



Pluralism of Sasak Puppet: A Study Of Intercultural Communication On Lombok Island

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Abstract

Sasak Puppet is one of the traditional performing arts that is believed to be a medium for broadcasting Islam on Lombok Island. This conclusion is strengthened by using scripts Serat Menak as the performance material. Serat Menak is based on the Persian story Qisa El Amir Hamza, with the central character Amir Hamzah, the uncle of the prophet Muhammad SAW. In practice, the Sasak Puppet performance in Lombok is played not only by Muslim puppeteers but also by Hindu puppeteers. Sasak Puppet is also enjoyed by the Muslim community and the Hindu community in Lombok; even the Sasak Puppet performance is also held in a temple, a place of worship for Hindus. This study describes the existence of pluralism in the Sasak Puppet performance, starting from the performance material and the interaction of the puppeteers and the Sasak Puppet enthusiasts both in the performance space and in everyday life outside the performance. As a product of intercultural communication, Sasak Puppet deserves to be a reference for the public who wants to build pluralism in a multicultural society.

Keywords: Sasak puppet, intercultural communication, Serat Menak, pluralism

INTRODUCTION

Wayang is a traditional performing art still in Indonesian society today. Its existence strengthened when UNESCO named it a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity on November 7, 2003.¹ It was GAJ Hazeu, an advisor to the Dutch colonial government for indigenous affairs, who found his

¹ Sasak Shadow Puppets are ranked 58th on the Intangible Cultural Heritage List (UNESCO)

belief that wayang was an original performing art of Java, Indonesia. This belief refers to the uniqueness (authenticity) of the terms used in wayang performances only found on Java island. These terms include kelir (wayang performance screen), blencong (wayang performance lights), kothak (a box for storing wayang), Kepyak (a wayang musical instrument made of copper sheets), and dalang (a person who plays the wayang performance).²

In addition to functioning as an entertainment art, historically, wayang is a religious ritual performance associated with a spiritual procession called ruwatan. The Yucatan procession is held so the person being purified can avoid disaster. Art performances, including wayang performances, were closely related to Hindu-Buddhist religious activities during the Majapahit era.³

The existence of wayang as a ritual performance that grew in the community at that time became a consideration for Wali Songo to make it a medium for spreading Islam. In order to adjust to Islamic teachings, Wali Songo made several deformative changes to the wayang performances that already existed in the community. Some of these changes include forms and stories adjusted to Islamic teachings.⁴

On Lombok Island, there is Sasak puppetry, which is made of leather, and the *Serat Menak* play. The story in the *Serat Menak* play comes from the book "Qissa I Emr Hamza," a Persian literary work during the reign of Harun Al Rasyid. In Malay lands, this book is known as "Hikayat Amir Hamzah." As the title suggests, the story in this book tells the experiences, struggles, and heroism of Amir Hamzah, the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, in spreading Islam to various countries.⁵ Although the stories played in Sasak Puppet performances have Islamic nuances, Hindu puppeteers also play Sasak Puppet in practice. In the early history of Sasak Puppet, several Hindu puppeteers were known during the reign of King Anak Agung

² Hazeu, GAJ, "Bijdrage Tot de Kennis Van Het Javaanshe Tooneel" in dalam *Simbolisme dan Mistikisme dalam Wayang*, Sri Mulyono (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1979)) h. 51

³Sunyoto, Agus, *Atlas Walinongo* , (Jakarta: Pustaka Ilman, 2012) p. 173.

⁴Sunyoto, *Atlas...*, p. 175.¹

⁵Yamin, Muhammad dkk, *Diskripsi Wayang Kulit Sasak Daerah Nusa Tenggara Barat*, (Departemen Pendidikan et Kebudayaan Kantor Wilayah Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Barat, 1992)

in Lombok. These puppeteers were quite famous and were often invited to perform in various regions on Lombok Island. One of the most famous puppeteers is Ki Dalang Nengah Gowang. Gowang is widely known among Sasak Puppet puppeteers who met during the pre-research process.

In addition to Nengah Gowang, many Hindu puppeteers are widely known by the people of Lombok, including I Wayan Giur, I Wayan Sateb, Made Tegeh, I Wayan Kantun, and others. The existence of these Hindu puppeteers shows the harmonious social relations in the community of Lombok. The strong Islamic nuances in Sasak puppetry are played skillfully by puppeteers from the Balinese ethnic group. Through this Sasak puppetry, the Balinese puppeteers also insert messages of harmony in society. One of the characters in the Sasak puppet story who is used as the messenger of this message is Gusti Gede. This character is usually presented in dialogues between padawans, everyday dialogues that present jokes and messages about the importance of building good relationships.⁶

Currently, there are still several Hindu Sasak puppeteers in Lombok. One of them is Made Darundya, the grandson of Nengah Gowang. Darundya⁷He claims to know Sasak puppetry from his habit of following his father, I Wayan Mojar, the leader of the Sanggar Sucita Hati puppetry group, which holds puppet shows in remote areas on Lombok Island. As a direct descendant or son of a puppeteer, Wayan Mojar can be a puppeteer. However, because of the belief that a child of a puppeteer should not become a puppeteer—especially since his two siblings, Layan and Tutar, who had been puppeteers, died at a young age—Mojar continued the tradition of Sasak puppetry carried out by his father Nengah Gowang, by taking on the role of studio leader. Later, in 1980, Darundya began to be a puppeteer, inheriting his grandfather's puppetry knowledge.

