



# Creative Visualization of Wayang Combo for Counseling the Covid-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract.** In a priority dialectics, culture often occupies an extra position when dealing with two sectors that are considered main by the layman, namely the economy and health. Therefore, it is not surprising that cultural forms are increasingly biased and their essence is not seen with precision in the midst of a pandemic. For this reason, this study aims to 1) find out the strategy for visualizing wayang performances in the midst of a pandemic and 2) the character values contained in the Sanggar Unggul Pamenang combo puppet show as well as counseling on information related to COVID-19. This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to reveal the transformation of both the performance system and wayang stories as a form of adaptation that is studied descriptively. From the results of the field findings, the visualization of the puppet combo held by Sanggar Unggul Pamenang proved to be able to adjust the graphics of COVID-19 as well as the growing constellation of lips, either by changing the strategy of the performance or the wayang story. In addition, the wisdom contained in the wayang combo also teaches the public to always be optimistic that COVID-19 will end soon as the community adheres to health protocols. However, this effort will not run smoothly if it is carried out unilaterally by relying on responders in every performance. For this reason, collaboration is needed, for example from the Health Service or the Police Unit to jointly revive culture while simultaneously providing information on COVID-19 in the midst of a pandemic.

**Keywords:** wayang combo · covid-19 · creative visualization

## 1 Introduction

At the beginning of 2020 and even today, the world is still being forced to adapt to the emergence of the COVID-19 virus and all its related constellations. Although it is quite a long time for the corona virus to make friends with the world, this manifest problem cannot be considered as a common thing. This is definitely confirmed by the statement of the International Health Organization (WHO) which declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic or epidemic with a very fast transmission capacity, even if no country in the world can ensure that it is protected from the corona virus (WHO, 2020).

In response to this global epidemic, the Indonesian government issued a total PSBB policy or now better known as PPKM. Where, to be successful, various sanctions have

been designed in such a way for those who violate this policy, namely those who will be charged using Articles 212 and 218 of the Criminal Code, Article 14 of the 1984 Law on Outbreaks of Infectious Diseases and Article 93 of Law Number 6 of 2018 concerning Quarantine (Muhid, 2021).). If you criticize further, in the future a classic question will arise which asks the extent of the effectiveness of the policy. Considering economic reasons and many people complain that they are bored because the restrictions program that continues to be extended causes mobility violations to occur indefinitely. In this case, it is impossible that health protocols can be monitored effectively in every line of society. So public awareness itself is needed as a minimal form of contribution to breaking the COVID-19 chain.

Meanwhile, modern technology and information have succeeded in occupying an important position in people's daily lives. This is because various information that comes from various websites and applications such as Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, etc. As a friendly solution to the policy of limiting community activities. However, the latent problem that is no less critical must be considered again, namely the ambiguity of the continuity of cultural inheritance which will be a separate climax for the preservation of Indonesia's original culture. The public's perspective has been successfully transferred to the cultural euphoria that was popular at the time, such as western culture and is now changing its direction to k-pop idols. The implication is that the direction of some people, especially the younger generation, is easy to turn its axis to follow the trend so that not a few lose their identity.

Indeed, culture also deserves to be taken into account. This is supported by the statement of President Joko Widodo who said that humanists also have an important contribution during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely, apart from entertaining and creating works, they also work for the preservation of the culture of the archipelago so that it continues to exist in the community. For this reason, in order to harmonize stay at home policies but also reduce the impact of cultural bias, it is also important to transform culture so that it can adapt to current problems. One of them is the visualization of the puppet combo (flash and leather) that was once held by Sanggar Unggul Pamenang, on November 7, 2020. The purpose of holding this performance event is none other than to socialize health protocol policies in the form of wayang stories in which at the end of the story there is a lesson in life.

