

Sinta and Social Criticism of the *Wayang Tavip*

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Abstract—This study aims to uncover the messages and social criticisms conveyed through the *Wayang Tavip* in Rahvayana's play. *Wayang Tavip* is a contemporary *wayang* from Bandung that presents Rahvayana's story based on Rahvayana's novel by Sujewo Tejo. The appearance of the *Wayang Tavip* began when the creators experienced concerns about the lack of youthful interest in Indonesian local wisdom. Environmental issues such as plastic waste did not escape observation. The method used is descriptive-qualitative. The visual meaning is analyzed using Charles S. Peirce's semiotic theory through icons, indexes, and symbols. The results revealed that Every artist has a creative courage that it is sourced from his environment and his frame of mind. The frame of mind of academic artists can raise socio-political issues as part of social criticism in their innovations. Cases of corruption and the behavior of a contemporary society that is increasingly deviating from Islam and eastern norms are common topics discussed in Rahvayana's play through the main figures, for example, is Sinta. This method is considered quite effective as a medium of education, propaganda, as well as interesting entertainment for the younger generation.

Keywords: *Rahvayana, Wayang Tavip, semiotic analysis, social criticism, Sinta*

I. INTRODUCTION

Wayang has become the media for *da'wah* (Islamic calling), education, philosophical understanding and entertainment for people through the stories performed. An examination of how *wayang* is situated in global contexts begins in the colonial period. *Wayang* puppets in traditional Java were *pusaka* (sacred objects), and traditional norms and values stood in the way of radical experimentation with form until the postcolonial era [1]. One of the famous stories performed in the *wayang* show is the Rahvayana epic. Nowadays, the transformation of Rahvayana story is found in some Indonesia's modern literary works novel of *Rahvayana: Aku Lala Padamu* novel by Sujiwo Tejo. In line with the puppet story, types of *wayang* are growing from time to time. As a result, shows and *wayang* stories considerably changed and the innovations which are adjusted to the time or situation-condition in each region. Thus, contemporary puppets appear in Indonesia these days. Contemporary *wayang* is a type of *wayang* as the result of innovating classical *wayang*, for example, *Wayang Obor, Wayang Pancasila, Wayang Hip-hop,* and *Wayang Motekar*.

Wayang Tavip is the final work of M. Tavip when taking the Masters Program at ISI Surakarta in 2010 with the title

"Wayang Tavip: Rebuilding the Potential of Children." Tavip's research work aims to present the results of the creator's exploration with elementary school children in the *Wayang Tavip* media. This *wayang* is performed for the first time by Herry Dim who collaborated with M. Tavip in 1993. The word "Motekar" means creative in the Sundanese language. The difference of *Wayang Motekar* and shadow *wayang* is seen from the color produced by the shadow display in the show. *Wayang Motekar* appears in full-color theme, while shadow *wayang* only shows black shadow. It occurs because the basic principle of *Wayang Motekar* is the used plastic material, transparent coloring, lighting system and particular screen [2]. Tavip used plastic waste as the media in making his *wayang*. It is considered as the action of his awareness of environmental problem issues caused by waste. It is hoped that the more people appreciate his work, the more awareness comes from people about waste and they can turn it into something useful. Tavip often makes workshops for people around him, particularly for the youths and children who are interested in *Wayang Tavip*. Through his unique and interesting *wayang* show, he wants to grow children's love toward traditional *wayang*, because *wayang* teaches many positive things such as introducing local wisdom values, improving creativity and togetherness.

Rahvayana means the journey of Rahwana. Rahvayana's novel contains a collection of Rahwana's love letters to Sinta. Uniquely, the Rahvayana's play performed by *Wayang Tavip* not only displays the letters Rahwana gave to Sinta. He also presents political figures, artists, and certain characters outside the story as characters in their *wayang* shows. This method is carried out to respond to various deviations and actual issues in Indonesia to effectively convey social criticism in the community.

Rahvayana's play in the *Wayang Tavip* is full of values of local wisdom and socio-cultural criticism that are full of meaning, both in performances and visualizations of the *wayang*. These facts encourage the author to research the meaning of the *Wayang Tavip* characters in more depth. This is in line with the opinion of Danesi & Perron who named humans as "*Homo culturalis*, namely as creatures who always want to understand the meaning of what they find (meaning-seeking creature)." *Wayang* as a result of human culture which is rich in values and symbols in the show is very suitable if examined from the perspective of semiotics [3]. In this case, Mulyono argues that *wayang* contains a set of symbols or language from human life and culture [4]. Therefore, in this

research, the writer uses semiotic theory in studying the visualization and meaning of the *wayang* characters. This is consistent with the opinion of Hoed who revealed that "semiotics in its development became a theoretical tool used to study human culture." [5].