As a Hindu, Darundya knows very well that Sasak Puppet plays the story of the spread of Islam, the story of the war of Muslim troops against the infidels. For

⁶ Suprpto, *Semberak Dupa di Pulau Seribu Masjid*, Grup Penerbit Kencana Prenadamedia, Mataram, 2013. h.201

⁷Interview with Dalang Darundya, July 2019

Darundya, universal values are conveyed in the Sasak Puppet story. However, in particular plays, it is told how the infidel king (left wayang) who lost the war with the Islamic kingdom troops (right wayang) was finally willing to embrace Islam.

According to Darundya, his puppetry activities, including performing *the Serat Menak story*, were not rejected by Hindus or Muslims on Lombok Island. Both Muslims and Hindus often invited Darundya to perform puppetry. He even demonstrated his ability to play Sasak puppetry in a temple that is a place of worship for Hindus.

The wayang performance art in Lombok involves puppeteers from different religions (Islam-Hindu) and cultural backgrounds (Sasak-Bali), implying inter-religious and inter-cultural relations. This *results* in pluralization in wayang performances while also depicting the dimension of inclusivity in the art community in Lombok. From the above phenomenon, the researcher wants to examine more deeply to find the existence of plurality in the Sasak Puppet performance that builds a harmonious relationship between Hindu puppeteers and Muslim puppeteers, as well as the Hindu and Muslim publics who are linked by cultural activities, the Sasak Puppet performance art.

Amidst the still minimal literacy about Sasak puppets, the results of this study are expected to be a reference for other researchers who want to conduct further studies related to the existence of Sasak puppets, especially in the aspect of intercultural communication. In addition, the results of this study are expected to provide a reference contribution to efforts to build pluralism in a multicultural society.

Several previous studies have examined performing arts as a medium for cross-cultural communication and preaching, including studies on Sasak puppetry from various perspectives. Hambali⁸ for example, studying the Audience Reception of Wayang Haji Lalu Nasib, a senior puppeteer in Gerung, West Lombok. This study found differences in perception between young and older audiences about

⁸ Hambali, tesis : *Resepsi Penonton Terhadap Wayang Haji Lalu Nasib, Gerung, Lombok Barat t* (Malang : Programme Pascasarjanan Universitas Negeri Malang, 2011)

Sasak puppet performances. Young audiences generally do not understand the Jejawan language used in the standard stories played by the puppeteer; they prefer the presence of defenceman characters (punakawan) who use the Sasak language, which is full of jokes. Meanwhile, older audiences, who have knowledge and experience watching puppets, are more receptive to performances that play standard storylines; they negatively perceive the presence of rerincikan characters who are considered to disrupt the standard.

Another study by Wahyu⁹ Focused on characterization in Sasak puppetry. This study found a tiered characterization in Sasak puppetry, starting from the characterization of the scriptwriter, the character of, the carver, and the character of the puppeteer. From the characters and forms of the performance, Wayhu concluded that Sasak puppetry is similar to puppetry in Java. However, local treasures are still clearly visible in Sasak puppetry performances.

According to Wahyu, *Serat Menak*, as a text that is the primary source for Sasak Puppet performances written by the Javanese people, there is space for puppeteers and wayang carvers to interpret the text according to their local conditions. The success of the spread of Islam in Lombok, according to Wahyu, caused the Sasak puppetry to become one of the preaching media, so all the substance and philosophy of the Sasak puppetry were adjusted to Islamic teachings. Finally, simple forms of local puppet characters were born, as seen in the characters of the defenceman figures. Referring to the year of publication of the babon (*Serat Menak*), which was used as the primary material for Sasak puppet performances, Wahyu concluded that Sasak puppetry first existed in Lombok around 1700-1800 AD.

Meanwhile, another researcher, Syahrul¹⁰ Examines the concept of perfection of Amir Hamzah or Wong Menak, the main character in the Sasak puppet show. This study reveals that the perfection possessed by Wong Menak, which makes him

⁹ Wahyu Kurnia, Tesis : *Karakterisasai Dalam Wayang Sasak Lombok* , (Yogya : Pascasarjana Institut Seni Indonesia – 2018)

¹⁰ Muh. Syahrul Qodri, « *Konsep Kesempurnaan Tokoh Wong Menak dalam Wayang Sasak* » (Jurnal Panggung, Vol 28 No.3, septembre 2018)..

glorified, even sacred by the Sasak people, can be seen from the names or nicknames he bears, including 1. Jayengrana (self-importance, or the main self), 2. Jayeng Palugon (a person who is victorious in the battle against evil), 3. Jayeng Satru (a person who can lead in battle), 4. Jayeng Jurit (a person victorious in a journey or life), and 5. Jayeng Palupi (a calm figure).