In general, if we look at the philosophy, wayang has always been used not only as a spectacle but also as a guide. The urgency is reflected in the successful spread of Islam in Java by means of wayang da'wah media, media that fueled the spirit of post-independence nationalism, using figures who lived at that time such as Ir. Soekarno, Drs. Moh Hatta and so on as revealed in Aprilia Siskawati's 2018 research entitled Wayang Suluh Madiun Years 1947–1965, as well as research entitled Wayang Suluh As a Learning Media in Teaching History in High School which was researched by Cahyo Budi Utomo, Syaiful Amin and Tiara Nove Ria, where this research was successful with 75% of respondents claiming to be very enthusiastic about the alternative concept of Wayang Suluh as a learning medium. So it is hoped that the information dissemination regarding COVID-19 will be successful with the performance. In addition, the meaning to be learned should also be able to restore the dignity of the original character of the Indonesian people who are known to be polite and cultured. With this performance, it

is certain that it will leave the impression that the stigma of wayang, which tends to be ancient and inferior to creative content with modern themes, can actually intersect peacefully by using the internet as a medium.

## **2 Research Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach that aims to describe the deep meaning of wayang suluh which can revive the existence of character value development for today's young generation as well as the continued efforts of Sanggar Unggul Pamenang in popularizing wayang suluh in the midst of the ongoing problems of COVID-19. The type of research that.

The method used is phenomenology where this research emphasizes the experience of cultural activists to carry out puppet transformation and visionary strategies from Sanggar Unggul Pamenang so that they can be used as fields of wisdom that can be learned in order to instill the character of the community in facing the pandemic. The subject of this research is Ki Dalang Fajar as the owner and founder of Sanggar Unggul Pamenang, while the object of the research is the visualization model of Sanggar Unggul Pamenang and the wisdom contained in the wayang story. In another case regarding data collection techniques, researchers use data triangulation consisting of observations, interviews and documentation, which are then analyzed by reducing and presenting data so that a conclusion can be drawn.

## **3 The Result**

As is well known, the reality is that the policy of restricting the community, whether in the form of socialization and preventive seminars or curatively disbanding crowds, has not touched the hearts of the people. This can be seen through cases of violations that continue to exist and even increase. Therefore, a cultural approach is needed in addition to socializing health protocols and the visionary hope that Indonesia will get out of the pandemic problem, it can also be used as cultural neutrality after almost 2 years of struggling in the world of technology and modernization. One of the platforms for cultural activists in the midst of a pandemic is Sanggar Unggul Pamenang which offers a mix of classic and contemporary stories to be developed in various puppet visualization revolutions.

## **4 Discussion**

### **4.1 Performance System**

Since the emergence of the COVID-19 virus in early 2020, almost half of the responders have been eliminated, resulting in the cancellation of the Pamenang Unggul performance jobdesk. The transfer of the way to tell the art of wayang from what was previously held manually to online puppets. Not only that, the audience and puppet partners are also limited to sindhen, niyaga, and funny interludes. This is because of limited capital, so

they have to rotate the performance partners. The impact is of course carrying out the 3M health protocol and social distancing. At this stage, responders such as Pacitan Vision Official, local government officials and large community events such as circumcision, village family planning events and so on. At this stage too, support from the ranks of the Democratic-based Pacitan political party also paid attention to the fate of Sanggar Unggul Pamenang culturalists through the performance of “Knitting Hearts in the Midst of a Pandemic”, with a note of compliance with the recommendations for handling COVID-19.

At the end of 2020 until now online wayang has evolved its name into a pure puppeteer based on the adaptation of wayang artists. This puppet show really relies on online media, namely streaming YouTube with a more limited duration and story. In addition, because this puppet is minimalistic and modest, then.

Of course, it also has an effect on wayang partners, such as the decreasing number of sindhens or at least only one, improvised niyaga and rarely using funny characters as usual.

In response to this, Sanggar Unggul Pamenang has conducted a poll on YouTube regarding plans for future content creation. The result is 64% campursari dangdut, 24% wayang and the remaining 13% add other comments. In addition, it can also be seen in the comments column of Fajar Combo’s Youtube Channel, especially regarding online puppets until they are called cilikmen, always getting public responses in the form of support, criticism and suggestions.

In fact, the visionary view of Ki Dalang Fajar as the owner, founder and activist of wayang culture will perform independent performances as a new culture of the puppetry scene, especially in Pacitan. Where there will be no puppet partners like niyaga, sindhen or funny figures, but only himself who performs puppet performances in the studio with makeshift tools. It doesn’t stop there, even Ki Dalang Fajar will be desperate to change the new culture of dalang’s clothing from beskap to PPE as proof of his dedication and criticism of his embarrassment over the endless pandemic.