Contemporary puppets developed by Tavip are the result of an artist's creativity process inspired by environmental concerns. Based on these facts, the creative process varies between artists which are influenced by cross-culture, creator personality, and tasks [6]. Meanwhile, Campbell explained that the emergence of creativity is based on 5 steps, namely: (1) preparation; (2) concentration; (3) incubation; (4) lighting; and (5) verification / production [4]. Therefore, the study of the creative process and how to apply it to people is a part that needs to be studied as one of the important concerns in uncovering the growth of contemporary dolls in Indonesia, completing the semiotic analysis method used in this research. This creativity process in each artist has its own uniqueness, but basically it has the same steps. These approaches could be used directly during observations of the creative process and associated with cognitive, conative, emotional, and environmental factors involved in the process [7].

A study on traditional *wayang* from various viewpoints has been widely conducted in Indonesia and international researchers who were interested in Indonesia's *wayang* culture. However, it is found that a study on contemporary *wayang* is rarely conducted. There are only a few articles that can be used for reference to this field of study. Rahvayana's play in *Wayang Tavip* is full of local wisdom values and socio-cultural criticism, both in performances and visualization of *wayang* characters that have not been revealed in previous studies. Based on the background of the problem above, a research question was formulated that is: how is the meaning contained in the main character of the *Wayang Tavip* in the Rahvayana's play: *Aku Lala Padamu*? In the study, the author discusses the message and symbolic meaning of the *wayang* in the main character in Rahvayana's play.

II. METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive method since the researcher aims to understand a phenomenon on the visual appearance of *wayang* as the research object. From these objects, the researcher would discover the meaning of *wayang* through visual facts seen (in *wayang* figures and the performance), perceptions, motivation, and action of the creator as the informant following the qualitative approach taken [8]. The results of this study would be concluded and written descriptively to be well understood by the reader [9]. Based on the approach and research method used, the researcher tried to collect data completely and its to be easy analyzed objectively, carefully and systematically to scientific insights for readers, specifically to academics and art practitioners.

A. Research's Subject and Object

The subject of this research is *Wayang Tavip's* creator, that is Mr. M. Tavip. This study was conducted in *Wayang Tavip* studio, as the center of art activities and as Tavip's residence,

which is located in Komplek Delima Endah V No. 5-6, RT/RW: 02/09, Wargamekar village, Baleendah, Bandung. Besides, this study was also conducted in ISBI Bandung, which is the office of Tavip. Meanwhile, the object of this research is the visualization of *Wayang Tavip's* characters shown in Rahvayana's play. The population of puppet characters observed is thirty-two puppets, but the researcher narrowed down the research object into five puppets as the main characters. The selection of the five puppets is considered to already represent Rahvayana play and they have differences in visual aspect and message. The five characters are: 1) Rahwana, 2) Sinta, 3) Rama, 4) Hanoman, and 5) Laksmana.

B. Data Collection Method

There are three methods used in this study, which are: 1) observation method, which is conducted to understand *wayang* characters visualization aspect (design and ornament variations); and aspect of sign on the *wayang*, to draw conclusion about message and meaning on the characters and during the performance of Rahvayana's play; 2) interview method; and 3) documentation method. The following is the example of an interview instrument sheet:

TABLE I. SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW AND OBSERVATION INSTRUMENTS

No	Wayang Design	Character Name	Message and Meaning
1.			

Variable/Aspect	Indicator
The picture of <i>Wayang Tavip</i> character	Observing the design structure on <i>Wayang Tavip</i> . Observing the ornaments on <i>Wayang Tavip</i> . Interpreting the signs and meanings contained in <i>Wayang Tavip</i> .

C. Data Analysis Technique

Aesthetic and semiotic analysis methods were chosen according to the main purpose of the study, as suggested by Rohidi [10], which is to understand the meaning which implicitly shows its form in the observed work. Analysis method in this study is described on the table below:

Aesthetics		Semiotika / semiotics	
Line	On the ornaments and shapes of puppet's body	Icon	Charles S. Peirce's Sign Typology theory
Field		Index	
Colour		Symbol	
Texture			

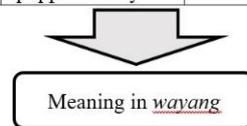


Fig. 1. Method of analysis.