The virtues of Wong Menak or Jayengrana that Syahrul explained were a combination of the abilities or strengths of his friends: 1. Umar Maya, who is described as an intelligent and wise figure; 2. Maktal, a calm figure who is obedient to the truth, 3. Umar Madi is a figure who is strong in eating and greedy but loyal to Wong Agung Jayengrana, 4. Alam Daur or Selandir, described as a fierce figure, easily angered and greatly feared by his enemies, and 5. The twin friends Taptanus and Santanus illustrate the concept of the universe's balance.

In addition, there is also research by Anggoro.¹¹(2018), which examines the history of the development of wayang art in Java as a performing art and da'wah. Anggoro explains the history of the presence of wayang in Java, which is closely related to the process of spreading Islam. The spreaders of Islam used wayang as a medium of Islamization amid Javanese society, which still adheres to animism and dynamism and is full of mystical traditions in the form of worship of their ancestral spirits.

With the collapse of the Majapahit kingdom, all royal ceremonial equipment, including wayang gamelan instruments, were brought to the Demak kingdom. At the behest of Raden Patah, wayang sets, which had been a palace cultural art since the Hindu-Buddhist era, were transformed into Islamic performing arts by incorporating elements of aqidah, worship, and morals by Islamic teachings. Sunan Kalijaga then included moral education, divinity, and social life elements.

In addition to functioning as a medium for preaching that greatly influenced the development of Islam in Java, Anggoro also explained the function of wayang

¹¹ Bayu Anggoro, "Wayang dan Seni Pertunjukan : Kajian Sejarah Perkembangan Seni Wayang di tanah Jawa sebagai Seni Pertunjukan et Dakwah. (Jurnal Sejarah Peradaban Islam Vol.2 No.2 Tahun 2018)

today, where wayang has experienced developments in form and story, becoming a channel of entertainment that the wider community can accept because the content of its stories contains moral values.

Related to cross-cultural studies, this study refers to research conducted by Zaini ¹²trying to understand cross-cultural communication as a means of preaching. In his research, Zaini explained that in a multicultural society, a preacher has to study cross-cultural communication so that the public can accept the preaching message they convey with different backgrounds. Zaini also reviewed that a cross-cultural communicator must also be able to manage communication effectively. This management includes, first, the development of cultural sensitivity, namely the ability to recognize one's own culture and the culture of others; second, the accuracy of encoding, namely the ability of a communicator to translate the message to be conveyed into the correct language; third, selectively choosing transmission, namely the accuracy of the communicator in choosing the right media for his preaching; fourth, careful decoding, namely the accuracy of a communicator in interpreting a symbol, and fifth, the proper follow-up in the form of the communicator's ability to use verbal and non-verbal language. Verbal in his preaching.

An important conclusion regarding cross-cultural communication written by Zaini in his research is that the requirements for cross-cultural communication to be practical include, among other things, that the communicator must have the maximum ability to express messages, translate the contents of the message, adapt his culture to the culture of others, and be skilled at providing guarantees for the culture of others.

In addition, there is Kusumastuti's research ¹³That examines the symbolic interaction between the players and the audience in the Laesan art performance, a

¹² Ahmad Zaini, "Memahami Komunikasi Lintas Budaya Sebagai Sarana Dakwah". (Jurnal Komunikasi Penyiaran Islam At Tabsyir IAIN Kudus, Vol.5 No.1, 2017)

¹³ ny Kusumawati, "Laesan sebuah Fenomena Kesenian Pesisir: Kajian Interaksi Simbolik antara Pemain dan Penonton". (Harmonia Jurnal Pengetahuan dan Pemikiran Seni, Vol VII.No 3/septembre – décembre 2006)

traditional art of the Bojomulyo Village community, Juwana District, Pati Regency, Central Java. This art has a characteristic where the players, known as Laes, experience trance during the performance. This study dissects the interactive symbols that occur during the Laesan performance, the form of the Laesan performance, how symbolic interaction is created between the players and the audience, and the various symbols that exist and are used to build symbolic interaction between the players and the audience.

As Kusumawati states, symbolic interaction in Laesan art performance is found in every part of the performance, including the equipment or means of performance, such as incense and offerings, songs played by the accompaniment throughout the performance, and the meaning of trance in the performance process. Symbolic interaction appears in symbols such as incense, songs, dance movements, offerings, and the trance of a laes.