## 4.2 Puppet Story

In addition to the system, the Sanggar Unggul Pamenang puppet story about the COVID-19 outbreak also developed depending on what was being said at the time. Ki Dalang Fajar is always optimistic that the wayang past, which succeeded in Islamizing Java and nationalizing P4 planting, can also be similar to the COVID-19 protocol.

The wayang which was held was a combo type where most of the stories depicted Mahabaratha by wayang kulit, there was also an interlude of wayang suluh as a critical manifestation of the complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic. The hope is that in addition to seeing the cultural perspective of handling COVID-19 and counseling efforts, it is also to always remind the dignity of the original culture of Indonesian wayang kulit.

For wayang suluh, depicted in Pringgodani Village with several contemporary characters such as village people, Otokuwek (people depicted wearing masks), and political party elites such as Edhy Baskoro Yudohoyono, Annisa Pohan and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. In an interview that was carried out, Ki Dalang Fajar admitted that he had held a puppet entitled “Knitting Hearts in the Middle of a Pandemic” which fully talked

about public complaints about COVID-19 and of course closed with an optimistic attitude that the pandemic would be over as long as they obeyed the protocol. This event was held on November 7, 2020, in collaboration with the ranks.

Local government and funded by Mas Ibas as Chairman of the DPR RI. This story revolves around two villagers who even forget the names of their neighbors because they have been at home for too long.

One of the figures named Kasirun complained that he was changing his profession from an organist to being a wood hauling driver belonging to his neighbor because of the demands of the household economy. In this case, his neighbors provide mental support and strengthen himself to remain optimistic that as long as he does his work while obeying the government, the pandemic will disappear from the archipelago. In addition, his neighbors also reminded him to always be sincere and entrust all these complexities to the people's representatives in the government because they do not remain silent seeing the condition of their citizens who are screaming for the economy. Here the government elite in question is the Democratic party, namely Edhy Baskoro, who has provided assistance in the form of basic necessities, internet quota for students and additional boats for fishermen in response to the COVID-19 situation.

Gradually, not only talking about government assistance but also developing issues at the time such as the appearance of the figure Doctor Tirta who would criticize the response to the COVID-19 conspiracy, corruption in social assistance funds, the pros/cons of the current vaccine and so on. The setting of the place taken remains the same, namely in Pringgodani Village because Ki Dalang Faja uses micro glasses from people who are critical of government policies. In addition, if you pay attention to the physical evolution of the Otokuwek puppet, it is also depicted that people who are obedient to wearing masks are interesting to take lessons from so that as a good society they always obey government policies. The hope of the story that continues to develop is nothing but to attract the audience with the intention of not only providing counseling, but also inviting critical thinking about the story issues that occurred at that time.

### **4.3 Character Values in Wayang Combo: A Winning Superior Effort**

When observed carefully, that every story that is narrated always contains the wisdom of character. Wayang Suluh is a manifestation of criticism of contemporary problems about how to be a good society in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although in a tight economic condition, the villagers described by Ki Dalang Fajar are always optimistic that by following the government's recommendations, the pandemic will quickly disappear from the archipelago. Meanwhile, the political elite of the party always supports the community to continue to develop the economy so that at least it will not be further affected by COVID-19 by giving.

Assistance in the form of basic necessities, boats for fishermen, internet quota and free wifi for students. Without eliminating the cultural heritage that becomes the artist's homework to be investigated, then the criticism of wayang suluh is combined with wayang kulit. The wayang kulit stories are described as classics such as Mahabaratha with the titles of the play Gathokaca Born, the play Bagong Naggap Electone, Duryudhono Repentance Puntodewo Kumat and so on.

## 5 Conclusion

As is well known, the reality is that the policy of restricting the community, whether in the form of socialization and preventive seminars or curatively disbanding crowds, has not touched the hearts of the people. For that we need a cultural approach in the form of wayang which is used as a preventive socialization media for COVID-19 which can at the same time restore the cultural dignity of the Indonesian people. In keeping up with the times, Sanggar Unggul Pamenang has made many adaptations, both regarding performance strategies and wayang stories that are able to provide lessons for reflection. However, cooperation between the government, security units, the health service and the community is certainly needed to make the development of this wayang culture a success.

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