



Social Criticism in *Wayang Kulit Purwa* Performance by Purbo Asmoro, Study of Interpretation (*Sanggit*) and Treatment (*Garap*)

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Abstract

This study intends to examine *wayang kulit purwa* performances [from Central Java] of the plays *Réyog Ponorogo* and *Sang Batara Sambo "Prahara Suralaya,"* created by Purbo Asmoro (2022). Both of these works are fascinating to study because in addition to the fact that they are allusions to topical conflicts [in Indonesia] presented in the form of social commentary, the structure and texture of these performances differ from the treatment of *wayang purwa* performances in general. This problem is studied based on the ethnoart paradigm, using the Interpretation (*Sanggit*) and Treatment (*Garap*) Theories and critical analysis. Research data was collected through literature studies, documentation studies, and interviews. The results of the study show that the social criticism revealed in *lakon Réyog Ponorogo* is blatant, while the social criticism in *lakon Sang Batara Sambo "Prahara Suralaya"* as a whole is equivocal, but in the closing scene it is blatant. In creating a 'new' *lakon*, the *dalang* must master various references—both written and spoken—which will later be used as hipogram texts, interpret various hypogram texts into a story, and translate them into *lakon wayang*. The artistic ability of the *dalang* greatly influences the quality of *wayang* performances, the ability of the *dalang* to choose the elements of *pakeliran* treatment to be highlighted in each scene, the *dalang's* ability to organize the performance supporting team, and the ability of the *dalang* to read the situation of the audience.

Keywords: *wayang kulit purwa*; Purbo Asmoro; social criticism; interpretation and treatment

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INTRODUCTION

Wayang kulit purwa performances (hereafter referred to simply as *pakeliran*) occur in specific contexts in society and do not stand alone as art-for-art's-sake like theater performances do. This is why the story for performance is chosen from a repertory of *lakon* that fits the needs of the sponsor, who may be observing a life-cycle event such as the birth of a baby, a circumcision, a wedding, or a death. For

the purpose of marking the week or bulan after the birth of a baby, *dalang* usually take the *lakon* from the catalogue of stories concerning the birth of a *wayang* character (*lairan*). For the purpose of a circumcision, the story is taken from a repertory of *lakon* concerning the coming-of-age amulets granted to humans by the gods (*wahyu*). For the purpose of a wedding, the *lakon* comes from the repertory concerning marriages (*rabèn*). For the commemoration of someone's death, the *lakon* will concern

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a character's willful rising up to the heavens to end their life (*muksa*) (Murtiyoso & Suratno, 1992).

Hence, we can surmise that even though the main sources of stories in *wayang* are the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, not all *lakon* are taken from [the Indian versions of] these epics. Much of the *lakon* repertory in *wayang* comes from works created by *dalang* themselves, which in Javanese *dalang* circles are called *carangan*. New Javanese-created *lakon* that still fall within the context of the Indian *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*, or the *Pustaka Raja Purwa* by Ranggawarsita (Poerbatjaraka, 1964, pp. 151-157) are referred to as *carang dhinapur*, while new *lakon* that are entirely separate from the three sources above are referred to as *sempalan* (Feinstein et al., 1986). Further, (Poerbatjaraka, 1964, pp. 151-157) states that even much of *Pustaka Raja Purwa* by Ranggawarsita, which is the main source for the Javanese performance community, came from local *dalang*'s versions of stories back then.

Often, the *lakon* does not come from the repertory a *dalang* has prepared but is determined on a request by the hiring party in the moments before the performance begins. This happened at a performance by the *Dalang Anom Soeroto* for an event at which the sponsoring party asked for *Wahyu Tunjung Sanga* (*The Nine Lotus Flowers Amulet*). In fact, this *lakon* does not exist in the repertory. In such a situation, the *dalang* has to create the story on the spot, on stage (interview with Anom Soeroto, 1 May 2021). One of many reasons behind so many *wahyu* stories always popping up in the Central Javanese repertory – for example *Wahyu Tohjali*, *Wahyu Cengkir Gadhing*, *Wahyu Hidayat Jati*, *Wahyu Legundhi Wulung*, *Wahyu Katentreman*, to name a few (Feinstein et al., 1986) – is that these types of stories are believed to bring good fortune to the sponsor (Murtiyoso & Suratno, 1992).

In the New Order Era, *wayang* shows occurred not only due to the needs of the general public but were also put on by governmental institutions that frequently

sponsored *wayang* performances. In response to this development, the repertory of *lakon* used for such performances fit the needs of the government sponsors at that time. A few of the *lakon* with political messages that propped up the power of the New Order regime was, to name a few, *Wahyu Waringin Kencana* (*The Gift of the Golden Ficus Tree*), *Darma Bakti Putra Pandhawa* (*The Pandhawa Children's Devotion*) (Van Groenendael, 1987, pp. 204-205), and *Semar mBabar Jatidhiri* (*Semar Lays Out His True Intent*) (Darmoko, 2020).

The concept of sorting *wayang* stories by theme was proposed in the research by (Murtiyoso & Suratno, 1992), with the categories that follow. Based on the titles of *lakon*, there are ten types of *lakon*, that is: the birth of a character (*lairan*), the marriage of a character (*rabèn*), competition over a female character (*alap-alapan*), the death of a character in battle (*gugur* or *léna*), the building of a something (*mbangun*), the coronation of a king (*jumenengan*), the granting of a boon, amulet, or power (*wahyu*), the title being the name of a character (for example, *Ngruna-Ngruni*, *Mumpuni*, *Watugunung*, and the like), the events of a character's life from birth to death (*banjaran*), and an emissary from one country to another (*duta*).

When sorted according to important event types instead, there are nine types of *wayang* stories, which are: a travesty committed by one character upon another (*paé-kan*), an attack or rebellion (*kraman*), a love story (*asmara*), a search for the meaning of life (*wirid*), an apprenticeship (*ngèngèr*), a character's transformation to a different form (*kilatbuwanan*), a large battle with many victims (*prang ageng*), the movement of a number of figures from one place to another (*boyong*) and allusions to specific topical events (*pasemon*) (Murtiyoso & Suratno, 1992, pp. 49-75).

