

## Function of Wayang Beber Pacitan

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### Abstract

*Wayang beber* is unique traditional art type because this *wayang beber* is the only one found in Indonesia or world. *Wayang beber* is made in complicated painting in the form of paper roll. Totally, there are six rolls, and each roll contains four scenes. *Wayang beber* show has various functions for the supporting community. This study will describe the *wayang beber* show any function. This research aimed to find out the function in *Wayang Beber* Pacitan. This study was a descriptive qualitative research. Techniques of collecting data used were observation, interview, and document analysis. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling one. Data analysis was carried out using an interactive model of analysis, while data validation was conducted using triangulation. From the result of research, it can be concluded that *wayang beber* is a traditional art of Archipelago having distinctive peculiarity compared with other *wayang* types. The peculiarity of *wayang beber* lies on its painting form and performing method spread out, and retold by the narrator corresponding to the content of story. The existence of *wayang beber* has a very important function and values for its proponents including; *wayang bebers* has ritual, social, and economic functions.

**Keywords:** Wayang beber, ritual

### Introduction

Indonesia is well-known for a variety of *wayang* art including *wayang beber*. This type of *wayang* has distinctive peculiarity and is different from other common type of *wayang*. *Wayang beber*'s peculiarity lies on its visual form and performing method. In *Wayangkulit*, every character is prepared one by one and one and given handle, while *wayang beber* is in the form of painting on a roll of paper or cloth featuring some scenes and it is performed through extending the paper or clothe out (*dibeber* in Javanese), and then the narrator retells the story according to the act. Therefore it is called *wayang beber* (Haryono, 2008:2).

*Wayang beber* is also called 'Javanese comic', as it constitutes the painting on a roll of paper or cloth containing some scenes drawn chronologically corresponding to the story plot. Historically, *wayang beber* exists in two places: In Gunung Kidul Regency of Yogyakarta and Pacitan Regency. Therefore based on its origin, *wayang beber* is called *Wayang beber Wonosari* and *wayang beber Pacitan*. The presence of *wayang beber Pacitan* exists in Gedropol village, Donorojo Sub District, Pacitan Regency. *Wayang beber Pacitan* has believably been existing since Majapahit time. Inference to the available theories, *wayang beber* was made or performed for the first time in Majapahit era. Though these theories can be considered reasonable, many things are equivocal. The comparison results show that the shape of *wayang beber* seems to indicate newer era than the shapes of other *wayang* with the same age in Majapahit era. Perhaps *wayang beber* was created in the fall of Majapahit (at the beginning of 16th century), before the cultural center moved to Demak, Central Java (Dharsono, 2017:53).

*Wayang beber* is unique traditional art type because this *wayang beber* is the only one found in Indonesia or world. *Wayang beber* is made in complicated painting in the form of paper roll. Totally, there are six rolls, and each roll contains four scenes (*jagong: in Javanese*). So, totally there are 24 *jagong* (scenes). Many character and other pictures of flora and faun are painted on each scene. There are also human, animal, plant elements (the floras drawn on each sheet are different), *gaman* or weapon (for example keris, lance) and other painting.

### Research Method

This research is a qualitative descriptive research. This research was conducted at the place of original of *wayang beber* Pacitan in Karangtalun, Gedropol village, Pacitan regency. Data obtained through observation, in-depth interview, and document analysis. The observation was done at *wayang beber* show, interview was done with Mr. Rudy Prasetyo and Mr. Anom Sukatno as puppeteer (*dalang in Javanese*) *wayang beber* Pacitan. The interview was also conducted with Mr. Johan Perwiranto, cultural observer from Pacitan.

Data were analyzed using interactive analysis technique consisted of three componen, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Primary data and secondary data transcribed in report form and then reduced and selected according to the data requierd. Presentation of data, is an information organization assembly in the form of classification or categorization that allows the conclusion of research, and the collected data is then analyzed by hermeutical approach, so that it can be made conclusion.

