

## THE FLASHBACK OF WAYANG MEDIA AT WALI SONGO ERA AND ITS RELEVANCE IN MODERN LIFE

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Accepted: 10 October 2022. Approved: 14 October 2022. Published: 15 October 2022.

### ABSTRACT

Wayang as a medium of da'wah is the result of an initiative carried out by Sunan Kalijaga. Sunan Kalijaga is one of the Wali Songo members. By using wayang media, Wali Songo introduced Islam and invited people to convert to Islam voluntarily. The purpose of this study was to collect various information regarding the use of wayang as a medium of da'wah in the Walisongo era and its relevance in modern times. The method used in this research is a literature study; information is obtained and collected from several studies and existing literature. The result of the discussion is that wayang in the Wali Songo era was used as a propaganda medium to introduce Islam. However, the times have changed to modern times; the use of wayang is not only focused as a medium of da'wah but also for public entertainment.

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**Keywords:** Media of Da'wah, Wayang, Culture, Wali Songo, Islam.

### INTRODUCTION

Javanese society has a rich culture known for its traditions ranging from dance, food, music, and wayang. Wayang, as a type of performance, is often interpreted as a shadow that is not clear or vague, moving to and fro. In Javanese society, wayang is often used as a medium of da'wah. With the arrival of Walisongo in the archipelago, especially Java, with the primary mission of spreading Islam, it turns out that the method of spreading it is unique, namely wayang as a propaganda medium, the result of an initiative carried out by Sunan Kalijaga. The da'wah approach strategy through the media of wayang culture plays a significant role in the development of Islamic values in Indonesia. The wayang is a medium of cultural propaganda used by Wali Songo as a form of

acculturation of Hindu culture with Islam (Widoyo, A. F. 2021)

At the time of Wali Songo, Wayang played a role as an entertainment medium that inserted Islamic philosophy and noble values through communication and information in the form of stories or plays so that the people could more readily accept it. Currently, in modern life, the relevance of wayang as a medium of social communication and as cultural heritage can still be used as a vehicle for revitalizing Islamic da'wah and linking it with existing social realities so that it can become a spectacle that leads a good and proper direction according to Islam.

Wayang is a work of art that can be the most effective medium for entertainment and the need to spread religious and spiritual values to modern society. With that, wayang is still considered an art that has relevance in

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modern life, so that wayang deserves to be preserved, especially as a medium for preaching to Muslims.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Hostories Wayang

Wayang is an ancestral cultural heritage estimated to have existed since ± 1500 BC. Historians in determining the origin of wayang vary. According to Krom, wayang comes from India, while Gosling argues from China. Meanwhile, Pischel, as quoted by Hazim, supports Gosling, namely that wayang comes from India. However, according to the Dutch historian Hazeu, wayang originated from the Javanese people during the animist era (Soetarno, 1995).

The development of wayang in line with human life and civilization began with the Ramayana and Mahabharata and continued until the Javanese empire and the independence revolution. Wayang is a picture of human life, both in the context of individuals and groups, regarding the development of a moral code for humans. Wayang comes from the Old Javanese language from the word "wod" and "yang", which means repetitive and irregular movement; with the meaning of that word, it can be said that wayang means a shadowy form that is constantly moving in an irregular place (Marina Puspitasari, 2008, p. 32).

### Wayang as a Da'wah Media

The word media comes from Latin, which means tool or intermediary. Media are physical tools that explain the content of messages or teachings, such as books, films, videos, cassettes, slides and so on (Munir, 2009, p. 113), while da'wah is a practice used to convey da'wah material to da'wah recipients (Bachtiar, W, 1997, p. 35). The media used for this da'wah is wayang art. Ya'kub, H, 1981:98 divides da'wah media into five, namely: Through oral, such as lectures, lectures and speeches; Through writing, such as books, magazines, newspapers, correspondence and banners; Through paintings, for example, drawings, and caricatures; Through audio visuals such as TV, movies, internet, slides and OHP; Morals, for example, a visit to hospitality.

According to Ali Aziz, there are two types of da'wah media: traditional da'wah

media and modern da'wah media. Based on Aziz's division, wayang art is included in the category of traditional da'wah media. In the global era, various kinds of da'wah media are available. Some people still like to accept traditional cultural media, such as wayang art, ketoprak, ludruk, and hadrah/tambourine. In comparison, some other people prefer modern propaganda media such as films, dramas, operas, telenovelas and so on.

