



Wayang Sasak As A Media For Dakwah Case Study Of Ki Dalang Buwana Sanggar H. Safwan, Ar In Batu Rimpang Dusun Badrain Village Narmada District, West Lombok Regency

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Article History

Manuscript submitted:

28 Maret 2025

Manuscript revised:

30 April 2025

Accepted for publication:

15 Juny 2025

Keywords

Puppets media, strategy, preaching, dakwah

Abstract

Shadow puppets is one of the most prominent highlights of Indonesian culture among other cultural. Puppets culture include acting, sound, music, literature, sculpture and symbolism. Puppets as a point of Sasak and Islamic cultural values is a very valuable momentum for the development of Sasak cultural treasures. Puppets for Sasak people are not only entertainment, but also a communication tool that can connect the will of the puppeteer through the storyline, so that dakwah can be embedded in a Sasak puppet performance. Based on this, the purpose of this study is to answer the question of how a puppeteer packages the delivery of messages (Dakwah) in puppet shows, especially in Sanggar Buwana Ki Dalang H. Safwan, AR, in Batu Rimpang, Badrain Village, Narmada District, West Lombok Regency. The methodology used is descriptive qualitative approach. Researchers do and try to collect, process and analyze qualitatively and embodied in the concept. While the data obtained by the researcher by means of observation, interviews, study documentation. The results of the research are the efforts of puppeteers in inserting dakwah messages in puppet shows, the approach in inserting dakwah messages through puppet media, has advantages that can be directly benefited by the community until now. In the staging or performance of puppets, it has a lot of influence on its fans. Because in the staging or performance of puppets contains a lot of philosophy of life and noble values. For the inhibiting factors in the process of puppet performances in carrying out the insertion of dakwah messages are the lack of publication to be spread outside the village so that the audience from outside the village is small, limited funding from the committee so that the puppeteer cannot add personnel which is one of the allures to attract the attention of the audience to watch until completion, and the love of puppets which is starting to decline, especially for the younger generation.

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Introduction

Wayang art in Indonesia has long been regarded as a deeply spiritual and cultural performance, transcending its artistic value to become a medium of religious ritual and social education. Traditionally, wayang is connected to religious ceremonies, particularly the ritual known as ruwatan, a spiritual process conducted to purify individuals from misfortune or prevent disasters. During the Majapahit era, wayang was intrinsically linked to Hindu-Buddhist rituals and was an integral part of cultural and spiritual life. However, when Islam began to spread across Java and other parts of the archipelago, Wali Songo the nine great Islamic missionaries recognized the cultural significance of wayang and adapted it as an effective medium for propagating Islamic teachings. They carried out deformative changes in both the form and content of wayang stories, transforming them into performances aligned with Islamic philosophy and values (Apriaman, 2021).

The transformation of wayang under Wali Songo exemplifies how culture and religion interact within society. Human beings, as both individual and social entities, require systems of meaning to guide their lives. Every nation possesses unique traditions and customs that contribute to its identity and character (Geertz, 1973). For the Sasak people of Lombok, the arrival of Islam was mediated through wayang. Historical narratives indicate that Sunan Prapen, a descendant of Sunan Giri, played a vital role in spreading Islam on Lombok Island. He introduced wayang performances, which were initially based on Hindu epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Yet, as the Sasak community had already embraced a monotheistic worldview by the 17th century, these narratives were replaced with the Serat Menak, a Javanese-Islamic literary text recounting the heroic journey of Amir Hamzah, also known locally as Raja Jayengrana (Apriaman, 2021).

The Serat Menak is not merely a story but a medium of moral and religious teaching. It portrays Amir Hamzah as a just and pious king, embodying the qualities of faith, heroism, and moral integrity (Florida, 1995). The introduction of Wayang Sasak thus marked a significant transformation of Lombok's cultural landscape, where Islamic values were embedded into local traditions. Unlike Javanese or Balinese wayang, which continued to emphasize Hindu epics, Wayang Sasak became distinctly Islamic in its message and form, while maintaining its performative and artistic richness (Lindsay, 1995).