## Literature Review

Culture is the result of human activity in its supporting society. Nanang Rizali explains about culture related to meaning, values and symbols. Understanding the dynamics of culture basically understand the problem of meaning, values and symbols that are used as a reference by a group of supporters. Explained that culture is the whole system of ideas, actions, and the work of human beings in the framework of life (2000: 32).

Rohidi, (2000) describes culture as related to the symbol system, which is a reference and guideline for the life of society and as a system of symbols, giving meaning, the model is transmitted through symbolic codes (pp.3). Understanding the culture gives connotation that the culture as a public expression in the form of ideas and human behavior in the community.

Ida Bagus Gedhe Triguna (1997:65), explains values and symbols etymologically. The word symbol comes from the Greek word *sumballo* (*sumballien*) which means to interview, contemplate, compare. The symbol is a statement of two things that are unified and based on their dimensions. Values relate to something that is considered valuable, while symbols in addition to having certain functions can also be utilized as the identity of the community. A symbol describes a dual function that is transcendent-vertical (related to reference, size, pattern of society in behaving), and horizontal immanent (As a means of communication based on its context and the adhesive of solidarity relationship of its supporting society). Related to the cultural system, Nooryan Bahari (2004) argues about the mutual relationship between society and culture. Human relations as members of society with culture is very close, because there is no society that has no culture. Similarly, there can be no culture that is not incarnate in a society (pp. 21). Bahari further states that the notion of culture varies greatly, and every constraint of the given meaning depends on the point of view of each person based on the pattern of his thinking.

Some people regard culture as a social behavior. For others, culture is by no means a behavior, but a behavioral abstraction. Some people think stone axes, temples, and pottery are cultures. As for others consider these objects not as culture, but the result of culture. The concept of culture on the basis of the theory of evolution, which considers the culture as a complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and various abilities and other habits acquired by humans as members of society. The learning behavior of a community or community sub-group includes organizations, family structures, agency structures that express or regulate social relationship, communicating forms typical of community members. Although the notion of culture varies greatly, there is an attempt to reformulate the concept of culture that culture refers to as a whole of behavioral patterns and patterns of behavior, both explicit and implicit, acquired and derived through symbols, which are finally able to something characteristic and characteristic of the human group, including its embodiment in material things (2004: 21).

The characteristic according to Simuh (1988) as the prominent features in Javanese culture is full of symbols or symbols. This is possible because Javanese humans at that time were not accustomed to abstract thinking. All ideas are expressed in more concrete forms of symbols, thus everything can be a riddle, because symbols can be interpreted in a double (pp. 131). The meaning of ornamental elements has a generalistic nature, given that cultural values such as *wayang* have the same roots between *gagrag* one with another (from time to time), namely Javanese cultural values that are conserved in the tradition of puppets. This is in accordance with Rohidi's (2000: 2) opinion, that traditions in a society may change but cultural values that are regarded as endowments are preserved. Koentjaraningrat (2009) states that culture is the whole system of ideas, actions and human works in the life of society (pp.193-195).

The form and content of culture, according to Honigmann in Koentjaraningrat (2009) there are at least three forms, namely (1) ideas, (2) activities and (3) artifacts. These three forms of culture by Koentjaraningrat are expressed as systems that are closely related to each other, and in this case the most abstract system (ideas) seems to be on top to regulate the activities of social systems more concrete, while activity in social systems produce its material culture (artifact). This opinion provides an illustration that Javanese culture is a reciprocal interaction between the systems in the form of culture, the relationship between ideas and activities that produce various works in the form of artifacts. *Wayang beber* Pacitan as a form of expression contains cultural values that reflect the culture of the Indonesian nation.