Of these nine types of *lakon* based on important events and laid out in the work of (Murtiyoso & Suratno, 1992), the *lakon pasemon* (allusion) featuring social criticism and commentary did not exist from the New Order through the beginning of the Reformation Era. This type of allusi-

on-based, social commentary only arose again in 2021 at the hands of Purbo Asmoro. Against the backdrop of the Covid-19 which had been going on since 2 March 2020, Purbo Asmoro created two new stories alluding to the situation during the pandemic, *lakon Semar Namba (Semar Heals)* (24 July 2021) and *Tamba Teka Lara Lunga (Remedy Shows Up, Malady Gives Up)* (28 September 2021).

Ever since then, Purbo Asmoro's creativity through new *lakon* flowed nonstop. This was seen again when *gamelan* was declared to be an Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO on 15 December 2021 (*Tempo*, 2021), and Purbo Asmoro created a new *lakon* with the title *Dumadiné Gamelan (The Mythical Origin of the Gamelan)* (22 January 2022). The controversy as to whether or not *wayang* was "haram" after Ustadz Khalid Zeed Abdullah Basalamah's statements (*Detikcom*, 2022), was met with another new *lakon* entitled *Wayang Urip (Wayang Flourishes)* (27 February 2022).

When there was an uproar over the village performance tradition of *réyog* from Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia being claimed by Malaysia as their own, the *lakon* entitled *Réyog Ponorogo (Réyog from Ponorogo)* was created (15 April 2022). Also, when the murder of Brigadir Nofriansyah Yosua Hutabarat by Irjen Polisi Ferdy Sambo received serious attention by the current Indonesian leader, President Joko Widodo, the *lakon* entitled *Sang Batara Sambo "Prahara Suralaya" (The Great God Sambo "Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens")* (24 August 2022) was created. All of these new works by Purbo Asmoro were live-streamed over Purbo Asmoro Official on YouTube.

Based on the titles of the *lakon* and the conflicts they address, the performances of *Réyog Ponorogo* (hereafter referred to by in English as *Réyog from Ponorogo*) and *Sang Batara Sambo "Prahara Suralaya"* (hereafter referred to in English as *The Great God Sambo "Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens"*) are the two social-commentary *lakon* the most interesting to analyze. These are interesting not simply because of the topical events issues addressed, but also because the titles

themselves exude blatant social critique. In addition, the performances' structure and texture differ from the styles of *wayang* performances in general.

Lakon wayang which contains social criticism, has indeed been composed by Boedihardjo (The Minister of Information in 1968–1973) with the title *Salya Bégal*. This *lakon* was first presented by Manteb Soedharsono in 1996 to celebrate Boedihardjo's 75th birthday. Even so, the social criticism conveyed is not as clear as the *lakon Réyog Ponorogo* and *Sang Batara Sambo "Prahara Suralaya"* by Purbo Asmoro.

Many previous researchers have carried out research on *wayang* performances, but no one has researched it based on the theory of interpretation and innovation. Kats analyzed the catalog of *wayang* stories and the manner in which they are organized (Kats, 1923); Brandon discussed the *lakon Rama Nitisa, Irawan Rabi, Karna Tandhing* and performance practice at the time (Brandon, 1970); Becker looked at the stories and plots of *wayang* (Becker, 1979); Feinstein et al. discussed the concept and repertory of what are known as *lakon carangan* (Feinstein et al., 1986); Murtiyoso dan Suratno discussed the repertory of *wayang* stories prevalent over the five years previous to their publication in the Surakarta area (Murtiyoso & Suratno, 1992); and Sears addressed the differences in interpretation of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* during the time of Indian, Islamic, Western, and post-colonial influences (Sears, 1996).

Triyogo dan Wiryamartana discussed the inter-textuality of the *lakon Banjaran Gathutkaca* (Triyogo & Wiryamartana, 2001); Kayam wrote about changes in the structure of the world of Javanese *dalang* and *wayang* due to the interest in *wayang* by the New Order (Kayam, 2001); Junaidi examines the symbolic meaning of the *wayang kulit purwa lakon Salya Bégal*, as a form of communication between the art house community and Boedihardjo (Junaidi, 2003); Murtiyoso discussed the development of *lakon* (Murtiyoso B et al., 2004); Nugroho discussed the interpretation and

treatment of *lakon banjaran* (Nugroho, 2012, 2015); Kathryn Anne Emerson discussed the innovations and performance practice of Purbo Asmoro (Emerson, 2017; Emerson, 2022); Wibowo, Priyatna, and Sobarna discussed modifications to the traditional art of *Wayang Topeng Malangan* which had long been developed in Malang City, East Java (Wibowo, Priyatna, & Sobarna, 2019); Darmoko discussed the sections on power in the story *Semar mBabar Jatidhiri* (Darmoko, 2020); and Widyastutieningrum and Herdiani discussed the innovations in the form of the *Sriwedari Wayang Orang* performance in Surakarta (Widyastutieningrum & Herdiani, 2023).

Although research on Purbo Asmoro's performance style has been discussed by Nugroho (2012) and Emerson (2017; 2022), both of them did not discuss the work of *lakon Réyog Ponorogo* and *Sang Batara Sambo "Prahara Suralaya."* Likewise, even though social criticism in wayang performances has been studied (Junaidi, 2003) and (Darmoko, 2020), the *lakon* studied is different from the object of this research. Thus, this research is original.

METHODS

This research uses the ethnoart paradigm, which views a creative work from a stakeholder's perspective within that culture (Ahimsa-Putra, 2003). The analysis of the two *lakon pasemon* by Purbo Asmoro utilizes the theories of *sanggit* (interpretation) and *garap* (treatment) laid out by (Nugroho, 2012). *Sanggit* is the creative work of a *dalang*, and can refer to a brand new work but also a new interpretation for an existing work. *Garap* is the implementation or treatment by which the desired interpretation is carried out by the *dalang* and his team, to reach the aspired quality of performance.