In a multicultural society like Lombok, various intercultural conflicts are still prone. If not managed properly, diversity, which is a blessing, can become a social problem that is not productive for the development of a society. Like a coin, life's plurality has two equally present sides. On the one hand, plurality is a blessing, while on the other hand, it contains the potential for conflict due to conflicting interests. Awareness of plurality does not necessarily make a society wise. There are at least two conditions that cause this. First, the public does not know precisely the positive and negative sides of the plurality phenomenon and does not know where to use it. Second, there are external factors in the form of interests that exploit the conditions of society for specific interests. Politics is the most dominant factor that accompanies the harmful excesses of the plurality of society.¹⁴

The phenomenon of plurality in Lombok, especially between Muslim and Hindu communities, tends to occur associatively rather than dissociatively. This practice occurs because of the willingness of each party to understand each other's differences, obedience to applicable laws, and a willingness to forget past conflict

¹⁴ Wahid Abdul, *Pluralisme agama: Paradigma Dialog pour Resolusi Konflik et Dakwah*, Mataram, LEPPIM IAIN Mataram, 2016 h. 14-15

events. This attitude of mutual acceptance and mutual respect then becomes a driver for the emergence of mutual trust (*Interpersonal trust*) and encourages social ties between residents (*civic engagement*)¹⁵

Researchers see the art of Sasak Puppet culture as a legacy of scientific knowledge that will never run out to be explored, one of which is the good practice of implementing pluralism in the art of Sasak Puppet performances. The existence of Sasak Puppet as a medium of intercultural communication, which can be accepted by all levels of society on the island of Lombok, deserves to be a communication model that can be applied amid a multicultural society. Research is expected to contribute to efforts to build pluralism in a multicultural society. In addition, this research is also expected to be a reference for the development of science, especially intercultural communication science, and a reference for other researchers who want to study further related to Sasak Puppet.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method of the phenomenological paradigm model. Phenomenological paradigm model research tries to understand the public's perception, perspective, and understanding of a particular situation or phenomenon. Phenomenological research tries to answer the question, "How does it feel to experience this and that?" By looking at the perspective of the same situation, researchers can begin to make some generalizations about an experience from an insider perspective.¹⁶

Data was collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and literature studies. Researchers carried out observations in this study since the establishment of the Sasak Puppetry School (SPWS) in 2015, where researchers

¹⁵ Suprpto, *Semberak Dupa di Pulau Seribu Masjid*, groupe Penerbit Kencana Prenadamedia, Mataram, 2013.

¹⁶ Sobur, Alex, *Communication Philosophy; Tradition and Phenomenological Method*, (Bandung, PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2013),

were involved in the establishment process. SPWS is an alternative (non-formal) puppetry school that provides space for transforming knowledge possessed by senior puppeteers to young people who want to learn Sasak puppetry. In 2016, the Sasak Puppetry Foundation was formed to oversee the existence of SPWS. The author is the director of the Sasak Puppetry Foundation.

Some puppeteers who are the primary sources in this study are teachers or teaching teams at SPWS, including Dalang Sukardi and Dalang Haji Safwan. From the Muslim puppeteers, researchers explored their experiences of holding performances among Hindus who invited them to play Sasak puppets. Meanwhile, for Hindu puppeteers, researchers explored their personal experiences of playing Sasak puppets, which are known to be thick with Islamic nuances, including when playing Sasak puppets among different communities, Hindus and Muslims. Meanwhile, from the Sekehe or musicians supporting the puppet show, researchers explored information about their experiences involved in Sasak puppet shows played by Hindu puppeteers and the process of practicing and holding the show. From Islamic religious figures and Hindu religious figures, researchers each explored their opinions, especially about the phenomenon of Sasak puppets played by Hindu puppeteers. Sasak puppet lovers or audiences from Hindu and Muslim circles were also important sources from which their perceptions were explored regarding Sasak puppets - puppets with Islamic nuances accepted amid Hindu and Muslim communities, including when played by Hindu puppeteers.

This study's observations include watching puppeteers and *sekehe* prepare performances, hold performances, and interact with each other in daily life. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview model with several sources, including puppeteers, *sekere* (musicians), Islamic and Hindu community leaders, and audiences directly involved as Sasak puppet lovers. This study also uses SPWS documentation, photos and videos, and writings related to SPWS activities on the page www.wayangsasak.org.

Three puppeteers still actively performing Sasak puppet shows became the primary sources in this study. The puppeteers are Sukardi from West Lombok,

Muhammad from Central Lombok, who has a Muslim Sasak ethnic background and Made Darundya from Mataram City, who has a Balinese ethnic background and is Hindu.

The data analysis process in this study was carried out before the researcher entered the field, while in the field, and after the completion of the field research. Data analysis includes the data reduction process, summarizing, sorting out the main things that are important from all the data collected in the data collection process; data presentation in the form of brief descriptions, charts, and relationships between categories that will make it easier for researchers to understand what is happening, plan further work based on what has been understood, as well as drawing conclusions and verification.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Cultural Acculturation and Localization of Values

Historically, *Serat Menak*, which became the material for Sasak puppet performances, is a story from Persia adapted into the Kawi language (jejawen). *The Serat Menak manuscript, which became the material for Sasak puppet performances, originated from Java, using the Kawi language (jejawen) as the intermediary.* However, when it was presented as a source in Sasak puppet performances, the *Serat Menak* story was localized, from the characters' names to the storyline. The form of *Serat Menak*, in the form of verses of poetry or songs, can be created and adapted by Sasak puppet activists, including puppeteers, when presented in the form of performances. The existence of *kawian* and *carangan plays* in Sasak puppet performances illustrates the story creation process by the poets who wrote the *carangan* and *kawian*.