Wayang performances serve as more than entertainment. Each character within the wayang symbolizes moral and philosophical values relevant to human life. There are figures symbolizing honesty, justice, bravery, and piety, contrasted with others representing greed, arrogance, and deceit. These dualities mirror the complexities of human behavior, providing audiences with moral lessons through symbolic representation (Aron, 2021). For this reason, wayang has remained relevant across centuries it communicates ethical and spiritual lessons in a narrative form that resonates with communal values.

A central figure in every wayang performance is the dalang or puppeteer, who serves not only as a storyteller but also as a teacher, critic, and philosopher. The dalang's role is to interpret the stories in ways that align with cultural and religious contexts, ensuring that the performance conveys both entertainment and moral instruction (Holt, 1967). In Lombok, this tradition has been preserved and adapted by contemporary figures such as Ki Dalang H. Safwan, AR, a renowned puppeteer from Badrain Village, West Lombok.

The preliminary study conducted in Sanggar Buwana, founded by Ki Dalang H. Safwan, AR, reveals how local artists have preserved and innovated the wayang tradition. Initially established in 1998 under the name Amukti Baskara, the studio was renamed Sanggar Buwana in 2010, focusing on cultural preservation and Islamic propagation. Through this studio, wayang performances are not only staged as cultural entertainment but also as a means of dakwah, where Islamic values are embedded within the narratives of Wayang Sasak.

Ki Dalang H. Safwan began practicing wayang as a child, creating puppets from cardboard at the age of nine and performing in his village. Over time, he grew into a respected puppeteer recognized by PEPADI (Indonesian Puppeteers Association). His performances emphasize not only the aesthetic and performative elements of wayang but also the importance of religious content. According to Safwan, the effectiveness of wayang as dakwah lies in its ability to communicate messages tailored to the audience's cultural background. Thus, wayang becomes a bridge between tradition and modern Islamic life in Lombok.

The figures most often emphasized in Safwan's performances are Prabunursiwan and Patih Baktiar, who represent loyalty, faith, and justice. These characters embody the values promoted through dakwah and serve as moral exemplars for audiences. Importantly, the wayang performance is not static but dynamic; it evolves with its audience, ensuring that the messages remain relevant to contemporary social and cultural contexts (Laksono, 2005).

The adaptation of wayang as a religious tool demonstrates the capacity of local traditions to integrate new belief systems without losing cultural identity. Wayang Sasak exemplifies how Islam in Indonesia has historically adapted itself through cultural means, creating an Islam that is both universal and locally rooted. This cultural hybridity enriches the diversity of Islamic practices in the archipelago and highlights the importance of cultural preservation in religious life (Ricklefs, 2012).

From an educational perspective, wayang provides moral instruction in ways that are engaging and memorable for audiences of all ages. Through dramatization, symbolism, and music, it communicates lessons about justice, humility, patience, and piety. For children and younger audiences, these performances serve as informal education, complementing formal schooling and reinforcing communal values (Soedarsono, 1999).

In conclusion, Wayang Sasak represents a unique cultural adaptation that integrates Islamic values within local tradition. Its historical development under Sunan Prapen, its reliance on the Serat Menak, and its continued preservation by cultural figures such as Ki Dalang Safwan highlight its enduring significance as both art and religious practice. Beyond entertainment, wayang serves as a vehicle for character formation, moral education, and the preservation of cultural identity. The case of Wayang Sasak demonstrates how traditional art can be a powerful medium of religious propagation, ensuring that cultural heritage and spiritual values continue to thrive in harmony.

Methods

There are four key terms to note: scientific methods, data, purpose, and specific uses. Scientific methods mean that research activities are based on scientific characteristics, namely rational, empirical, and systematic. Rational means that research activities are carried out in a reasonable way that can be comprehended by human reasoning, empirical means that the methods used can be observed by human senses, so others can observe and understand the methods used. Systematic means that the process used in the research employs specific, logical steps (Sugiyono 2017:3, Suryadmaja et al., 2015). This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. Descriptive means a problem formulation that guides the research to explore or capture the research situation comprehensively, broadly, and deeply. In qualitative research, data is obtained from various sources. Data collection techniques are also varied and continuously carried out until the data is valid. Here, the researcher acts as the main data collector. The instruments in this research are observation, interviews, and documentation.