The notion of value according to Kluckhohn in Mulyana (2004: 10) argues that values as conceptions (implied or written, which distinguish individual or group characteristics) from what is desired affects the choice of the intermediate, purpose and end of action. Through visual elements such as lines, shapes, colors, and others contain messages of moral teachings that are priceless. Cultural values are ideas that have been learned by citizens from an early age, making it difficult to change. It is this idea which then produces things created by human beings based on their values, thoughts, and behaviors.

## Result and Discussion

As aforementioned, *wayang beber* has some peculiarities in its performing method and story. *Wayang beber* performance takes Panji story. The story is a love story well-known in agrarian society. This story has been recomposed in many versions developing in the society. The core of Panji story is the marriage between Raden

Panji Asmara Bangun (Panji Inu Kertapati) from Jenggala Kingdom and Dewi Sekartaji (Candrakirana), the princess of Kediri Kingdom.

To find out the content of *wayang beber* story, the write took *Wayang Beber* performance with the story “*Kawine Dewi Sekartaji*” in Gedompol Village, Donorojo Sub District, Pacitan Regency, as the example. Meanwhile the plot of story is retold as follows:

Prabu Brawijaya, the king of Kediri Kingdom, called his servants including Patih Tanda Prawira Mantri Arya Deksa Negara to come before him in the Palace. Patih Arya Deksa who at that time was discussing the state security with his subordinates came in a hurry to see Sang Prabu. After the kingdom’s officials have come and sent their respect greeting, Sang Prabu told Patih about the loss of Dewi Sekartaji. For that reason, the king – called Prabu Brawijaya by *dalang* Mardi and local people, although this name was not known during Kediri time around the 11<sup>th</sup> century and was just known during Majapahit time in the 13<sup>th</sup> century – held a prize contest to find her daughter. The contest told that whoever can find Dewi Sekartaji, regardless his/has their background, will be her daughter’s husband (if he is male), and will be his daughter’s sister (if she is female). Thereafter, Patih Arya Deksa was assigned to announce the prize contest to all people in that country.



Figure 1: Wayang Beber Pacitan first scene,  
Prabu Brawijaya announced the contest to find Dewi Sekartaji  
(Source: Mbah Mardi Collection, photo repro: Margana, 2017)

Soon after, a youth came before the Kediri Kingdom to attend the price contest. This youth has a very high supernatural power as indicated with the presence of a wild ox (*banteng*) in Kediri’s square (*alun-alun in Javanese*) subjected to him. The King was surprised seeing the youth’s supernatural power, then asked Patih Arya Deksa information about the youth. Patih informed that the youth is Jaka Kembang Kuning, coming from Kademangan Kuning, the messenger of Ki Demang Kuning.

Then, the king told his servant to call Jaka Kembang Kuning to come before the King. Jaka Kembang Kuning was asked by the King whether or not he can find Dewi Sekartaji, and may not come back to Kediri Kingdom before he finds Dewi Sekartaji. With his pleasure, Jaka Kembang Kuning stated his capability of finding Dewi Sekartaji constituting her sweetheart. In his search for Dewi Sekartaji, Jaka Kembang Kuning met the soldier of Prabu Klana who would follow the price contest.

Jaka Kembang Kuning then said goodbye to Sang Prabu and went to find Dewi Sekartaji. He was accompanied with his two servants: Ki Tawang Alun and Ki Nala Derma. Having made a retiring journey, Ki Tawang Alun recommended Jaka Kembang Kuning a way of finding the Princess immediately. The way of finding Dewi Sekartaji was to hold *Barang Terbang* performance (a kind of tambourine art) in Katumenggungan market, because Dewi Sekartaji liked to see *Barang Terbang*.