By looking at the characters that first appear on the screen of a wayang performance, the Sasak wayang audience can easily recognize whether the puppeteer playing the wayang they are watching is a Muslim or Hindu. Muslim puppeteers will bring up a *gunungan* behind, which are the characters of the

couple Jayengrane and Munigarim. Meanwhile, for Hindu puppeteers, the audience will witness the appearance of Rurah and Kembung on the puppeteer's screen for the first time. Rurah and Kembung are punakawan characters from the left-wing wayang.

From the findings above, it can be concluded that Sasak puppetry is the fruit of a cultural acculturation process. This process mixes different cultural elements into a new form without eliminating the basic color of the elements that form it.

One element of puppetry that looks diverse is Sasak puppet music. Some puppetry groups, such as the Jayengmare group, Batu Kumbung, Narmada, and West Lombok, still play Sasak puppet music, which is considered standard. In contrast, other groups play puppet music in different styles.

Language Pluralism

The variety of languages used in the Sasak puppet show makes this traditional performing art unique. The Kawi (*Jejawen*) language, Sasak language, Balinese language, and Indonesian language used by the puppeteers to convey the stories they play are pluralisms of languages, which will be an important factor in facilitating intercultural communication. A puppeteer as a communicator will easily convey their messages to the public as communicants from different cultural backgrounds. This is considering the existence of Sasak puppetry that grew amid the pluralistic Lombok society.

The Serat Menak manuscript in the form of poetry texts also has an opportunity to experience creativity when made into a form of performance. In this case, the role of a puppeteer is vital. The cheerful plot and the depiction of the characters also make localization possible, including language localization. The language change used by the figure Umar Madi—one of the main characters in Wayang Kanan—is one example of such localization. In the *Se, rat Menak manuscript*, Umar Mad I has dialogues using the Javanese language, but when performed in a Sasak Puppet performance, he has dialogues using Balinese.

To become a qualified puppeteer in Lombok, a puppeteer must master at least four languages. First, the Kawi language is the primary medium of Sasak

puppet performances, which refers to the Serat Menak language. Second, the Sasak language is the language of the majority of the people in Lombok. Third, the Balinese language is used by several characters or figures in Sasak puppets. Fourth, Indonesian is the national language that is widely known throughout Indonesia.

Dalang Muhammad, in a Sasak puppet show at his home in Gunung Malang Village, Pringgabaya Tengah District, felt insecure about playing the character of Umar Madi because his Balinese language was not fluent while among the audience present at the show was made Darundya, a puppeteer from the Balinese ethnic group. To play the character of Umar Madi, Dalang Muhammad asked for help from his son, the young puppeteer Muridun, as a substitute puppeteer. Muridun's role was again replaced by Muhammad after the character of Umar Madi was finished being played.

Considering the importance of language as a message conveyor to the audience. When invited to hold a performance in a particular area, Dalang Nengah Gowang conducted observations in public spaces, such as markets and stalls, to learn the language, dialect, and jokes of the residents ¹⁷. This observation bore sweet fruit; when holding his puppet show, his messages were easily understood because the language was similar between the puppeteer as the communicator and the audience as the communicant.

Internalization of pluralism among puppeteers.

The three puppeteers who were the primary informants in this study, Dalang Sukardi, Dalang Darundya, and Dalang Muhammad, have almost the same historical background related to the world of puppetry, and the three of them obtained their puppetry knowledge from their closest families. Dalang Sukardi and Dalang Muhammad obtained their puppetry knowledge from their parents, as did Dalang Darundya. Especially for Darundya's significant contribution was from his grandfather, Nengah Gowang - a famous puppeteer in Lombok in his time until

¹⁷ Interview with Puppeteer Darundia, March 30, 2021

today - who influenced Darundya's activities as a Sasak puppeteer. In addition to knowledge and skills about puppetry, the parents of the three puppeteers also instilled and passed on the history of pluralistic behavior to their children.

Not only do they discuss pluralism in the Sasak puppet shows that they perform in their daily lives, in interactions with fellow Sasak puppeteers, and with the community in general, but they have practiced the values of pluralism. This practice can be seen from the harmonious relationship between Dalang Darundya's grandfather, Dalang Nengah Gowang (of Balinese descent, Hindu) in Cakranegara with Dalang Amaq Mudim (Sasak, Muslim) in Bonjeruk, where Dalang Muhammad studied puppetry, it is also evident from the harmonious relationship between the parents of Dalang Sukardi (Sasak, Muslim) with his friends, *both sekehe* and Hindu puppeteers. The harmonious relationship between Muhammad, Sukardi, and Darundya proves that internalizing the values of pluralism taught by their parents is still ongoing in their daily practices, both in the Sasak puppet show space and their interactions.

Among his hundreds of puppet collections, Muhammad has a pair of puppets, Wayang Jayengrana and Munigarim (Jayengrana's wife), that looks different from the others; the color is faded, and some parts of the carving are fragile and broken, and there are traces of glue that stick the broken parts together. As a puppeteer who can also carve puppets, Muhammad could have retired the puppets and replaced them with new ones. However, there is a historical trace in the existence of the pair of puppets that makes him persist in always playing them, even though only in the opening scene of his show.