Thus, the data collected from observations, interviews and documentation from the Tavip puppets are discussed, interpreted, and collected inductively by analytical methods: 1) aesthetics, which include lines, fields, colors, and textures; 2) semiotics, using the theory of the typology of signs from Charles S. Peirce, so as to produce an accurate picture of the things that actually happened.

Semiotic theory emphasizes communication as the generation of meaning. A work of art can be considered as a collection of signs that can be used as a communication medium. This opinion is in line with the thinking of Keir Elam who argues that: Semiotics is also linked to processes of 'signification' (signification) and processes of 'communication,' which is a tool or medium where meanings are defined and exchanged. Semiotic objects are codes and sign systems that operate in society, actual messages and texts produced in this way [11].

Art objects can function as signs or collections of signs because they have properties that make things effective. Artworks are basically communication media from artists to the public that contain values that are believed by the artists themselves, in accordance with the values prevailing in society. Therefore, artists can be called as messengers.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are six figures of *wayang* Rahwayana studied, but in this paper, the author only discusses one character, namely Sinta. This figure is considered to be representative because it is the main female character who causes the two main characters (Rama and Rahwana) to clash to form Rahwayana's overall storyline. Besides that, signs and messages are quite common in this *wayang* so that they can represent Tavip's thoughts in conveying social criticism to Indonesian people.

A. Sinta



Source: Personal documentation.

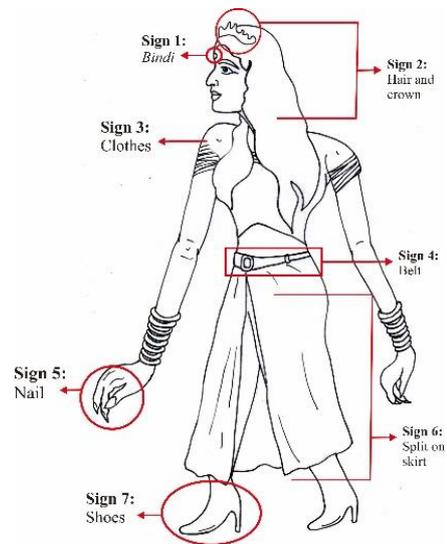
Fig. 2. Sinta.

Overall, Sinta's modern *wayang* seems out of the *wayang* tradition in general. However, Tavip as a *wayang* creator is trying to maintain the traditional side in each of his creation *wayang*. This effort appears in the head of the Sinta's figure. If observed, Sinta's face bears a resemblance to the Aryan-Indian race, which has white skin, sharp nose, thick lips, and curly hair. This makes the face of the Sinta's figure as an icon of the beautiful woman of India. To describe the unique beauty of India it is appropriate to use this description, although historians throughout the world agree that the culture of

Mohenjodaro-Harappa and the Indus river valley civilization was built by the Dravidians, which were categorized into the Australoid race, with characteristics of thick lips, black skin, nose pug, well-built, and curly hair, but according to experts, the Aryan race that has physical characteristics contrary to the Dravidas has dominated the origins of Indian society at this time [12]. Sinta was described as having long hair and wearing a crown. The Sinta's figure in the *wayang* standard is indeed long-haired, while the crown symbolizes the queen, ruler, nobility, and a high degree especially in *wayang*.

The next sign that appears to strengthen this is the red dot on Sinta's forehead called *bindi*. *Bindi* tattoo on the forehead is a common cultural practice in young Indian women [13]. *Bindi* is a red round shape that is applied right on the forehead of the woman, between the eyebrows. *Bindi* is a common accessory in South Asian countries, such as Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and even Mauritius. *Bindi* is closely related to religion, values, and traditions related to Hinduism. *Bindi* is considered a symbol of love, beauty, prosperity, honor, and the antidote to bad luck. The symbol of love in red is following David's opinion [14]. *Bindi* that is worn by a woman also symbolizes that they are married. In the ancient Aryan tradition, the groom uses his blood as a mark on the bride's forehead as a confession of marriage. Until now the culture is still applied in India [15]. When wearing *bindi*, Indian women usually combine it with traditional clothing such as *saree* [16].