The main aspects of *Sanggit* Theory in *wayang* include examining the structure of the story, the intertextuality, the relationships between characters and their roles in the story, the themes of the story, and the messages or food for thought em-

bedded within the *lakon* (Nugroho, 2012, pp. 48–55). The main aspects of *Garap* Theory include the producer, the tools and equipment, the elements in performance, the form of performance, the conceptor, and considerations (Supanggih, 2009; Nugroho, 2012, pp. 425–428). Interpretation and treatment within the *pasemon lakon* creations by Purbo Asmoro are also analyzed using the critical methods of Feldman (Feldman, 1967), and the concepts of Javanese *dalang* and *wayang* studies (Sumanto, 2002).

The research data was gathered through literature studies, documentation studies, and interviews. The literature study focused on books and manuscripts that served as primary sources for the two *lakon* mentioned. The documentation studies involved analysis of the *wayang* performances of *Réyog from Ponorogo* and *The Great God Sambo "Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens"* on the YouTube channel "Purbo Asmoro Official," on 15 April 2022 and 24 August 2022 respectively. Interviews were conducted with Purbo Asmoro, other *dalang*, and commentators in the field of *wayang*. The analysis of the data was conducted in stages: choosing and filtering the data, presenting the data, and drawing conclusions from the data (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interpretation of the *Lakon: Réyog from Ponorogo*

The structure of the *lakon Réyog Ponorogo* is binary, composed of two layers. The structure of the first layer is in three parts: (a) a *réyog* parade, (b) the debate between two characters who both claim *réyog* as their own, and (c) the scene with an elder mentor (*warok*) telling the village of Wengker about the history of *réyog*. The second layer is structured as a series of conversations and battles concerning the history of *réyog* in Ponorogo. The structure of the first layer of *lakon* (marked with numbers) and the structure of the second layer (marked with letters) are presented below:

Prologue

A *réyog* parade: *jathil* (are young cavalry, either young women, or young men with an effeminate look), Bujang Ganong (a thin, young, male, the leader of King Klana's troop who performs acrobatic moves), Klana (is the antagonist archetype king in *réyog* culture and other East Javanese stories, who kidnaps the archetype refined princess of the main court), and *dhadhak merak* (is a huge mask depicting a mythical lion wearing a headdress of peacock feathers, known as Singa Barong).

A debate between two characters who both claim *réyog* as their own (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Two characters both claim *réyog* as belonging to their culture (screenshot, Purbo Asmoro Official, 2022)

Scene in Wengker Hermitage: This begins with the apprentices in Wengker Hermitage practicing supranatural self-defense skills, followed by a warok (an old mentor or trainer in the context of a traditional apprenticeship who offers various types of learning philosophical, spiritual, or skill-related) instructs his students. The warok tells the story of the origin of *réyog* to his students (see Figure 2).

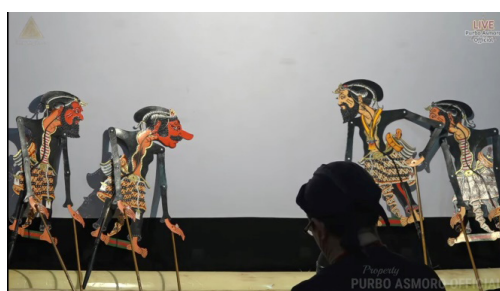


Figure 2. The Scene in Wengker Hermitage (screenshot, Purbo Asmoro Official, 2022)

“Outside the Audience Hall” scene in Bantarangin: A senior member of the court, together with defense minister Bujang Ganong, discusses the deteriorating economic situation in Bantarangin Kingdom. The king only thinks of his need to travel to other kingdoms and develop his spiritual power. They decide that as senior members of the court, they need to try to get a handle on this problem.

b. Scene in the Kingdom of Bantarangin: Defense Minister Bujang Ganong advises King Klana Sewandana to marry soon to assure the longevity of his rule. After some discussion, Klana Sewandana orders Bujang Ganong to apply for Dewi Sanggalangit's hand in marriage on his behalf. She is the princess of Kadiri Kingdom.

“Outside the Audience Hall” scene in Bantarangin: Bujang Ganong and his troops depart for Kadiri Kingdom.

In the public square of Kadiri fierce battles erupt between soldiers from a number of kingdoms, who are all competing for the hand of Sanggalangit. The princess tries to stop the battles while putting forward the conditions for both sides to fulfill. The requirement is in the form of a new performing art called *réyog*.

Scene in Lodaya Kingdom: King Singa Barong has fallen in love with Sanggalangit, but doesn't have the courage to ask for her hand in marriage because he is afraid to be in competition with Klana Sewandana. Hence, he orders Minister Singa Premada to kidnap Sanggalangit.

“Outside the Audience Hall” scene in Lodaya: Singa Premada departs for Kadiri, accompanied by an army of animal troops.

Intermezzo: Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong (dressed in costumes the style of Ponorogo, East Java) talk about *réyog* performances.

Scene in the middle of the forest: Sanggalangit explains to Semar that she has left the kingdom of Kadiri because she does not wish to marry anyone. If it happens that one of the applicants is able to fulfill her requests, the marriage will go

ahead only in name and only to preserve peace in the Kadiri Kingdom.

Sanggalangit's younger brother crosses paths with the Lodaya troops and battles ensue. After the troops flee, he meets with Sanggalangit.

Scene in the middle of the forest: Klana Sewandana meditates, asking for guidance from the gods to fulfill Sanggalangit's requests. His meditation is disrupted by a serpent, who transforms and turns into a priest. Klana Sewandana is given a whip known as *samandiman* or *wuluh gadhing* (ivory wool) and also 144 handsome youths on horseback, all in uniform.

Half of the horsemen youths are kidnapped by Singa Premada and guided toward Lodaya Kingdom.