In this qualitative research, the researcher will approach by visiting Sanggar Buwana twice a month and directly observing the training process of Sasak shadow puppetry as a medium of preaching. Afterwards, the researcher will conduct interviews with the puppeteer to strengthen data and information. The researcher uses this method because the researcher wants to describe the field conditions more specifically, transparently, and deeply. This research describes situations or events so that the collected data is descriptive to identify the application of the method in wayang kulit performances as a preaching medium at Sanggar Buwana. The process of data collection for research is carried out by observation, interviews, documentation, and literature study. The research to be conducted to answer the formulated questions will use a qualitative methodology. This type of research means a description or depiction of the object under study in writing and is expressed in detail, clearly, and as it is. Data analysis, according to Sugiyono (2018:482), is the process of systematically searching and organizing data obtained from interviews, field notes, and documentation by organizing the data into categories, breaking it down into units, synthesizing, arranging it into patterns, selecting what is important and to be studied, and making conclusions so that it is easy to understand by oneself and others.

Results and Discussions

A dalang is the central figure in wayang performances. The dalang is both the director and the artist who performs the wayang. A dalang must memorize many wayang stories, understand the genealogy of the wayang characters, and know the philosophy contained in them. They must be able to narrate the stories orderly, coherently, fluently, and captivatingly. A dalang must also skillfully perform and demonstrate the wayang characters they play, understanding each character's traits. A dalang is also required to master the accompanying gending songs and sing them, which is a primary requirement for a dalang. Additionally, they must skillfully modulate their voice so that the character's voice reflects the wayang character's personality. A good dalang should have charisma, enthusiasm, and the ability to control and influence the audience's emotions. Moreover, they must be physically fit because they are required to perform wayang all night long.

A dalang symbolizes logic, thought, intuition, imagination, emotion, and human desires that drive the body. The dalang holds a very crucial role in wayang performances. Becoming a dalang requires extensive skills. The skills a dalang must possess include: 1. The level of proficiency in the songs to be performed. In Wayang Sasak performances, the dalang must master the work "Serat Menak," the main material of Wayang Sasak. 2. The dalang must also have broad knowledge, both in religious and general knowledge. This wealth of knowledge is reflected in the dalang's performance. They must be fluent in Kawi (Old Javanese), Sasak, and Balinese languages. Using the Serat Menak script as the basis for Wayang Sasak and adapting it into the Wayang Sasak performance form requires a dalang fluent in all three languages. Kawi is used by the main characters in Wayang Sasak, Balinese is used by the character Umar Madi to build rapport with the Balinese audience, and Sasak is widely spoken in Lombok as a cultural dialect.

The role of a Wayang Sasak dalang requires a thorough understanding of the story's core. This is necessary so the dalang can freely choose the storyline to be performed. Mastery of story structure is also essential in the learning process. Understanding the text enhances the dalang's ability to improvise if unexpected situations arise. Among all Sasak dalangs in Lombok, most understand the text or story structure by appreciating every performance. Wayang performances encompass other art elements, including gending (songs). Therefore, the dalang's musicality significantly supports the performance quality. Additionally, all-night wayang performances require the vocal stamina of the dalang. In Wayang Sasak, the connection between flute players is very close. The sound of the flute always signals a change in the scene. Moreover, a dalang must have extensive knowledge of supporting areas such as religion, politics, health, culture, philosophy, and more. A person with broad insight can voice the issues around them. The rerencekan characters always play side scenes in wayang performances. As previously explained, the rerencekan characters represent the marginalized society in Lombok, and these scenes can serve as a discussion of the previous scene, providing the audience with a better understanding of the Old Javanese language. These characters come from various tribes and customs. Mastery of language and dialect brings more life to the characters played.

A dalang must have skills in manipulating wayang puppets, including knowing various ways to operate the puppets and differentiating the voices of characters. A dalang must master three types of voices. These three voices correspond to the puppet characters. They are three types of voices: dalem voice (a deep voice typically used by giants), middle voice (a rounded voice typically used by wise characters like a patih, such as Wong Agung Menak Jayengrane), and high-pitched voice (a head voice, often used for female characters). To become a Wayang Sasak Islamic dalang, you must also delve into the knowledge of tauhid. Syariat, tarikat, hakikat, and ma'rifat are the four levels that must be studied. There will be a well-established vertical relationship between humans and humans if the horizontal relationship (relationship between humans and God) is well-established too, and vice versa.

