



# Social Issues Reflected in Performances Wayang Beber Kota The story of "*Suluk Banyu*" by Dani Iswardana

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**Abstract.** So far the Wayang Beber story has always been attached to the epic meeting of Dewi Sekartaji and Panji Asmarabangun. This affects the narrative of Wayang Beber's stories in the end monotonous and boring. Many efforts have been made to contemporary wayang, one of them is by modifying wayang stories that describe the circumstances of people's lives. Wayang Beber Kota tells stories that address current issues. This research will analyze the social problems reflected in Wayang Beber Kota's performance of the play "*Suluk Banyu*". The qualitative methods with a descriptive approach were used to examine this research. Dialogue between characters, puppeteer monologues, and various other related components are used as primary data sources and interviews as secondary data sources. The findings from the results of this research study WBK's Social Problems The play "*Suluk Banyu*" is divided into several points, namely economic problems (including problems implement poverty alleviation and people's welfare programs), political problems (including problems with bribery, abuse of power), social problems (including poverty, the gap between the authorities and the general public)

**Keywords :** Social Problems, Wayang Beber Kota, Suluk Banyu

## 1 Introduction

Wayang have been around for so long that today, in fact, many people still enjoy them, showing how meaningful the existence of wayang is for people's lives . Wayang is not only known as a medium of entertainment but also as a medium of guidance for the community, which is more specifically a medium for channeling and delivering community aspirations as a message of development to the government, while from a horizontal perspective, wayang performances contain messages as a medium for conveying ideas, social control and instilling values. value to society. So wayang is not only a medium of entertainment, but in the abstract or ideological realm, wayang performances can instill values in them [1]. Wayang can be said to be a work of art that is inseparable from social life because art is born from mediations between individuals, groups, and communities at certain times and has genetic, archaeological, theological, symbolic, aesthetic, and even imaginative characteristics. Its universal characteristics

are closely related to certain universal aspirations [2]. It could be said that wayang performances are believed to be a symbolic language of people's lives. Everyone who sees the wayang seems to see a mirror. Therefore, plays performed by puppeteers have a significant relationship to the socio-cultural background of society. Usually, each play reflects the lives of the wayang characters in certain events that resemble real people's lives. This description gives the meaning that Wayang plays represent every life that occurs in society. Plays presented by wayang puppeteers are considered symbolic expressions with artistic and aesthetic considerations [3].

Talking about roles play, there is an identical play that tells the romantic story of a pair of lovers, Panji Asmarabangun and Galuh Candrakirana, which is Wayang Beber. As a performing art, wayang beber is rarely found, in contrast to wayang kulit which can be said to still be developing in people's lives. This can be seen from the cultural narrative of wayang beber which is still strongly attached to the shadows of the mystical or occult world, one of which is that a wayang beber puppeteer is not permitted to do any deviation from the wayang beber story, whether adding to, changing or subtracting from the narrative of the story, so that so far, as we have seen, the plays in wayang beber performances always tell the story of Panji, such as the wayang beber play *Joko Kembang Kuning* and the wayang beber play *Remeg Mangunjaya*. Making Wayang Beber performances is considered boring by society. Seeing the reality of what happened to revive the Wayang Beber show, one of them is modifying the Wayang Beber story with a story concept that talks about current issues that are close to people's lives. One of them is the Wayang Beber Kota community by Dani Iswardana. Wayang beber Kota carries the concept of transforming traditional wayang beber into contemporary wayang beber whose story content discusses the phenomena of social, political, environmental, and cultural issues that are occurring at this time.

The Wayang Beber Kota play which discusses contemporary issues, and is quite interesting, is *Suluk Banyu*. The concept of the play *Suluk Banyu* was born from the creator's experience of capturing the phenomenon of privatization of springs that occurred in one of the rural areas. Then Dani Iswardana thought about this phenomenon into an idea that was illustrated in the form of a wayang beber work. The abundance of spring water resources that should belong to the community can be enjoyed free of charge, but it turns out to be a field for business people who are trying to monopolize the water springs. A similar incident that occurred several months ago in 2023 in Klaten, Central Java was quoted from the news source *Republik Merdeka*. Hundreds of community members sued the branded mineral water factory company. The community is contesting the fate of their welfare and demanding the impacts they have experienced so far (Anhari, Nusantara Nusantara Homepage, <https://nusantara.rmol.id/read/2023/03/17/567416/tidak-menyejahterakan-pabrik-aqua-di-klaten-didemo-warga>, last accessed 2023/11/27).