The old wayang puppets are the legacy of Amaq Mudim, the first-generation puppeteer in Bonjeruk Village, Central Lombok, Muhammad's hometown. The puppet was a gift from his friend Nengah Gowang, a Hindu Sasak puppet master who lives in Cakranegara, Mataram. According to Muhammad, Amaq Mudim considered Gowang to be his teacher in puppetry, while Gowang was very impressed with how Mudim played his wayang. It is said that the puppets played by Mudim will look very lively on screen. Mudim often watched Gowang's

performances, and Gowang also watched Mudim's performances, even though the distance between Mataram and Bonjeruk was around 27 kilometers. There were no modern means of transportation at that time, around the 1950s. As a form of love for his friend, Gowang presented Mudim with a pair of Jayengrana and Munigarim puppets. The friendship between Gowang and Mudim continues through the friendship between Darundya, Gowang's grandson, and Muhammad, Mudim's successor.¹⁸

Puppeteer Sukardi got to know the world of puppetry from his father, Amaq Rumite. According to Sukardi, his father had never been a puppeteer. However, he gained his puppetry knowledge from his activities as a puppeteer group leader in Lembuak, Narmada, West Lombok, with a puppeteer named Tuaq Bocok. Rumite also made friends with Ketut Jubil, a puppet owner in Lembuak Village, Narmada District, West Lombok. After he passed away, Jubil's puppets were inherited by his son Wayan Pure. In the early days of becoming a professional puppeteer, Sukardi used Pure's puppets; his *puppeteers* came from various circles. The puppets inherited from Ketut Junil are still intact today.

During the puppetry process, Sukardi learned a lot from puppeteer Gede Wike from Kembang Kuning Village, West Lombok. Around 1997, Sukardi, who at that time joined the Batu Kumbung sect, Narmada, had experienced pengot (a symptom of a stroke that made his face crooked). Gede Wike tried to treat Sukardi by taking him to several specialist doctors. However, his illness did not get better. A friend of Sukardi's took him for traditional treatment to Jonggat Village, Central Lombok. Sukardi finally recovered. Unbeknownst to Sukardi, it turned out that Gede Wike had made a sarangi or promise to welcome Sukardi to perform puppetry at Pura Sesaot if he recovered from his illness. When Sukardi was completely cured and the promised debt was paid, Sukardi performed puppetry at Pura Sesaot. In addition to the general audience, Wike presented senior *sekehe*, including the still-living ¹⁹*sekehe* Gowang.

¹⁸ Interview with Puppeteer Muhammad, March 31, 2021

¹⁹ Interview with Puppeteer Sukardi, March 30, 2021

In addition to the knowledge and skills about puppetry, the parents of the three puppeteers, the primary sources of this research, also instilled and passed on the history of pluralistic behavior to their children. The harmonious relationship between Muhammad, Sukardi, and Darundya that continues today proves that the internalization of the values of pluralism taught by their parents still occurs in their daily behavior, both in the Sasak puppet show space and their daily interactions.

For Muslims, pork, which Hindus commonly consume, is forbidden. To maintain the anxiety of Islamic puppeteers and sects, Hindus who invite Islamic puppeteering groups to perform ensure that their dishes are halal and do not contain pork. Usually, the food served is ordered from a catering service owned by Muslims. Sometimes, Islamic puppetry groups are allowed to prepare their food, including slaughtering their chickens by Islamic law. This practice makes Islamic puppeteers and sects feel confident about the food they consume.

The practice of interfaith and interethnic marriages among puppeteers in Lombok also contributes to their growth of pluralism. Family. Lalu Anggawa in Semerbak Wangi Dupa di Pulau Seribu Masjid mentions that interethnic and interfaith marriages have the potential to cause conflict but also contribute to the formation of social cohesion. Family ties can be built with the existence of family ties.²⁰ The practice of interethnic and interfaith marriages can be seen in the Sukirman family, where the leader of the Jayeng Samare puppetry group was in Batu Kumbung, Narmada, West Lombok. Lalu Sukirman's family is married to the family of Dalang Made Darundya. The marriage was possible because Amaq Inti, Sukirman's parents, had been in a relationship with Darundia's family since they were young. Moreover, because of that marriage, Darundia is now a puppeteer in the Jayeng Smare puppetry group.

Mastermind Authority

Individual authority is one of the roots of pluralism. This authority includes individual autonomy to interpret a value, which is then manifested in his attitude

towards the value. Because each individual has a unique and different reason and background from each other, it allows for the emergence of various understandings of reality, as well as diverse interpretations and attitudes towards values, both religious and cultural values.²¹ In Sasak puppetry, the puppeteer, the leading actor in the performance, has much authority. The puppeteer can reinterpret the texts in *Serat Menak*, the primary material of the Sasak puppet performance. He can also determine when the performance will start and end, including shortening the performance due to specific needs.