A dalang is more than just a puppeteer; they are a solo actor presenting a complex performance that integrates various art elements. The role of a dalang goes far beyond the physical manipulation of the puppets behind the screen. In this context, Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR is a solo actor performing multiple roles in one performance. In wayang performances, Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR plays various characters and roles, from the main characters to supporting roles. When Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR acts as a solo actor, they must also be capable of being a narrator. This means that Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR must be able to change voice intonation, facial expressions (implied in the puppets' movements), and speaking styles to differentiate each character.

When the dalang acts as an actor, they express themselves through the characters they play. They pour their emotions, thoughts, and views into the performance. The dalang must also be able to create interactions with the audience through dialogue, facial expressions, and wayang movements. A dalang must be able to make the audience laugh, cry, and be stunned. Therefore, the dalang needs the ability to improvise to adapt the performance to the situation and the audience's responses. In playing the role of an actor, Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR is influenced by his daily life and environment. This is evident in how Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR acts during wayang performances. When performing the right and left wayang characters using the Kawi language with various characters, it is influenced by Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR's daily life as a singer, lontar script reader, and pembayun. Similarly, when Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR plays the Punakawan (Rerencek) characters, it is influenced by his social interactions and daily life in his environment. These conditions influence Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR's puppeteering style, using language easily understood by the general public while maintaining the classical performance's character, local wisdom, and humor.

In a wayang performance, Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR is not merely a puppeteer. Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR acts as a director in every performance, coordinating all elements to create a complete and engaging show. In this role, Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR designs the concept of the performance, from selecting the story to be staged, considering the theme's relevance and social conditions, to conveying moral and religious messages. Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR also interprets the story to differentiate it and determine the main theme to be conveyed through the wayang performance. As a director in a wayang performance, Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR also controls the tempo and atmosphere of the show, from slow, emphasized parts to fast and tense segments, ensuring that the intended message, especially the religious message, is effectively communicated. Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR also precisely manages the story's climax to ensure the audience experiences the peak emotions of the performance. Additionally, the dalang is responsible for sound and music arrangements. To handle sound and music, the dalang collaborates with the Pengrawit (musicians) to select Gending that match the mood and scenes and arrange dialogues and Tembang to suit the situation and character of the wayang. The dalang and Pengrawit interact to set the tempo and atmosphere.

If analogized, the dalang is a director, scriptwriter, and main character. The wayang are the supporting actors and props. The Gamelan is the accompanying music, and the screen in a wayang performance serves as a cinema screen. In this context, Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR is a creative director capable of controlling all aspects of the wayang performance. Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR can also bring classical stories to life and convey profound religious messages to the audience through the skillful portrayal of the punakawan (Rerencek) characters, as detailed in the fifth sub-chapter in the Rerencek section.

Wayang as a Medium of Preaching

The source of stories used in Wayang Sasak performances is the Serat Menak, which tells the journey of Amir Hamzah, the son of the uncle of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Serat Menak does not merely narrate the values and norms of Islam. However, the themes brought in every wayang performance in Lombok are always

related to Islamic teachings and are dominated by the tales of Amir Hamzah as the main story in Wayang Sasak performances. Within wayang Sasak, Serat Menak is commonly known as Bel (babon carita) and is a major source, proving Wayang Sasak as a medium for preaching, mostly derived from the tales of Amir Hamzah, containing many values of heroism, leadership, and sacrifice for religion. It is expected to inspire and guide the Sasak community's life. One such story from Bel or Serat Menak is the story of Menak Sidang-Dayang. Through the story of Sidang-Dayang, we can see the preaching messages contained within it, such as moral messages, noble character, and Islamic teachings. Almost all stories in Serat Menak Hikayat Amir Hamzah always contain a propagation to embrace the sacred religion and follow the sharia of Prophet Ibrahim. Over time, these messages are delivered by the dalang following the needs of preaching adjusted to the social conditions of their time. Thus, in Wayang Sasak performances, the dalang needs the ability to convey messages of religious preaching.