The emergence of mineral water companies aims to build business fields by utilizing spring water sources in rural areas where problems will arise starting from the limited availability of spring water sources which can previously be enjoyed unlimitedly by the community for their daily needs and rice field irrigation needs. is limited because the supply of spring water is prioritized as raw material for the production of mineral water companies.

Wayang Beber Kota, the play Suluk Banyu, consists of 4 actors in it. The first Jagong narrates a picture of the activities of rural communities in general, such as gardening, cooking with wood stoves, plowing fields, bathing together in rivers, and the activities of people flocking to rivers and springs to take advantage of the springs around them. Then the second jagong discussed various problems that occurred in villages due to industrialization activities in their area. The play tells of the actions of the village leader who wants to sell the community's spring water to a mineral water company businessman. The third Jagong raises problems that arise from the impact of this phenomenon, starting from people whose activities are disrupted due to access to irrigation in villages where to get the water resources they need, farmers must be willing to buy or rent water pumps to dig their fields. Finally, the fourth jagong tells the end of the play in which it is narrated that the people can no longer stand the impact they are feeling. Demonstrations broke out and caused peak anger due to the impact of this phenomenon.

Based on the description above, the main thread of this research aims to examine the representation of social problems reflected in the play Suluk Banyu. The play Suluk Banyu is the material object in this research because it represents social problems that occur around us which are communicated in the frame of everyday language (symbols and their meanings). Thus, to reach the conclusion stage, this paper will be studied using a semiotic approach as an analytical tool.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

The study of reading signs and how those signs work is the definition of semiotics. Epistemologically, the origin of semiotics is from the word semiotics which comes from the Greek word "semeion" meaning sign [4]. Signs are tools used to find a way in human life. Semiotics studies signs and how to study how these signs work [5]. Thus, semiotics talks about the science that studies signs and everything related to them. The main ideas of the basic concepts of semiotics are signs and symbols. The first concept of a sign in semiotics indicates a stimulus which then becomes a sign as a description of some other condition. The second concept is symbols. In a very special approach, symbols are markers for signs whose conditions are still complex and have many meanings [6].

**Table 1.** Map Semiotika Roland Bartehs

<i>Signifier</i> (Penanda)	<i>Denotative sign</i> (Tanda denotatif)
<i>Signified</i> (Petanda)	
<i>Connotative Signifier</i> (Penanda Konotatif)	<i>Connotative sign</i> (Tanda Konotatif)
<i>Connotative Signified</i> (Petanda Konotatif)	

Sumber: Semiotika Komunikasi (Sobur, 2006)

Based on Roland Barthes' description of the semiotic map, it can be seen that the denotative consists of two elements, namely the signifier and the signified. However,

in this process, the position of the denotation mark also becomes a connotation marker. In other words, what is meant is the material element. The sign referred to in Roland Barthes' concept does not just have additional meaning, but contains both parts of the underlying sign (Sobur, 2006:69).

Puppet performances are an art that is rich in symbols. These symbols are reflected in the physical appearance of the wayang characters or the storyline being told. Therefore, to analyze this research, a special method is needed that focuses on studying signs or symbols. This article will use Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. The Denotative and Connotative approach from Roland Barthes' semiotics is an approach to reading the cultural values created in the Wayang Beber Kota performance with the play Suluk Banyu by Dani Iswardana.

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### **3 Research Methods**

The type of research used in this research is a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of a framework interpretation/theoretical that shapes or influences the study of the research area related to the meaning imposed by an individual or group on a problem social or human [7]. In this case, qualitative research is understood as a research methodology that states or interprets in the form of sentences, narratives, and descriptions and reveals a particular and absolute social phenomenon. Dialogue between characters, mastermind monologues, and various other related components are used as primary data sources and interviews as secondary data sources.