Dewi Sekartaji running away from the palace in fact went to Ki Tumengung Paluamba’s residence in Katumenggungan. At that time, Nyi (Mrs.) and Ki (Mr.) Katumenggungan were quarrelling about Nyi Katumenggungan’s dream of getting twin revelations. Amid the quarrel, they were surprised suddenly with Sekartaji’s come. They were very afraid of Dewi Sekartaji’s come because they would be accused to hide Sekartaji. Therefore, Nyi Tumengung advised Sekartaji to come back to Kediri immediately. However, Sekartaji did not want to leave Ki Menggung’s house and even threatened that she would go anywhere when Ki and Nyi Tumengung did not want to receive her. They were compelled to receive Sekartaji to live temporarily in their home. Soon after that, Jaka Kembang Kuning’s group arrived at Katumenggungan market to hold *Barang Terbang* performance. All visitors and surrounding people were in uproar, as they see a very young and

handsome artist of *Barang Terbang*.

The uproar or crowd was herd immediately by Nyi Tumenggung and she was interested in inviting and holding *Barang Terbang*. Nyi Menggung asked Ki Tawang Alun how long they have played *Barang Terbang*. Ki Tawang Alun said that it was the first time he played *barang terbang*. Ki Tawang Alun showed *BarangTerbang* in Katumenggungan house yard. At that time, Dewi Sekartaji seemed to watch the art under Ringin tree.

Having completed the performance, Jaka Kembang Kuning along with servant went back to Kademangan Kuning. As soon as he arrived at Kademangan, Jaka Kembang Kuning was asked by his father, Ki Demang Kuning, about what Prabu Brawijaya has instructed to him. Jaka Kembang Kuning stated that he was delegated to find Dewi Sekartaji who went to the palace and finally has been found in Katumenggungan.

Jaka Kembang Kuning delegated Ki Tawang Alun came to see Prabu Brawijaya, the ruler of Kediri Kingdom, to report that Gusti Ayu Dewi Sekartaji has been found. Meanwhile, Ki Nala Derma was delegated by Jaka Kembang Kuning to see Dewi Sekartaji in order to give her a gold box (*kotak kencana in Javanese*). As soon as receiving the instruction, both of them go to do respective assignments.

Having arrived at Kediri, Ki Tawang Alun saw Raden Gandarepa who was quarrelling with Raden Sedah Rama. The quarrel formerly departing from dissent ceased suddenly after Ki Tawang Alun has came. Soon after, Ki Tawang Alun escorted by Raden Gandarepa came to see sang Prabu. However, their measure was stopped by RadenKlana's arrival, who wants to bring Dewi Sekartaji to her country to be his wife. Raden Gandarepa explained that the one deserving to be Sekartaji's husband is Jaka Kembang Kuning because he has found the Princess successfully. However, Raden Klana Gendinggepita did not care about it and compelled to bring Sekartaji with him. The circumstance was getting hotter, the oral war was getting sharper between them. The culmination was when Raden Gandarepa challenged Raden Klana to fight against Ki Tawang Alun.

In some following days, Raden Klana came to kaputren palace of Kediri kingdom through back door. Before entering into the Palace, he asked his little brother, RetnaTenggaron, to adorn him in order to be disguised from the kingdom soldier. He said, Tenggaron, please adorn me, to disguise and to come into kaputren of Kediri and bring DewiSekartaji with him", "yes brother, I will adorn you", answered Tenggaron briefly.

In his disguise, Raden Klana went carefully to the palace via back door. How surprised he was as he was caught red handed by Raden Gandarepa. Raden Klana was expelled from that place and saw Ki Tawang Alun. Their quarrel was inevitable. The violent quarrel was finally won by Ki Tawang Alun. Raden Klana Gendingpita died with broken-off neck due to Ki Tawang Alun'skeris.

After Raden Klana has died, Jaka Kembang Kuning came to see Prabu Brawijaya to demand his promise fulfillment and told his servant to adorn Dewi Sekartaji immediately. Finally, Dewi Sekartaji got married with Jaka Kembang Kuning and lived happily forever.