From these stories, the dalang of Wayang Sasak in the past formed the patterns and presentation structures in performances, especially in the development period, to insert preaching messages. The main story or Serat Menak itself contains many preaching messages because the script is based on the Hikayat Amir Hamzah, dominated by the tales of the Prophet's uncle. Wayang kulit as traditional art is the most familiar entertainment for its audience. This is because Wayang Sasak is an affordable show, and its stories are deeply integrated with the community. In Wayang Sasak performances, the dalang play a very important role for the community, functioning as "enlighteners," which in Arabic is called "dallah." In the past, the dalang also acted as Islamic preachers, although wayang was originally a Hindu heritage. The Islamic missionaries strived to approach the community, transforming the wayang influenced by Hinduism into a new form imbued with Islamic values. They sometimes inserted Islamic teachings into the performances.

Sunan Kalijaga was the most prominent figure in preaching through wayang. In Lombok, wayang is undoubtedly a primary tool for preaching due to its story content and philosophical values rooted in Islam. In a wayang performance, the first thing we see is a blank white screen surrounded by black, indicating that the universe was initially created by God in a void state without inhabitants. The wayang lamp (belenceng) is lit, symbolizing that the universe and life within it exist solely because of His Light. Then the Gunungan Wayang is first lowered by the dalang, symbolizing that life was created on Earth as a source of sustenance for humans, followed by the descent of Adam and Eve. Thus, the dalang also lowers two wayang puppets, Jayengrana and Dewi Munigarim. These examples highlight the significant role of wayang in nurturing Islamic preaching.

According to Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR, Wayang Kulit Sasak remains an efficient medium for embedding preaching messages today, as the Sasak community is still very enthusiastic about preserving Wayang Kulit Sasak. In the world of wayang, a dalang is defined as someone with special skills in manipulating wayang puppets (ndalang). In wayang performances, the dalang plays a very central role. For example, from a language perspective, performing wayang requires mastering various levels of speech appropriate to each character's status. Without mastering this aspect, the wayang performance would appear poor and fail to captivate the audience. Therefore, a dalang is someone who can depict every beauty created with heartfelt words, capable of captivating the audience, and rich with moral messages.

In wayang stories, just like in everyday human life, there are two aspects: good and bad. Similarly, in wayang stories, messages are conveyed. The messages delivered by the dalang are crucial, especially in terms of religious preaching. When performing, Ki H. Safwan AR inserts preaching messages to be conveyed through Wayang Kulit. According to Ki H. Safwan AR, in everyday life, we must realize that we are perfect beings, made perfect by the power of Allah SWT. By purifying ourselves and drawing closer to Allah, we must be grateful for all the blessings He has bestowed upon us.

As far as the meaning contained in wayang, in terms of its Islamic essence, the wayang we see now are the creations of the wali (Islamic saints). We also find other Islamic philosophies in the Gunungan. The Gunungan was created during the Demak kingdom era by Raden Patah around 1443. Before the performance begins, the Gunungan is placed in the center of the kelir (screen), which is the focal point for the audience. This Gunungan symbolizes the "Mustika Mosque." If the Gunungan is turned, it resembles the human heart, consisting of the right chamber, left chamber, right atrium, and left atrium. This symbolism carries an Islamic philosophy that means a person's heart should always be in the mosque. If a person has no intention of going to the mosque, their faith is not yet perfect. The dalang inserts the Gunungan in the center of the kelir, signifying that the first thing to be prioritized in life is the mosque or the importance of worshiping Allah SWT.

In wayang kulit performances, there are many moral messages, Aqidah values, Akhlaq (ethics), and Sharia conveyed by the dalang. These messages form the core intent or purpose to be communicated to the general public through wayang kulit performances. In wayang kulit performances, there are also messages of Aqidah, Akhlaq, and Sharia, which are fundamental noble values that every Muslim must possess. In the field of Aqidah, the discussion is not only directed at issues that must be believed but also covers prohibited matters, such as Shirk (associating partners with Allah), Mushrik, and others. In practice, the dalang encourages Muslims, particularly the wayang kulit audience, to believe in prayer and spirituality, which are obligatory for Muslims. Prayer is an expression of faith in Allah, the One and Only God. The assumption of God's existence as Rabb or the regulator of human affairs implies that everyone must worship. Before starting the wayang kulit performance, Ki H. Safwan AR performs a ritual prayer to Allah to ensure the smooth running of the wayang kulit performance.