The most striking detail on this puppet is the clothes worn by Sinta. The use of *bindi* and *saree* is the right step for the creator to portray Sinta as an icon of the magic of modern married Indian women because *saree* is usually worn by married women. Meanwhile, to strengthen the character of the nobility, and to emphasize the life story of Sinta, the purple *saree* can represent these things. This opinion is in line with the color theory put forward by Holzschlag that the color purple can refer to spiritual matters, mysteries, majesty, and shape changes (changes in the way of life of Sinta from a nobleman to become a hermit following her husband) [17].



Source: Personal documentation.

Fig. 3. Signs found on the Sinta's figure.

The selection of *saree* in Sinta's modern visualization is also the right thing. This is because contemporary Indian women are still proud to wear traditional clothes even though many are also wearing Western-style clothes. Ranging from daily activities to sleep at night. Even when living abroad they are still proud and in love with their traditional clothes. The sari was vital to this project of the shaping of the modern Indian woman now increasingly educated and urbanized unlike her still 'traditional', often rural counterpart [18]. There are no fixed rules that determine formal clothes or not. From office women to housewives, the style of clothing is the same. The difference is only during festivals or weddings. Usually, the colors chosen are more striking with colorful *merci* details and glamorous lace [19]. The visualizations were carried out by Tavip because the Ramayana epic originated in India. Tavip seems to show that Rahvayana's story which inspired his *wayang* making is in no way separated from the original story (Ramayana).

In the Rahvayana play, Sinta is shown in many modern clothes. Sinta here becomes an index of contemporary women who have integrity. This refers to the scene when Sinta was seduced by Rahwana who gave various tempting gifts, but Sinta did not budge because she was determined to return to her husband (Rama). Moreover, Indian women are known for their loyalty/devotion as a wife to their husbands. Sinta had the motto "it is better to die than surrender to Prabu Dasamuka's arrogance." This attitude is worth emulating. That a woman is not an object that can be easily mocked. "Such stoic and *tawakal* attitudes will surely get the help of God Almighty. Sinta secretly received protection from Arya Wibisana and Trijata" [20]. This behavior is inversely proportional to the behavior of some women today who easily turn to other men who have a slight advantage compared to their husbands. Many modern Sinta who are now easily exchanging the loyalty of a wife only because of the economic crash or seduction of men. Tavip made the Sinta's figure as a critic of the current economic situation in Indonesia. If it is related to the affairs of the stomach, humans can justify any means to achieve their goals.

Wearing a high-waisted skirt featuring thighs is a form of criticism for women who are often seen sexy. In Islam, the woman should only dress and show her beauty to her husband, as contained in the hadith of Abu Hurairah *Radhiyallahu'anhu*, that the Prophet *sallallahu'alaihi wa sallam* was once asked about, "What is the most characteristic of a *shalihah* woman?" It is pleasing to the husband when he is looking, and to obey him when he is ruling." [21]. This is because the decoration is part of the husband's right that his wife should fulfill the love between the two. Understandably, unmarried women are still trying to dress up to attract men. she looks like she's home, in front of her husband outdoors or busy taking selfies that show off her beauty and then uploading to her social media. That is a big question for Tavip: "For what and who is the woman dressed up and taking a selfie?"

Furthermore, the hemisphere on Sinta's skirt is also a metaphorical icon that shows Western culture that has been absorbed in such a way by Indonesian people, especially on the negative side. Women who are dressed in scanty are now considered normal, even though the original culture of

Indonesia which applies eastern customs is identical with polite clothes, especially after Islam entered the archipelago which further strengthened this worldview [22]. According to Hasan el-Qudsy [23], by dressing sexy like that automatically sexual violence will occur in the community. Women will lust from men around him because sometimes the crime occurs because given the opportunity by the victim.

The next metaphorical icon is high heels worn by Sinta. The shoes refer to the state of the people that often want to be seen to have a higher social status than they are. Tavip took an example of a woman who wore a gold plating bracelet that lined up a lot in her hands just to look rich. There are also grandmothers who dress up *menor* to look younger or beautiful that is not by following actual age. This shows the mentality of women today that are too attached to worldly life.