Scene in the Kingdom of Lodaya: After Singa Barong receives the handsome youth calvary, he departs for Kadiri.

Klana Sewandana receives a report from Bujang Ganong concerning the loss of some of the horsemen. Bujang Ganong meditates so that the portion of the calvary that was deported to Lodaya will return.

In the middle of their travels, the troops from Lodaya cross paths with those from Bantarangin. Battles ensue. Klana Sewandana defeats Singa Barong with the *samandiman* whip (see Figure 3). Singa Barong is ordered to accompany Klana Sewandana on his travels back to Kadiri.

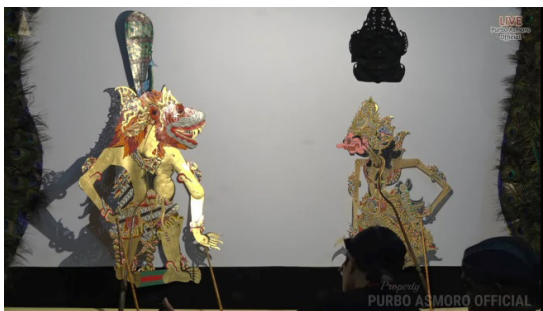


Figure 3. Klana Sewandana (right) faces off with Singa Barong (left) (screenshot, Purbo Asmoro Official, 2022)

Scene in the Wengker Hermitage: In the end, the *warok* explains that there are a number of versions of the *Réyog Ponorogo*

outcome: (a) Klana Sewandana succeeds in marrying Sanggalangit but then later they split up, (b) Klana Sewandana is given yet another condition, that he must build a kind of tunnel, and he succeeds, (c) Klana Sewandana perishes in the tunnel that he builds. Then the *warok* explains the philosophy behind the village tradition of *Réyog Ponorogo*.

A parade of *Réyog from Ponorogo* figures, consisting of *warok*, *jathil*, Bujang Ganong, Klana, *dhadhak merak*, and musicians (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. A parade of *Réyog Ponorogo* figures (screenshot, Purbo Asmoro Official, 2022)

This structure of scenes satisfies the concepts required by traditional Javanese *wayang* studies known as *tutug*, *kempel*, and *mulih* (Sumanto, 2002). *Tutug* means that the story presented comes to a resolution that is in accordance with its title. In this case *Réyog from Ponorogo*. *Kempel* means that the scenes are closely intertwined and connected. *Mulih* means that the conflicts in the story are resolved; the performance starts with a *réyog* parade and ends with a *réyog* parade, the story starts with a scene in the Wengker Hermitage and a discussion of the origin of *Réyog Ponorogo*, and it ends with a scene in Wengker Hermitage that explains the significance of *Réyog Ponorogo*.

The structure of the *lakon Réyog from Ponorogo* is linear, and the impression is that it follows the conventional scene structure of Surakarta-style *wayang* performances and *wayang gedhog* performances [is a type of *wayang* using flat shadow puppets like *wayang kulit purwa* but telling the stories of the Javanese legendary figure Panji

instead of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*] in particular, that is: a scene in the outer audience hall of Bantarangin (*paséban jawi*), a palace scene (*jejer kraton*) in Bantarangin, an outer audience hall scene (*paséban jawi*) in Bantarangin that continues into a departure of the troops (*budhalan*). Scenes a, b, and c, in addition to having the same setting, that is the Bantarangin Kingdom, also present a repetition of the conflict. We also find a conventional structure in scenes e and f, which can be likened to the *sab-rang rangkep* scene [is an optional scene in traditional, all-night *wayang* structure. Typically, part one (*pathet nem*) of a traditional *wayang* starts with a scene in a familiar kingdom and moves on later to a foreign kingdom scene for a second plotline. Sometimes there is yet another, different foreign kingdom scene (*sab-rang rangkep*) before part one is over] in Surakarta-style *wayang* performances. So it is also with scenes g, h, and i, which can be likened to *gara-gara*, forest scenes and *perang kembang* (a battle between a virtuous prince and an ogre) in Surakarta-style *wayang* performances.

Based on the structure of *Réyog from Ponorogo*, this *lakon* can be categorized as a mixed work between conventional performance practice, abbreviated performance practice, and condensed performance practice, with a duration of four hours (see the analysis of the form of performance). The treatment of this *lakon* is innovative in the way the story behind *Réyog from Ponorogo* is told, which in most performances would be only narrated, but by Purbo Asmoro is acted out as an embedded performance (see the second layer of the structure).

The *lakon Réyog from Ponorogo* has never before been performed as a *wayang* story of any kind, including *wayang gedhog* stories that tell the tales of Panji, and *wayang klithik* that tell the tales of the Majapahit Kingdom (Soetarno, Sarwanto, & Sudarko, 2007). This *lakon* is a new work by Purbo Asmoro, created specifically to address the issue of Malaysia's attempt to claim *réyog* from Ponorogo as their own.

There are four versions of the background story to *Réyog from Ponorogo*: the

one set in Bantarangin, the one centered around Ki Ageng Kutu, the one with Batoro Katong, and the one set during Majapahit (Kurnianto, 2013; Sujud, 2007). Based on its layout, Purbo Asmoro's work clearly has an intertextuality with the version of the origin of *réyog* set in Bantarangin, although [the details of] this tale have been reworked by Purbo Asmoro. This [the versions and his work's connection to the Bantarangin version] was noted by Purbo Asmoro at the beginning of the performance, but, as he said then, the important thing for him was that the *lakon* featured the main elements of *réyog*, which are *warok*, *jathil*, Bujang Ganong, Klana, and *dhadhak merak* (interview with Purbo Asmoro, 15 April 2022).

The characters presented in the *lakon* have clear and direct relationships to each other, and support as well as compliment each other. As mentioned, the *lakon* is structured in two layers and each character also appears in two contexts: the context of the *lakon* (the first layer) and the context of the tale [about *réyog*] within the *lakon* (the second layer).