Sanggar Buwana led by Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR has performed more than 20 times on regional and national stages, with four performances each year. In every Wayang Kulit Sasak performance, preaching messages are always embedded. The preaching messages in this context refer to the moral and character portrayals of each protagonist played by the dalang, such as characters who are patient, faithful to Allah SWT, diligent in worship, persistent in achieving goals, gentle, loving, and so on. All these portrayals are part of preaching through Wayang Kulit performances. Every time he performs, the dalang interacts with the audience to keep them focused on enjoying and understanding the performance. Usually, Ki H. Safwan AR inserts the preaching messages at the end of the performance.

Based on the main script of Wayang Sasak, most of the stories are adapted from Serat Menak, particularly the tales of Amir Hamzah, the uncle of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). These narratives emphasize Amir Hamzah's heroism, bravery, and strong faith in defending religion, making him a role model for the audience to emulate. Beyond tales of courage, Wayang Sasak is also rich in moral values such as honesty, patience, justice, and the promotion of social harmony and religious tolerance. Central to its message is the concept of tauhid and aqidah, highlighting the oneness of God and inviting the audience to always remember and worship Allah SWT. In addition, the performances encourage people to do good deeds, avoid wrongdoing, and help others. The dalang plays a central role in emphasizing the significance of education and knowledge, often featuring wise characters who advise the audience on the value of seeking knowledge as a foundation for a meaningful life.

In general, a Wayang Sasak performance is divided into four main sections, each of which contains specific religious and cultural messages. The first is the Pengaksame section, which serves as the prologue of the performance. This part begins with the dalang's voice before the appearance of the Gunungan and characters like Jayang Rana and Muni Garim. The Pengaksame functions as an opening statement, combining apologies and invitations while embedding subtle religious teachings. The second part is the Penangkilan section, which marks the transition from the prologue to the introduction of the characters. The dalang introduces both positive and negative characters to reflect different sides of human behavior. This section is divided into Penangkilan Wayang Kanan (Right Side), featuring noble characters such as Jayangrana, Umar Maya, Maktal, Darundia, Tanus, Tamtanus, Selandir, Umar Madi, and Kusnendar, and Penangkilan Wayang Kiri (Left Side), which introduces characters symbolizing negative qualities such as Prabu Nursiwan, Lurah, and Kembung. Through this contrast, the performance communicates moral lessons about wise and righteous behavior, particularly embodied by Jayang Rana.

The third section is the Lakon, which literally derives from the word laku meaning an act, event, or representation of human nature in daily life. Within the context of Wayang Sasak, lakon refers to the main storyline or script, encompassing a sequence of events, dialogues, and interactions among characters that shape the overall narrative. The lakon in Wayang Sasak performances is usually based on the Menak script, presenting preaching messages and invitations to embrace Islam and follow the teachings of Prophet Ibrahim. Dialogues between right-side and left-side characters typically precede battles, providing a medium to contrast virtue with vice while embedding moral and spiritual lessons.

The final section is the Rerencek, which introduces comedic characters who reflect the voices and conditions of local communities. These figures, such as Amaq Keseq, Amaq Ocong, Amaq Baok, Inaq Itet, and Inaq Ajep, add humor and entertainment to the performance while simultaneously delivering social, cultural, political, and religious commentary in a language and style easily understood by the audience. Their humorous

approach ensures that even serious messages are accessible and engaging. Importantly, the dalang often utilizes these characters as a vehicle to insert religious and moral teachings in a lighthearted manner.

Through these four sections, Wayang Sasak operates as more than just an artistic or entertainment form; it becomes a holistic medium of religious preaching and cultural education. According to observations of Ki Dalang H. Safwan AR's performance, the dalang explains that wayang represents the human journey, where good and evil coexist and continuously interact. Each character embodies aspects of human nature—both virtues to be imitated and vices to be avoided. In doing so, Wayang Sasak not only entertains but also guides its audience, reminding them about human origins, divine creation, and the moral values necessary for harmonious living. This makes Wayang Sasak a living tradition that intertwines culture, religion, and education, shaping the values of individuals and communities across generations.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The supporting factors for wayang kulit performances as a medium of preaching are deeply rooted in community participation and cultural solidarity. One of the most prominent aspects is the involvement of the local community in implementing the sedekah bumi program, a traditional ritual of gratitude to God for the blessings of nature and harvest. This ritual not only sustains religious and cultural values but also provides a context in which wayang kulit performances are held as part of the celebration. The voluntary contributions of community members further strengthen the sustainability of these performances, as villagers often contribute funds, resources, or labor to ensure the event runs smoothly. Such participation reflects a strong sense of belonging and communal identity, which is vital in maintaining the continuity of wayang kulit as both a cultural and religious medium.