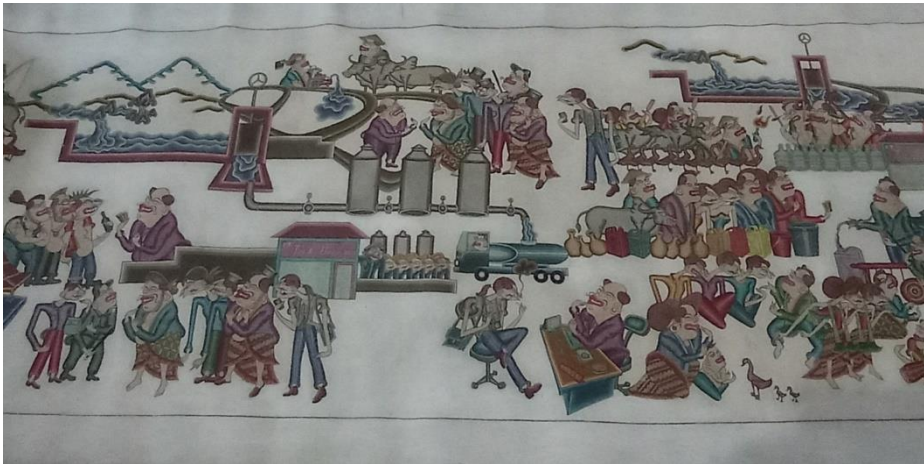
## **4 Findings and Discussions**

### **4.1 Wayang Beber Kota Lakon Suluk Banyu**

Every story (play) presented in Wayang so far tells about heroic plays by Wayang characters with good characters who play a role in eradicating crime/fighting evil. It might be said that in modern society, watching wayang is something that tends to be boring because the stories (acts) are monotonous. If you look at wayang stories (plays) as a medium that can convey or channel messages/messages and criticism, they describe the problems that occur. Nowadays many wayang plays have been modified, this is simply to revive this traditional art.

The plays in Wayang usually talk about current issues, such as issues that are close to social, cultural, political, and environmental issues. According to Soekanto (2012), social problems or social problems are a situation of incompatibility between culture or

society that may signal danger to the life of a social group or hinder the fulfillment of the social group's ideals. Talking about social problems, there are various kinds, such as poverty, poverty, education, and economic poverty. Meanwhile, if you look at wayang stories (plays) as a medium that can convey or convey messages/messages and criticism that describes the problems that occur. One of them can be seen in the work of Wayang Beber Kota, the play Suluk Banyu.



**Fig. 1.** Stills from the “Suluk Banyu” play.

The play Suluk Banyu is a work produced by the Wayang Beber Kota community which was first performed in 2015. As previously explained, the concept of the Wayang Beber Kota story is to discuss various problems experienced by society today. The play Suluk Banyu in Wayang Beber Kota provides a clear picture of the social problems experienced by society today. In general, Suluk Banyu tells the story of the phenomenon of the issue of privatization of water sources in which Wayang Beber Kota displays the main characters representing the characters of government figures, entrepreneurs, and young men.

The classification of symbols for the main characters of the play Suluk Banyu from Wayang Beber Kota:

Agung PW	A branch director of PT Tirta Durjana who uses all means to seize the water source of Kotakan
Lurah Karso	The Head of Kotakan Village was elected because of political games, namely money politics and dawn attacks.
Ganjar	An unemployed young man who is persistent in voicing social criticism of problems the inequality of the small people and the inequality of life that occurs in the village.
Yu Ponirah	Coffee shop seller
Adam	The Karso sub-district head's right-hand man who distributes money as a dawn attack and money politics

## 4.2 Synopsis of the play Suluk Banyu

The common thread of the play Suluk Banyu tells the story of anarchist acts done by the lower-class residents of Kotakan Village as a result of the impact of the government's "greedy" attitude which prioritizes power without caring about the interests of the small people. The residents of Kotakan Village held a demonstration because the water source from Telaga Kahuripan was taken over by the PT Company. Tirta Durjana driven by Agung PW. Long story short, Agung PW bribed the Karso Village Head, a crazy Kotakan Village leader, with money games (corruption). The Head of Karso Village permitted Agung PW because he had already pocketed some money for him to enjoy himself. Hearing rumors about this story, Ganjar then went to the Karso Village Head to cancel the plan, but this effort did not bear fruit because the Karso Village Head Agung PW and their followers continued to do their action. The ending of Suluk Banyu's play ends in an eruption of anarchy with the people of Kotakan Village expressing their disappointment by burning down the village building.