By looking at the presentation of the *lakon* itself as a whole, we can see two types of characters: main characters and supporting characters. The main character is the *warok* who tells the tale of *réyog* being from Ponorogo, while the supporting characters are the disciples in Wengker Hermitage who listen to the story about *réyog* from Ponorogo being told by the *warok*.

In looking at the story embedded within the *lakon*, we find six types of characters: main character, supporting character for the main character, the antagonist character, the supporting character for the antagonist, the tritagonist, and the supplemental characters. The main character in the [embedded] story is Klana Sewandana. The main supporting characters consist of Bujang Ganong and the troops of Bantarangin Kingdom. The antagonist in the [embedded] story is Singa Barong. The supporting characters for the antagonist consist of Singa Premada and the animal troops from Lodaya Kingdom. The

tritagonist in the [embedded] story is Princess Sanggalangit. As for the supplemental characters consist of Sanggalangit's younger brother and Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong. The relationships between characters in *Réyog from Ponorogo* can be seen in Figure 5.

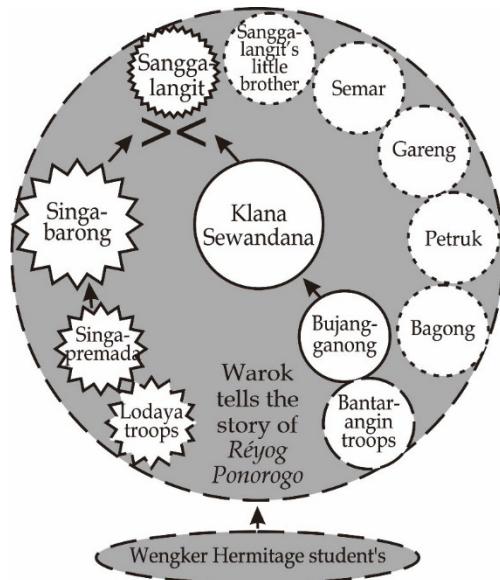


Figure 5. Relationships between the characters in the story *Réyog from Ponorogo*

The theme of *Réyog from Ponorogo* is social commentary and critique. This is evident from the prologue scene depicting a debate between two characters, claiming *réyog* as their own. The first party (represented by the *wayang* figure on the right) accuses the second party (represented by the *wayang* figure on the left) of claiming *réyog* as his own people's tradition. On the other hand, the second party retorts that he has no intention of claiming anything as his own but only wishes to preserve and develop *réyog*, since it has not been cared properly for by the first party.

This criticism is communicated directly and plainly in the context of the *lakon*, but falls outside of the context of the embedded story. Criticism and commentary that is so direct and obvious in Javanese *wayang* theory are known as *méthok* (direct criticism or *tandang kuli* (workers behavior) criticism (Nugroho, 2020, pp. 35-36).

The moral lesson or message for

the *lakon* is evident when the *warok* speaks to his pupils in the Wengker Hermitage scene (number 3), about what *réyog* tradition stands for: harmony and unity, cultural identity, honesty and straightforwardness, virtue, a healthy body willing to work, love and empathy, a performance that calms the soul and happiness in life. The lion serves as a symbol of strength, the peacock a symbol of beauty, Klana a symbol of aspiration to gain status, Bujanganong as symbol of skill, the young horsemen symbols of attraction, and the *warok* a symbol of someone offering true direction in life.

Interpretation of Lakon: The Great God Sambo "Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens"

The structure of the *lakon* *The Great God Sambo "Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens"* is singular – unlike the story-within-a-story structure of *Réyog from Ponorogo* – with the following chronology:

Scene in the Dandangmangore Realm: Goddess Durga is bored in the land of demons. She has taken up residence there due to God Guru's curse on her, which seems to have no end in sight. Because of this, she decides to work together with her son, the God Kala, to cause a disruption in the heavens.

Scene in the Suwelagringsing Goddess Chambers: Dewi Susti is devastated to find out that God Sambo, her husband, is having an affair with Dewi Swayana. This is despite their marriage producing four sons: Sambosa, Sambawa, Sambojana, and Sambodana. She plans to report the affair to her father.

Sambawa tries to convince Citrarata to cause trouble after Citrarata's youngest brother, Arjuwinanga, has been named head of the troops by his father, the God Indra. Citrarata cannot be swayed, to the point that a battle ensues. Sambawa and his siblings are all defeated.

Citarata, together with Citranggana, Citrasena, Jayantaka, Jayantara discuss the new division of loyalties in the army of the gods: God Sambo and God Brama's group versus God Indra and God Bayu's group.

Citrarata tells his siblings that everyone must heighten their awareness and watch over things to assure peace reigns in the world.

Sambo is love-making with Swayana (see Figure 6). Suddenly Sambodana arrives to tell him that his mother is going to report Sambo to his grandfather, Hyang Guruweda. Sambo orders Sambodana to keep an eye on his mother [Sambo's wife].



Figure 6. The God Sambo, love-making with Swayana (screenshot, Purbo Asmoro Official, 2022)

Guruweda has had a hunch that there is trouble between Susti and Sambo. Suddenly, Indra arrives, accompanied by Arjuwinanga. Indra reports that in an effort to unite the military again, which Sambo broke into factions, he appointed Arjuwinanga to serve as commander of the troops. Hyang Guruweda suggests that Indra report Sambo's actions to the God Guru [Indra's father]. Indra departs and temporarily leaves Arjuwinanga with Guruweda. Susti shows up and reports the problems in her household. Guruweda suggests that Susti meet with Swayana without the knowledge of Sambo. Susti departs and is accompanied by Arjuwinanga.

Scene in the Argamaruta Heavens: Bayu is distressed, thinking about the chaos that has come over the heavens. The gods are supposed to protect the human race, but they do whatever is in their own interest and for power. Because of his worries, Bayu tells his four sons (Sumarma, Sudarma, Sangkara, and Bismakara) to proceed with clear thinking and act with extreme caution.