Because of his authority, some people believe that a puppeteer in a puppet show is a symbol of God. This opinion is based on the book *Centini*, written by the poet Kyai Yosodipura from Surakarta in the 19th century.²²

The following is an excerpt from the *Centini Book*, *Megatruh* poem, verses 2 and 3;

"Janmotama by lejem ing pandulu, sasmita ing Hyang Sejatu, puppeteer la[n] wayang dinunung, penganggone hyang roseni [k]aryaupameng pandulon"

"Kelir universe gumelar wayang pinanggung, asnapun creatures ing widi. Gedebok cushiona wegung, pandam ing urip, gamelan gending ing lakon."

The meaning of the verse is as follows:

"A perfect person makes a puppet as a symbol, which refers to God. He gives the puppeteer and the puppet a place (meaning) as an illustration of the various acts of God. That is the parable."

"The screen is the world that is seen; the wayang (puppets) arranged side by side are part of the category of God's creation. The earth's surface is the banana stem (where the puppets are attached). Blencong is the lamp of life. Gamelan symbolizes harmony, the harmony of events."

Another opinion states that the puppeteer is a depiction of the human spirit or soul because even though he has authority over the performance space, he plays like a god for his puppets; a puppeteer still has limitations, including that the puppeteer may not change the play when the listener or the host orders him to do so. When the puppeteer does not play the agreed play, he will conflict with the

²¹Wahid, Abdul, *Pluralisme Agama*, LEPPIM IAIN Mataram, Majatam, 2016, h.87

²²Mulyono, Sri, *Simbolisme et Mistikisme dalam Wayang*, Gunung Agung, Jakarta 1976, h.95

owner of the event, which will impact the honorarium (reward) that he will receive at the end of the performance. From this analogy, it is concluded that a puppeteer embodies the human spirit whose actions will be assessed. If someone plays his duties well, like a human carrying out his obligations as a servant, he will receive an appropriate reward after the performance (the next day).²³

From the researcher's findings, the authority of the puppeteer has made the Sasak puppet show in Lombok increasingly diverse and colorful (plural). The background of each puppeteer allows for the presence of a variety of Sasak puppet shows. It is known that the primary source of stories in the Sasak puppet show is the seamen. The story that comes from the seat Nanak is known as *bel*. However, not all puppeteers can read the seat means written in Jejawan in Lombok. Some puppeteers who can read Jejawan letters even rely on their memory of the storyline they recorded from watching senior puppeteers or their puppeteer teachers. This allows for various comprehension or interpretations of a performance used as a reference. These differences in acceptance and interpretation allow for various storylines in a Sasak puppet show played by different puppeteers. In addition to the *bel* story, in the world of puppetry in Lombok, there is also a story or puppetry play that is a development of the *bel* story, or *seat men*; the new story is known as *Taiwan*. The presence of this *kawaii* is also a source of diversity of stories in Sasak puppet performances.

For example, the puppeteer Muhammad could not read the Jejawan script of the *Serat Menak* book. Since he was a child, his puppeteering ability relied only on his memory of watching puppeteers in Bonjeruk Village. Meanwhile, puppeteer Darundia, proficient in reading Jejawan letters, did not read the *Serat Menak* directly to use as material for his puppet shows. Darundia's family still keeps a copy of the *Serat Menak* manuscript inherited from his grandfather, Nengah Gowang. However, Darundia did not read the *Serat Menak* directly as a reference for the performances he held. Darundia gained his puppetry skills from watching the

²³Ibid, h. 118

puppeteer Nengah Giyur. When he wanted to play a Sasak puppet play, he relied on notes in Latin letters as a synopsis of the puppet play given by his father.

For example, a puppeteer in East Lombok, Lalu Subeki, gave the Jayengrana character an umbrella we do not find in other puppeteers. Subeki believes that Jayengrane is a noble figure who deserves to be respected. Adding an umbrella to every appearance of the Jayengrane character did not receive any rejection from other puppeteers or the audience, who usually watch Sasak puppet shows from other puppeteers.²⁴ The puppeteers also explore presenting detailed characters, including puppets not in the bell, such as motor puppets, cidomo, firearms, etc.

Refutation of ethnocentrism

One obstacle to effective intercultural communication is ethnocentrism, a feeling of superiority or superiority of a group of people who consider other groups inferior to their group.²⁵ From its historical roots, the Sasak puppets that are present in the Lombok community as a medium for spreading Islam in Lombok ideally belong to Islamic preachers and the Sasak community who are adherents of Islam, but in reality encountered in this study, it shows that the Sasak puppeteers are not only from the Islamic group, likewise the Sasak puppet lovers are also not only from the Islamic group but also Hindus (Balinese). A Muslim puppeteer plays Sasak puppets at the invitation or request of Hindu residents, and vice versa; a Hindu puppeteer can play Sasak puppets in the Sasak Muslim community without any rejection.

From this reality, it can be concluded that the practice of Sasak puppetry that has been in effect so far is a denial of ethnocentrism towards Sasak puppets. Sasak puppets are a medium that is open to be owned by anyone, regardless of their religious and cultural background. No group of people from a particular religion or culture is in a higher position than other groups, so they can claim to be the

²⁴Interview with Puppeteer Subeki, March 15, 2021

²⁵Liliweri, Alo, *Dasar-dasar Komunikasi Antar Budaya*, Pustaka Pelajar, Yogyakarta, 2011, h.266

principal owners of the Sasak puppet performance tradition. The presence of the colors of Sasak and Balinese traditions in Sasak puppet performances shows this.

