an insertion of problematic turmoil experienced by the community into the situation of statehood that is happening.⁶¹ This shows that there has been a change in the form of communication and the function of wayang for centuries to transform culture and religion in Javanese society.

In the Banyuwangi art tradition, *Lakon* Semar as Sabdopalon shows the symbolic expression of Hindu society towards the post-Majapahit religious socio-cultural struggle. This was done as a form of protest by the Hindu community against the Mataram expedition, which carried out destruction and slavery, and as a prevention of the rapid spread of Islam.⁶² Furthermore, the *Lakon Punakawan* becomes a mirror of what the people experienced; for example, the SDR story or “*Semar Dadi Ratu*” is a *Lakon* that symbolically stores and implies a message of desire in the form of the figure of “*Ratu Adil*” coveted by the community to be present to bring justice and welfare to its people.⁶³ Briefly, a leader figure capable of healing intellectual, moral, and spiritual crises. Furthermore, in the message of *Lakon* Bagong in the *Wayang* Performance of Ki Seno Nugroho “*Bareng dadi ratu ngunekke kawulane wong kere, sak durunge dadi ratu munduk-munduk, wes gong. Nek aku dadi ratu ngeko tak aspal, tak sejahterake (before so the king speaks will fix the road, and after being the king often insults others).*” The voice of the people who expects a leader who does not forget his mandate as a leader. A leader who does not lie about his promises to the people. Then, the *Lakon* Semar Kuning in the *Wayang* performance of Ki Joko Edan “*perubahan politik, ekonomi, budoyo mlebu parobahan kehidupan, la sopo to sing pantes dadi ratu? ora ono liyo mung satrio sing biso nguasai perubahan yo hamung gumantung satrio kang kasinungan wahyu cokro ningrat (politic, economic, cultural change, and life changes, so who deserves to be king? no one but Satria can bring about change, and who holds on to Wahyu Cokro Ningrat)*”. Semar gave the opinion that Satria or leaders who can provide changes to live are leaders who can be introspective, willing to appreciate differences in diversity, leaders who do not think about their destiny, and leaders who cannot be separated from spiritual dispositions.

A popular *lakon* PDR or “*Petruk Dadi Ratu*” has the expression “*aku iki reti yen pengin golek wong ayu gampang, nanging aku duwe karep arsa ngluhurke sipating abdi (I think it's easy to find beautiful people, but I have a desire to edify being who I am).*” The phrase gives the idea that a leader must have a noble nature as an inner servant who serves the people wholeheartedly. Then, what was conveyed by Ki Ethus Nugroho “*wong amarto sok sumuci suci, koyo sapu sumongko nyapune liyone, sapune dewe reget (the holy Amarta always corrects others, even though he needs to be corrected)*”. The phrase means that a leader should not speak before performing self-introspection, so that what the leader commands will be obeyed by society. Based on these examples, both the *Lakon* Semar, Petruk, and Bagong can be developed by the mastermind by adjusting the phenomenon of statehood at that time.⁶⁴ The message implied in

⁶¹ Lanjar Rani dkk., “Analisis Wacana Kritis Dalam Pagelaran Wayang Kulit Lakon ‘ Petruk Dadi Ratu,” *Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana*, 2013.

⁶² Duija, *Tokoh Sabdopalon: Rekonstruksi Pemaknaan Politik Kebudayaan Hindu-Islam*.

⁶³ Duija.

⁶⁴ Rani dkk., “Analisis Wacana Kritis Dalam Pagelaran Wayang Kulit Lakon ‘ Petruk Dadi Ratu.”

Lakon Punakawan is that when he becomes a leader, he must not act and make rules casually towards the people. The leader must respect and prosper the people as they should. The leader must be wise and fair and respect his people.

The puppeteer gives color through *Lakon Punakawan* during the Leather Shadow Puppet performance. The symbol of *Lakon Punakawan* as an entertainer or servant in “Batur or Pamong” and a representative of the “Wong Cilik,” the one who always gives innuendo insinuations that correspond to social facts in the state. The realization of the problem that occurred through the *Lakon Punakawan* thus symbolized the message from the people for the ruler at that time. As another example, during the pandemic in 2020, The Mastermind Seno Nugroho factory performed the lakon Bagong to connect the tongue of the people’s voice to the imposition of restrictions on community activities (PPKM) policy during the past pandemic. Small people objected if the imposition of restrictions on community activities (PPKM) was extended. This shows that the representation of society is symbolically realized through Punakawan plays in the leather shadow puppet performance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, several aspects have been discussed in this paper. *Firstly*, the article discusses the cultural changes in the Javanese community that the saints carried out by modifying the Lakon Punakawan, which was previously thick with Hinduism and Buddhism, turned into an Islamic tradition. *Secondly*, the egalitarian Islamic religious system is greatly helped by the story and symbolic message in the Lakon Punakawan. Thus, significant changes in social activity can be seen in the strata pattern of the Javanese society, which is equal and harmonious. *Thirdly*, the practice interpretation is contained in the Lakon Punakawan performed by the puppeteers as a form of interpretation of the anxiety of the “Wong Cilik” through the distinctive voices of criticism. Meanwhile, The Lakon Punakawan provides a very significant concept in people’s culture, ideology, and religion. Thus, the cultural and religious transformation process can be seen as the focal point of its change by looking at the symbolic message in the Lakon Punakawan.

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