Long nails coated with nail polish are also a metaphorical icon. From a forced or made-up beauty. Tavip associates it with plastic surgery cases that are increasingly rife by Indonesian women. Even though long nails can also refer to demon. It can be concluded that the behavior of women today tends to be bad as if affected by evil from demons because many norms, ethics, and religious rules that are no longer obeyed by Indonesian women. In this case, the Qur'an also mentions that Satan is a trait possessed by two creatures of Allah, namely jinn and man. As stated in the Qur'an surah An-Naas verses 4-6 [24] which means: "From the evil of the retreating whisperer (4); Who whispers [evil] into the breasts of mankind (5); From among the jinn and mankind (6)"

Tavip's mischief is embodied in Sinta who uses nail polish. He stated that "For a religiously devout woman (always performing a five-hour prayer), when ablution, it is not permissible that something obstructs the water of the body (ablution) which makes the prayer invalid." The opinion is in the opinion of experts Shaykh madhab prayer, "It is necessary to wash the whole skin and hair while washing. If there is a stain on the nail that prevents water from entering or there is a ring around it, then the wool will be invalid" [25].

TABLE II. CONCLUSION WAYANG SINTA

No	Sign (Representation)	Interpretation	Object	Type of Sign
1	Characteristics of Sinta's face	Aryan-Indian race	Indian beautiful woman	Icon Imagine
2	Characteristics of Sinta's face wearing a crown and long hair, the use of bindi and saree	Wayang Tavip aren't completely separated from the grip and cultural roots	The Story of Ramayana	Symbol
3	Sinta who uses purple saree and bindi.	Saree and bindi are usually worn by women who are married to date. The color purple represents majesty and shape change.	come from India	Icon Imagine
4	A skirt with a high slit with a belt	Behavioral criticism	A modern Indian female aristocrat who was married, but her life story suddenly underwent a drastic change	Metaphorical icons

Table II. Cont.

5	High heels	contemporary woman	Women who love to show genitalia/	Metaphorical icons
6	Long nails	Criticism of people's behavior.	The behavior of people who tend to be evil is like a devil due to neglected religious law / beauty forced by make-up and plastic surgery.	Metaphorical icons
7	coated nail polish	Indian woman is famous for her loyalty / devotion as a wife to her husband (Sinta is not beguited by Rahwana's seduction).	Sinta, a contemporary Indian woman who has integrity.	Index
8	Modern dressed of Sinta (1)	Criticism of the economic situation in Indonesia is alarming	Behavior that is inversely proportional to today's women who easily exchange loyalty because of the economic crush	Metaphorical icons

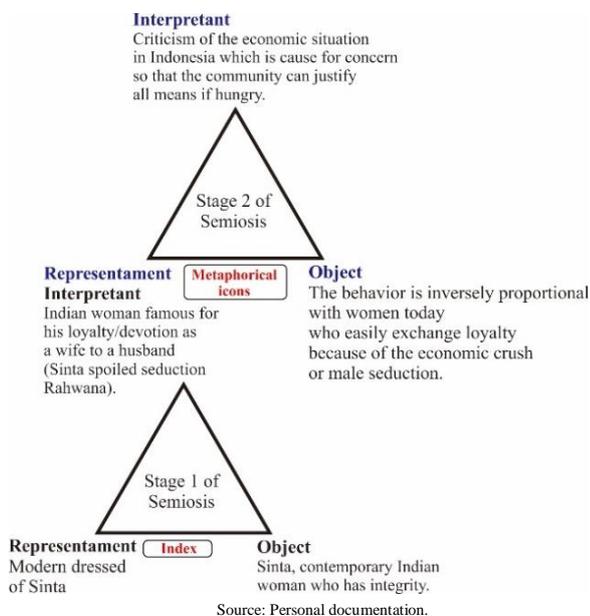


Fig. 4. Chart meaning of Sinta's clothes.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on research conducted by the author, the following conclusions are obtained:

Every artist has a creative courage that it is sourced from his environment and his frame of mind. The artist's work of Tawip in the realm of *wayang* is a response from environmental changes that prevent young people from appreciating the traditional arts of the archipelago. The frame of mind of academic artists also can raise socio-political issues as part of social criticism in their innovations. The issue that develops is relating to cases of corruption in government circles carried out by community leaders and the behavior of the women, younger generation or contemporary society that is increasingly

deviating from Islamic norms and eastern cultures. This is the message and meaning that appears in the symbols found in the main characters of the Tawip in Rahwayana's play: *Aku Lala Padamu*.

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