Blurring

When performing a Sasak puppet show in front of the residents of Mejeti Village, Lingsar District, West Lombok, who are predominantly Hindu, Sukardi repeatedly used the word *kafir* to refer to the left-wing puppet group (protagonist) who were being fought by the right-wing puppet group (antagonist), or the Jayengrana king group. For Sukardi, the *kafir* referred to those who were not yet religious, not those who had embraced a particular religion. Meanwhile, puppeteer Darundya used the word *kupar* to refer to the left-wing puppet group. For him, the word *kafir* was too sensitive and could offend the audience, so replacing *kafir* with *kupar* was considered safer and would not cause offense. *Kupar*, according to Darundya, is a term for people or groups who do not have a religion, behave tyrannically, and go beyond their limits. Researchers view this blooming process as part of the puppeteers' efforts to maintain harmony by living with people with different religious and cultural backgrounds.

Collaboration

As a performing art, Sasak Puppet combines several branches of art, including drama, visual arts, literary arts, vocal arts, *kara witan* arts, stage arts, *vidya* arts, and *riba* arts.²⁶ The combination of various artistic elements allows artists from various fields of art to meet in a Sasak puppet show. A puppeteer can master the various artistic elements that build a Sasak puppet show, but of course, he will not be able to present a complete Sasak puppet show alone; collaboration or cooperation from various artists is needed.

Dalang Muhammad is one of the puppeteers who is considered to have mastered the art of puppetry. Not only is he skilled at playing puppetry and musical instruments, but Muhammad is also good at carving puppets. In addition to

²⁶ Kasidi Hadiprayitno, *Teori Estetika pour Seni Pedalangan*. Lembaga Penelitian ISI Yogyakarta, 2004.

producing puppets for his performances, he receives orders to make puppets for several puppeteers in Lombok. However, Muhammad cannot make musical instruments. For the needs of musical instruments, whether making or repairing Sasak puppet musical instruments, there is an expert, I Wayang Kantun. Kantun is a Hindu Sasak puppeteer who lives in Gunung Sari, West Lombok. Among traditional artists, including puppet artists, apart from being a Sasak puppeteer, Kantun is also known as a maker of musical instruments, ranging from percussion drums, tambourines, and wind instruments to metal musical instruments. Kantun often receives orders from traditional artists in Lombok to make or repair various musical instruments. Meanwhile, for puppet needs, Kantun orders from Muhammad.

In practice, Sasak puppetry activists are also accustomed to complementing each other to hold Sasak puppet shows. A puppeteer who does not have complete puppets often borrows puppets from other puppeteers; not only that, puppeteers can also "borrow" sekere from other groups to complete their sekere performances. This illustration shows that cooperation or collaboration in the world of Sasak puppetry has been practiced in the daily lives of Sasak puppeteers.

CONCLUSION

This study has proven the existence of pluralism in Sasak Puppet performances. Although it has a history and contains Islamic values - the majority religion of the Sasak people in Lombok - Sasak Puppet does not belong to a particular religious or cultural group. The Muslim Sasak and Balinese Hindu communities living in Lombok accept the presence of the Sasak Puppet as part of their lives. Sasak Puppet is present not only in traditional ceremonies of the Sasak people but also in Hindu ceremonies, and it is even performed in temples, which are places of worship for Hindus. Sasak Puppet has become part of a harmonious coexistence amid the pluralistic society of Lombok.

Pluralism is reflected starting from the performance material, which is seen from the diversity of languages used by the puppeteers (Kawi, Sasak, and Balinese),

the plurality of characters representing the Sasak and Balinese ethnic groups in the figure of *re r incident* (punakawan). Pluralism is also seen in the harmonious relationship between the puppeteers and *sekehe* from different religious (Hindu-Islamic) and cultural (Balinese-Sasak) backgrounds, which has been going on for a long time since the early generation of Sasak puppetry and continues to this day. This harmonious relationship is not only seen on the performance stage when puppeteers and *sekehe* from different religions and cultures hold Sasak puppet shows, but a harmonious relationship also occurs in the daily lives of Sasak puppeteers.

From the general description obtained in this study, the author views that the practice of pluralism in Sasak puppet performances in Lombok needs serious attention from various parties so that it continues to be maintained to maintain harmony and harmony amid Lombok's multicultural society. Considering that from day to day, the number of puppeteers who play Sasak puppets is decreasing, there needs to be serious efforts, including intervention from the government and cultural activists, so that they can strive for the regeneration process of Sasak puppeteers. If this effort is not made, sooner or later, the wealth in the form of intangible cultural heritage, which is full of noble values, will only be a story. The rest of this research is only a small piece of the findings from the field of knowledge that is still stored in the world of Sasak puppetry. Efforts to excavate mosaics of knowledge from researchers and observers are highly expected so that the pearls still hidden in the world of Sasak puppets can be presented for the common good.

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