Scene in the Argadahana Heavens:

Brama is pleased because his two sons (Maricibrahma and Naradabrahma) are siding with Sambo.

Intermezzo: Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong (dressed in godlike outfits) joke around outside of the context of the *lakon*.

Scene in the Cakrakembang Heavens: Semar visits the God Kamajaya and the Goddess Ratih to inform them about the tumult in the heavens. Kamajaya tells Semar about the split in the army troops. Semar asks Kamajaya to find a way to bring peace to the heavens.

Sambodana discovers that Arjuwinanga is helping Susti, can catch up with him, handcuff him, and bring him to Sambo.

Sambodana comes before Sambo, with Arjuwinanga in handcuffs. Sambo is furious with Arjuwinanga, who has agreed to become commander of the heavenly troops. Sambo feels that he himself has more of a right to organize the heavenly army than Indra, because he is the eldest son of the God Guru. His anger only grows as he hears Sambodana's report that Arjuwinanga is also interfering with Sambo's private affairs. In the end, Arjuwinanga is beaten to a pulp by Sambo (see Figure 7) and thrown into the Candradimuka Cauldron.



Figure 7. The God Sambo beats up Arjuwinanga, witnessed by Sambodana and Sambawa (screenshot, Purbo Asmoro Official, 2022)

The God Yamadipati is shocked to see Arjuwinanga cast into the Candradimuka Cauldron. But because Yamadipati is unable to come to Arjuwinanga's assistance, Semar advises that Yamadipati report the incident to the God Guru.

Scene in the Jonggring Salaka Heavens: The Gods Guru and Narada listen to Indra's news about the tumult that has overcome the heavens. Yamadipati then arrives to report the fate Arjuwinanga has suffered. Because Guru cannot overcome all of these problems, he decides to go to Hyang Wenang to explain everything.

Susti confronts Swayana and accuses her of being the source of all her family troubles. Swayana feels attacked and defends herself, even to the point that a battle starts. They engage in a number of clashes, and eventually, Susti is rendered unconscious.

In the Candradimuka Cauldron, Arjuwinanga is rescued by Wenang. Wenang orders Guru, who has come to see him to fully investigate the Sambo issue and to do so without covering anything up.

Susti, who is unconscious, is revived by Semar and Kamajaya. Guru and Arjuwinanga appear and explain everything to Semar. Semar becomes furious and really chews Sambo out for what he has done.

Bayu's four sons, who want to find Arjuwinanga, are blocked by Brama's two sons and Sambo's four sons, until a fierce battle erupts. Even Sambo joins in the battle, attacking Bayu's four sons. Indra and Bayu descend to the battlefield and confront Sambo. Semar sees the ever-worsening mess and confronts Sambo on the battlefield. Sambo is rendered weak after Kala, who had entered his being much before this moment, leaves his body. Durga also leaves Swayana's body. Semar gives Sambo a lecture in front of Durga and Kala, telling him that when a person is unable to control their desires, their soul is vulnerable to these invasions by Kala (or, in other words, Satan) also, that those who do evil will eventually reap what they have sown.

The structure of the *lakon The Great God Sambo "Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens"* aside from fulfilling the concept of *tutug* (a story that comes to an end in accordance to the title given it) is also more *kempel* (with scenes following one another being closely intertwined) than *Réyog from Ponorogo*. The density and compactness of the interpre-

tation are more evident. By density here, we are not referring to the length, which is shorter than *Réyog from Ponorogo*, but rather to the structure of the story which has more "causality" from one scene to another (Sudarko, 2003). For example, even though scenes one, two, three, and four have different settings and different conflicts, they are tightly wound up together plotwise. The structure of the *lakon The Great God Sambo "Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens"* also fulfills the concept of *mulih*. The desire of the Goddess Durga from the very beginning to cause destruction and chaos in the heavens is resolved in the end by Semar preventing all her efforts. Also, the affairs and questionable actions of the God Sambo are eventually revealed.

The tale of God Sambo is found in the *Serat Paramayoga* by Ranggawarsita, a poet from the era of King Paku Buwana VII's reign through to King Paku Buwana IX's reign (1845-1873) (Poerbatjaraka, 1964, pp. 151-157). It is said that the God Sambo is the eldest son of the God Guru and his wife Dewi Uma. He resides in the Suwelagringging Heavens. He has two wives: Dewi Susti (Hyang Guruweda's daughter) and Dewi Swayana (Hyang Pancaweda's daughter). The God Sambo descended to Earth at one point and became a king in Mendangprawa, named Sri Maharaja Maldewa. His defense minister was Sage Acakelasa (Padmosoekotjo, 1979, pp. 79). Even though this background exists, this tale has never before been performed as a *wayang*. Because of that, the *lakon The Great God Sambo "Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens"* can be considered a new work.

The characters in this *lakon* are very complex and consist of a main character, a supporting character to the main character, an antagonist, a supporting character to the antagonist, a tritagonist, supplemental figures, and other minor characters. All of the characters have a very close relationship to each other, and support and complement each other.

The main character in this *lakon* is the God Sambo. The supporting characters in the first layer of the story are the God Kala

and Goddess Durga, while the supporting characters in the second level are Dewi Swayana (who is having an affair with Sambo). The third supporting character level is Sambo’s sons (Sambosa, Sambawa, Sambojana, and Sambodana), the God Brahma and Brahma’s sons (Maricibrahma and Naradabrahma).

The antagonist in this *lakon* is Dewi Susti (Sambo’s wife). The first level supporting character for the antagonist is Arjuwinanga, while the second level supporting character for the antagonist is the God Indra and his sons (Citrarata, Citrangana, Citrasena, Jayantaka, Jayantara) and the God Bayu with his sons (Sumarma, Sudarma, Sangkara, Bismakara).

The tritagonist characters are Guruweda, Semar, and Hyang Wenang. The supplemental characters are the gods Guru, Yamadipati, and Kamajaya. The rest of the characters, all in minor roles, are Dewi Ratih, the God Narada, Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong.