Figure 2: Dewi Sekartaji's wedding with Jaka Kembang Kuning  
(Source: Mbah Mardi Collection, photo repro: Margana, 2017)

The existence of *wayang beber* and the story performed contain the following values. *Wayang beber* has multifunction including: ritual/spiritual and social-economic functions. *Wayang Beber* is an inseparable from Gedompol villagers upholding communality values and harmony. *Wayang beber* becomes a very important in maintaining and growing its proponent solidarity. Thus, social cohesion can always be reformed through customary rite organized by performing *Wayang Beber*. In addition, considering and listening to *wayang beber* narrator's statement, the people always get religious advice from the narrator about the importance of living in concord and maintaining social harmony. Briefly, *wayang bebers* is not only an attractive spectacle, but also the guidance for the audience holding on the culture. *Wayang Beber* can be an important social institution in

Gedompol Village people's life.

*Wayang Beber* contains very high advice or moral tenet, for example, teaching human being to live warily, to keep introspecting and always remember God's power. It also contains advice to live within society by avoiding negative speech that can harm social relation. Human being should maintain balanced relationship between human beings and God, between human beings and nature, and between human beings.

This art has economic function as well, eliciting economic benefit to *dalang* Mardi's family in particular and to Gedompol villagers in general. *Wayang Beber* and narrator in this village are the only ones left in Indonesia thereby having distinctive uniqueness. *Wayang Beber's* uniqueness and peculiarity has generated interest in many stakeholders including state officials, cultural observer, artist, researcher, student, and other society beyond Gedompol, not only Indonesian people but also foreigners. The high interest in coming to this village impacts on the social-economic activity of local society.

*Wayang Beber* also has cultural function, becoming the identity of local society's culture and reflecting local wisdom. *Wayang beber* represents agrarian culture of local society living in hilly and dry field environment. Majority people live as farmers and in colony in hamlet or village. Farmer society is the one upholding harmony and concord values, still holding on the old values originating from ancestor's tenet and Hindu and Buddha tradition. Therefore, animism and dynamism elements are still found in daily life practice of local people. It is these values that are crystallized later and preserved through *wayang beber* art. So, actually that *wayang beber* is the manifestation of local people cosmology still holding on the old values. Borrowing term Clifford Geertz, Gedompol villagers can be categorized into *abangan* group (distinguished with *santri* and *priyayi*), the farmer society group still maintaining pre-Hindu-Buddha values emphasizing on the adoration to the spirit of ancestors. They still believe in village's tutelary spirit, natural power, and hold customary rites followed with a variety of offerings as the means related to supra-natural power. It is in this context that *wayang beber* live everlastingly until today. It becomes local identity distinguishing Gedompol village from others.

In addition, *wayang beber* in Gedompol Village is considered not only as the high-value art work product, but also considered as heirloom not everyone can touch or play. Only *Wayang Beber* narrator's descent may hold on, store, and perform the art.

*Wayang beber* includes folklore, so that there is no written note to which puppetry refers. All *wayang beber* puppetry knowledge and skill are sent down orally. Therefore, there is a very large probability of misspelling or misunderstanding *wayang beber* between previous generation and the next. Oral tradition relies on the actors' power of memory and absolute belief, rather than on textual truth. In this sacredness context, *wayang beber* is mistic-legendary, closed, and difficult to study by others beyond nucleus family or original puppeteer (narrator) descent.

## Conclusion

*Wayang beber* as the original Archipelago painting art work constituting a unique and scarce fine art work, as it is the only painting inherited from Majapahit period still left now. *Wayang beber* performs the story of Panji constituting romantic story well-known in agrarian community. This story was composed in many versions developing within society including the addressing of Panji character. The story of Panji is the marriage between Raden Panji Asmara Bangun (Panji Inu Kertapati) from Jenggala Kingdom and Dewi Sekartaji (Candrakirana), the princess of Kediri kingdom.

There are some lessons that can be taken from the existence of *wayang beber*: *wayang beber* serves as traditional art with ritual/spiritual, cultural, and social-economic functions.

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