## 4.3 Representation of Social Problems in the Play Suluk Banyu

### The Political Problem of Suluk Banyu Play

#### Dialogue 1

*Adam : (drinking coffee in the cafe) To be a leader should be able to protect the people, establish the foundation of justice, and truth, and fight for the people. Because people who act well can be an example of my number one leader.*

*Yu Ponirah : Well, until yesterday Mr. Karso became a prayer imam*

*Adam : Well, it is said that a leader must be able to become an imam, lead people in prayer, or whatever the priest of the people of the village.*

*Somad : It's important to know that I don't have money, I'll have a lot of money later that I did not vote*

*Adam : Well, if it's calm, don't worry. Mr. Karso is guaranteed that he is a philanthropist.*

*Ganjar : What does Mr. Karso mean by giving one hundred thousand to the people?*

*Adam : Look, you're a pie to Njar, you missed this information. This money is for paying off your debt to Yu Ponirah. Mr. Karso is a philanthropist who has not become a person.*

## Dialogue 2

*Lurah Karso : One more than one Jar,*

*Ganjar : Reward One plus one or two*

*Lurah Karso : One plus one, if you are like two people, it means you are stupid, one plus one means two, four, five*

*Ganjar : Ooo.... Indeed, the headman is not healthy because the people are unhealthy. This is causing trouble to the small people, not caring about the needs of the people, and even selling the water source in Tirta Durjana. SaidThe government is trusted, why are the people betrayed by this?*

*Meaning Connotation*

Based on the presentation of the first dialogue, it was explained that there was a free distribution of money from a candidate for village head named Karso. The distribution was done by Adam to people who were coming to the coffee shop and in the second dialogue it was about *Siji tambah Siji dadi loro papat karo limo* which indicated the dishonesty of the Karso village head.

*Denotation Meaning*

The situation in the dialogue illustrates the practice of bribery and money politics done by the Karso Village Head to win the Village Head election and the involvement in the bribery case involving selling the Kahuripan Lake water source.

**Social Problems of the Play Suluk Banyu**

## Dialogue 1

*Ganjar : They say that the government requires 12 years of schooling, but for me, it is not compulsory to go to school, because I am poor and have no money. I want to do it, but it's like my fate.*

*Yu Ponirah : Don't forget that this is your fate, it's your fault that you were born as a manpoverty is now more and more complaining when looking for a job there*

*Ganjar : Is this a pie for you? If I can choose, I must not choose to be a poor person, I want to be the son of a general*

*Meaning Connotation*

Dropping out of school is a sign of a social situation experienced by someone who is forced not to continue their education due to the economic inability to pay for education.

*Meaning Denotation*

From the dialogue, it is explained that the duty of school education for 12 years is something that cannot be fulfilled by a Ganjar who eventually drops out of school because he was born into a poor family and lives in a village where most villagers do not attach much importance to what is called 12 years of compulsory education according to with government policy.

### **Economic problems of the play Suluk Banyu.**

Dialogue 1

*Yu Ponirah : You have to pay this day, you have a lot of debt!*

*Ganjar : Don't pay everything now, I don't have enough money, I'll pay you tomorrow, I'm hungry right now*

*Lek Paidi : Ooooo Jar, why do you like to borrow money, if you have to borrow money here, I'll be the one to pay it.*

*Meaning Connotation*

Describes the poverty situation as a situation where the economy is insufficient to meet needs resulting from the government's failure to implement poverty alleviation and people's welfare programs. It can be seen from the dialogue scene between Ganjar and Yu Ponirah, who often borrows money here and there so he can eat and drink (*Jar, this day you have to pay, your debt is very much*)

*Denotation Meaning*

From the presentation of the dialogue, it can be seen that Ganjar has not been able to pay off his debts because he does not have enough money to pay the debts because he comes from poor people who do not have much wealth and just to eat and drink, Ganjar has to be willing to borrow here and there.

## **5 Conclusion**

Based on the analysis that has been described, this scientific paper can conclude that the social problems are reflected in the Wayang Beber Kota performance of the play Suluk Banyu by Dani Iswardana using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, several answers are put forward that show several current problematic issues. In the play, Suluk Banyu represents social problems including political problems, social problems, and economic problems experienced by the people of Kotalakan Village. These signs and symbols are conveyed through dialogue delivered by the city's wayang beber characters and storylines that represent a picture of the daily nature of society with all its problems.



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