The relationships between the characters in the *lakon The Great God Sambo “Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens”* can be seen in Figure 8.

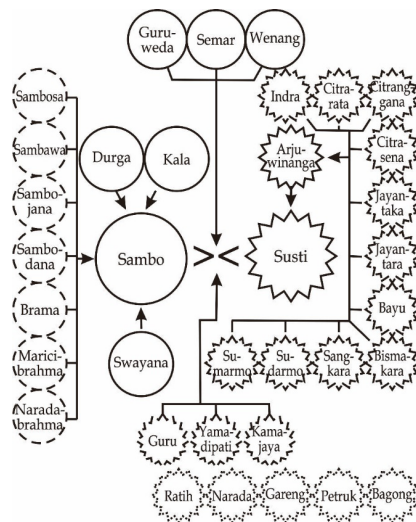


Figure 8. Relationships between the characters in the *lakon The Great God Sambo “Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens”*

The *lakon The Great God Sambo “Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens”* theme is social commentary and critique. This is

reflected in every section of the story. The God Sambo is depicted as an ambitious and audacious character. Simply to get what he wants in marrying Dewi Swayana and controlling the army of the gods, he is willing to go to all ends, including dividing the loyalties of the army led by the God Indra, his younger brother. He felt satisfied when he received the support of the God Brahma, his younger brother, as he gained control of half of the army of the gods. This is why, when Arjuwinanga was promoted by the God Indra as the commander of the troops with the explicit task of uniting the troops once again, the God Sambo was furious. His anger grew even more when he found out that Arjuwinanga was thought to be interfering in his personal affairs. This is why Arjuwinanga was beaten up and ultimately killed.

Although the content of the *lakon* has many similarities to the case of Ferdj Sambo, the social commentary is in fact veiled, which in Javanese *wayang* theory is called *medhang miring* or *semon mantri* (equivocal) (Nugroho, 2020, pp. 36–37). The *dalang*, as the creator of the *lakon*, did not in any way refer to the case of Ferdj Sambo. However, at the end of the *lakon*, via Semar, the *dalang* criticizes those currently in power who only think of themselves and their party. Thus the performance of *The Great God Sambo “Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens”* also contains direct and obvious social commentary (*méthok* or *tandang kuli*).

The theme of this *lakon* is stated by Semar at the conclusion—anyone who cannot control their passions will be overtaken by Kala (Satan). The [Indonesian] people are currently quite disappointed with the actions of those in power who do not protect society and do not serve as role models, whereas trust is the most expensive of all traits. If the people can no longer trust our leaders, the nation will fall into disrepair. A leader must be useful to the people and not only to himself and his party. Anyone who is arrogant and audacious (*adigang*), feels they can control others (*adigung*), and feels smarter than others (*adigung*) will eventually suffer misfortune.

Treatment of the *Lakon Réyog Ponorogo* and the *Lakon The Great God Sambo "Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens"*

The producer

Purbo Asmoro as the creator of the new works discussed, is an artist of the highest quality. He is a master of all aspects of *wayang* treatment. He not only has mastery of *wayang* stories, but also popular legends (*babad*) and stories that are transmitted orally (*gotèk*).

As for the *wayang* performance itself, he is a master of a wide span of the Javanese language (Old Javanese, Modern Javanese, dialects, and the idiolects of specific *wayang* characters), he is skilled in the movements of many different types of *wayang* figures, he has mastery of the musical repertory (in fact has mastery on all *gamelan* instruments), has a good voice and a mastery of the repertory of sung poetry (*sulukan*), also the techniques for striking the copper plates with his foot which hang off the right side of the *wayang* box (*keprakan*) and the knocks from the wooden striker (*dhodhogan*).

His musical troupe supporting the performance—consisting of musicians (*pengrawit*), female vocalists (*pesindhèn*), and male vocalists (*penggèrong*)—forms Purbo Asmoro's collaborative team for every performance. This musical troupe led by Purbo Asmoro is called "Mayangkara," an abbreviation of *Mangèsthi Wayang Kagunan Rahayu*. There is clearly an emotional connection between the *dalang* and the musical troupe, such that anything the *dalang* wishes from the troupe can be accomplished. As for the *lakon Réyog from Ponorogo*, the *dalang* invited a *réyog* group from Ponorogo in addition to Mayangkara. The *dalang* as well as all the supporting artists were wearing traditional outfits from Ponorogo (*warok* outfits for the men, and *jathil* outfits for the women).

The tools and equipment

The equipment used in the performances of *Réyog from Ponorogo* and *The Great God Sambo "Tumult in the Suralaya*

Heavens" were exhaustive and representative of the ideal, which in the world of Javanese *wayang* is known as *mrabot*. The *wayang* figures, the *gamelan*, the *wayang* frame (*gawangan*) and screen (*layar*) along with the performance lamp (*bléncong*) used were all owned by Purbo Asmoro.

The *wayang* collection used in the *lakon Réyog Ponorogo* consisted of figures of *wayang* characters from *wayang madya*, *wayang gedhog*, and *wayang klithik*, all owned by Purbo Asmoro. What is more, in order to realize what was needed for the story, new figures were created, such as the *warok*, *jathilan*, Bujang Ganong, Klana, the lion-peacock mask known as *dhadhak merak*, and the music ensemble used specifically for *réyog* accompaniment (see Figure 4).

The *wayang* collection for the performance of *The Great God Sambo "Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens"* used *wayang kulit* figures owned by Purbo Asmoro. The God Guru figure used was a shadow-puppet figure known as The God Guru *wanda reca* (statue version), which is famous for being created in the Islamic Mataram era. The God Narada figure used was from a *wayang kulit* style of the Kartasura Palace (wearing a crown like a king but not wearing priestly robes and without slippers) (Sajid, 1958).