The performance itself is supported by a well-structured collaboration between various elements. The dalang, or puppeteer, plays the central role in conveying both the storyline and the preaching messages. The pengrawit (musicians) provide the musical background that builds emotional intensity and sets the rhythm of the performance, while the sinden (female singers) add lyrical and spiritual dimensions through traditional songs. Comedians and supporting assistants also play important roles in keeping the audience entertained and ensuring smooth transitions between scenes. This cohesion among performers makes wayang kulit an immersive and holistic experience that sustains audience engagement from evening until dawn. In addition, modern facilities such as sound systems, gamelan sets, and strategic venues create a more comfortable and accessible environment for both performers and spectators. Loyal audiences, who often watch until the end of the performance, contribute to the endurance of this art form by providing motivation for performers to continue preserving tradition.

However, alongside these supporting factors, there are also several inhibiting challenges. One major issue is the limited publicity of wayang kulit outside the village, which restricts its exposure to broader audiences. As a result, spectators are predominantly local villagers, reducing opportunities for cultural exchange and financial support from outside communities. Moreover, funding limitations from organizing committees hinder the ability to expand the scale of performances, such as adding more musicians, singers, or special effects, which could enhance the appeal of the show. These financial constraints not only reduce the variety of performances but also affect the overall quality and sustainability of the event.

A more pressing concern is the declining interest among the younger generation. Many young people are more attracted to modern forms of entertainment such as social media, television, or digital platforms, which overshadow traditional art forms like wayang kulit. If this trend continues without intervention, wayang kulit may face the risk of extinction. This poses a significant challenge for dalangs and cultural activists, who must find innovative strategies to attract younger audiences. Possible approaches include integrating modern storytelling techniques, digital media promotion, and educational programs that highlight the cultural and moral values embedded in wayang kulit. Furthermore, collaboration with schools, cultural institutions, and local governments could ensure that this art form remains relevant and accessible.

In conclusion, while community participation, cohesive performance structures, and supporting facilities contribute significantly to the sustainability of wayang kulit, challenges such as limited publicity, insufficient funding, and the lack of youth interest threaten its survival. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts from cultural practitioners, community leaders, and government authorities to revitalize wayang kulit and ensure its legacy endures for future generations.

Conclusion

Based on what has been mentioned above, the following conclusions can be drawn: a wayang performance must use a language that the community can understand. Therefore, the dalang must master what he needs to know, namely the language and the traditions. In wayang kulit performances, dalang Ki H. Safwan AR always strives to package preaching messages that the local community can easily digest. During the performance, Ki H. Safwan AR inserts messages about Islam, conveyed through the wayang characters' traits. He also delivers messages of Akhlaq, Aqidah, and Sharia. In wayang kulit performances, Ki H. Safwan AR focuses more on the final hours to deliver preaching messages, with more Islamic messages conveyed due to the audience's endurance to fight drowsiness. In life, everything has supporting and inhibiting factors, as does the wayang kulit performance of Ki H. Safwan AR.

As a suggestion in this research, dalang Ki H. Safwan AR should firmly uphold the significant responsibility for the work's outcome and the messages conveyed during the performance. The wayang kulit performances have a significant influence on wayang kulit enthusiasts and the community watching the performances. The art of wayang kulit should not fade from the culture that has existed for thousands of years, so that our descendants can experience the cultural heritage from their birthplace and ancestors. Not to forget, in wayang kulit performances, these art stories can educate and bring more goodness to the enthusiasts and community, just as packaging preaching messages can be integrated with stories according to current developments.

For the community, there is an obligation to teach what has been learned from any lesson, such as after watching a wayang kulit performance. Everyone should continue to preach according to their respective fields and abilities because Islamic preaching is not focused on just one field, but on all fields and abilities that can carry out the preaching. For the Indonesian community, preserve your own culture. More moral, Akhlaq, Aqidah, and Sharia messages are embedded in every culture in this country. Make our culture known worldwide so we can be proud to be Indonesians. Do not only imitate the West to make this generation famous; make this country famous with the culture inherited from our ancestors.

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