The figure used for the God Sambo is a *wayang* figure by Pringgasutata and commissioned by Purbo Asmoro himself (interview with Purbo Asmoro, 24 August 2022). This figure of the God Sambo wears a crown like a king, no robes, and no slippers (similar to the Narada figure from the Kartasura Palace), and has a body and clothes of light gold, with a pink face. Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong were new figures and all wore crowns and noble headdresses.

The *gamelan* used to support the *wayang* performances of this two *lakon* was a full *gamelan* with both the *sléndro* and *pélog* scales (*gamelan ageng*), of the type usually for a *gamelan* concert in Java (a *klenengan*). For the performance of *Réyog Ponorogo* this was supplemented by a set of accompanying instruments used during *réyog*

brought from Ponorogo, East Java, consisted of a *kendhang* and *ketipung* (types of hand drums), a *kethuk* with pitch 2 *sléndro*, a *kenong* with pitch 5 in *sléndro*, a *kempul* on pitch 5 in *sléndro*, a pair of *angklung* instruments pitched 6 and 5 in *sléndro*, and a traditional, village reeded instrument known as a *slomprèt* for the melodied in the *pélog* scale.

The elements of performance

The elements used to manifest in these performances included narration from the *dalang* and dialogue between characters, movements of the *wayang* figures (*sabet*), musical selections by the *gamelan* (*gendhing*), and songs used by the *dalang* (*sulukan*). All the above elements supported and complemented each other to form the package known as *garap pakeliran*.

The narration presented by the *dalang* took two forms: (1) narration spoken while a musical selection was playing, known as *janturan*; and (2) narration without musical accompaniment, known as *pocapan*. Both of these types of narration serve as description—description of a scene, the telling of an event in the story, or the depiction of mood in a character's heart. The movement techniques consist of two types: (1) "representative" movements which are modeled after realistic human or animal movements, and (2) "thematic" movements, which are meant to depict an aura, such as the daydreaming of a character, love, chaos, and the like. The musical selections serve to (1) accompany various scenes, including battles, and (2) intensify a particular atmosphere in a scene. *Sulukan* (poetry sung by the *dalang*) serve to: (1) intensify a certain atmosphere (if the *sulukan* occurs before a larger musical selection), (2) create a particular atmosphere (if the *sulukan* occurs in the middle of a narration or a dialogue between characters); and (3) support a particular atmosphere (if the *sulukan* is presented after a musical selection) (Nugroho, 2012, pp. 429–438).

The form of performance

The performance of *Réyog from Po-*

norogo is a combination of conventional, abbreviated, and condensed styles. Conventional *wayang*, or all-night *wayang*, is a style in which the template of scenes is set, such that even if the story is different the structure of the scenes and battles is the same. The duration is approximately seven hours. *Pakeliran ringkes*, or abbreviated performance style, resembles all-night conventional *wayang*, but each scene or battle is simply abbreviated and focused upon the main problem and main characters, such that the duration is shorter (around three to four hours). *Pakeliran padat*, on the other hand, is a style with an alternative structure in which the placement of scenes and battles entirely depends on the major issues faced by the main character in carrying out the plotline.

Much of the execution of these performances uses templates from conventional treatment. For example, the way that the Bantarangin Palace scene is followed by the departure of the troops Bantarangin. The Lodaya Kingdom scene is also followed by the departure of the Lodaya troops. In addition, there are intermezzo scenes with Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong which are removed from the context of the *lakon*, just like *Gara-gara* scene in a conventional performance. This is followed by the *Perang Kembang* between Dewi Sanggalangit's little brother and the ogres.

But the performance of *The Great God Sambo "Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens"* leans more toward the structure of a *pakeliran padat* (condensed performance). The order of the scenes and the battles do not follow the structure of conventional all-night performances.

The conceptor

Kondang Sutrisno, Chairman of the Association of Indonesian *Wayang*, Central Branch came up with the idea of the *lakon Réyog from Ponorogo*. Although this *lakon* was then developed by Purbo Asmoro, it was requested by Kondang Sutrisno (interview with Purbo Asmoro, 15 April 2022). As for *The Great God Sambo "Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens,"* Purbo Asmoro himself

was the one to decide to create a story around this idea. It was not at the request of anyone else.

Considerations

The fall of the New Order regime in 1998 was the starting point for the reform of the Indonesian nation. With the issuance of Regulation 39 in the year 1999 regarding basic human rights, all citizens of the Indonesian nation now enjoyed freedom in the areas of politics, economy, social engagement and the arts, including the receiving and disseminating of information. Because of this, *dalang*, whose job it is to convey the big questions of philosophy, ethics, spirituality and morality to their *wayang* fans, were no longer hesitant to explore topical societal or governmental issues openly. Thus, Purbo Asmoro was not concerned about engaging in socio-political commentary through his *wayang* performances of *Réyog from Ponorogo* and *The Great God Sambo "Tumult in the Suralaya Heavens"*. Moreover, there had already been widespread coverage of these two issues in both mass media and electronic media.

CONCLUSION

Based on the descriptions and analysis above, it can be concluded that the social criticism presented in *wayang* performances can be blatant (*méthok* or *tandang kuli*), equivocal (*medhang miring* or *semon mant-ri*), or personification (*nyampar pikolèh* or *èsem bupati*). The social criticism revealed in *lakon Réyog Ponorogo* is blatant, while the social criticism in *lakon Sang Batara Sambo "Prahara Suralaya"* as a whole is equivocal, but in the closing scene it is blatant.

In creating a 'new' *lakon*, the *dalang* must master various written and spoken references that will later be used as hypogram texts. The *dalang* must also be able to interpret various hypogram texts into a story and translate them into the treatment of *lakon wayang*.

The quality of *wayang* treatment is greatly influenced by the artistic ability of the *dalang* in staging, the ability of the

dalang to choose the elements of *pakeliran* treatment to be highlighted in each scene, the ability of the *dalang* to determine the thickness of the elements of *pakeliran* treatment in each scene, the ability of the *dalang* to organize the performance supporting team, and the ability of the *dalang* to read the situation of the audience.

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