## METHODS

The method used in this research is a literature study or literature review. Literature study or literature review is undoubtedly not just reading and recording literature or books as is often understood by many people. This study links the research with the existing literature and fills a gap in previous research. A literature study or review is a series of activities related to library data collection methods, reading and recording and processing research materials (Zed, M, 2004, p. 3).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to historical data, in 937 AD, the King of Kediri Jayabaya started making wayang from rental. King Jenggala Raden Panji, in 1223 AD, also made wayang with the same material. Starting in 1244 AD, King Ox Amiluhur from Pajajaran made wayang out of paper. Likewise, Prabu Brawijaya of Majapahit, in 1283 AD, made wayang from paper in the form of wayang beber. The shape of the wayang at this time resembles a human. The position of his face is metok, while the source of the story comes from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. The form of wayang in the Islamic era changed and adapted to Islamic teachings.

In pre-Islamic times, wayang was in the form of small statues like humans. According to the religious understanding of the time, they are keeping or preserving it for decoration or whatever was considered haram in the early days of Islam entering Java. Sunan Kalijaga includes elements of Aqidah, morals and even worship. Wayang that previously resembled a human form were redesigned so as not to resemble humans. The head consisting of a nose, eyes, and mouth, is designed so that it does not resemble a human

head. Likewise, the designed wayang body is not ideal with the original human form. Even hands and feet are very far from the depiction of humans. For the Alusan character, the nose is pointed, the neck is as long as an arm, the extended arms almost touch the soles of the feet, and the mouth is curved. This is because, in Islamic teachings, there is a prohibition on depictions that resemble human forms. The results of the redesign of the wayang can be seen until now.

### **Sunan Kalijaga Using Wayang for Da'wah and Linking into the Pillars of Islam**

Historically, wayang cannot be separated from Sunan Kalijaga, and he is the one who has contributed to modifying wayang from its old (Hindu-Buddhist) form to its current form. Sunan Kalijaga uses wayang to get and attract people's sympathy to convert to Islam voluntarily. The number of wayang has increased, namely the term five Pandavas. The five wayang want to convey the content of the elements of Aqidah, namely the five pillars of Islam. The pillars of Islam are incarnated in wayang figures. The first pillar of Islam, the Shahada, is embodied in the Puntadewa figure. Sunan Kalijaga modified "*Jimat kali maha usada*", the motto that has existed since the Hindu-Buddhist era, to "*Jimat Kalimo Sodho*", which means "*Azimat Kalimat Syahadat*". The amulet is a symbol of the key to success in life. So humans who want to survive the hereafter must have the talisman, namely by reciting the Shahadatain, which means testifying to acknowledge Allah SWT as God and Muhammad as a Prophet.

Allah SWT has Asma al Husna, while the prophet Muhammad has noble qualities. Sunan Kalijaga embodies some of Asma al Husna and the nature of the prophet in the Puntadewa character, who is described as a king who is virtuous, wise, wise, fair, honest, trustworthy, and protects his people. The second personification of the pillars of Islam is the character Werkudara or Bima. Bima is depicted as a wayang character who is strong, valiant, famous for his magic, likes to uphold justice, and upholds the values of goodness. Bima is also described as the enforcer of the Pandavas because Bima rarely sits, even during periods of sleep, standing up. This is following the rules of prayer. Prayer is a pillar

of religion, and you must be strong to carry it out five times a day. The obligatory prayer five times is very heavy worship for some Muslims; therefore, it is necessary to have the strength that every Muslim, both physically and mentally, must have in carrying out the prayer. The third pillar of Islam is fasting, manifested in character Janaka or Arjuna. Fasting aims to cleanse oneself so that the heart or mind becomes pure, clean, and clear. By fasting, it is hoped that his soul will be vital in facing all trials to produce a clean and easy heart to draw closer to Allah SWT. Arjuna is a man of choice for the world's Ielananging. Arjuna's clarity radiated from the aura of his face and body.

In addition, Arjuna is a wayang character whose feelings are smooth, very reluctant to refuse kindness. Hence, it seems as if Arjuna is weak, even though Arjuna does not want to hurt other people's hearts. Art and beauty are elements that have been engraved in Arjuna's heart. Zakat and Hajj, respectively, occupy the position of the fourth and fifth pillars, presented by twin wayang characters named Nakula-Sadewa. Nakula's characters complement each other. Good personality, politely dressed, hardworking, affluent, and generous. In a logical explanation, people who like to work will get property which will then be able to perform the Hajj and don't forget to clean the property so that it is pure physically and mentally, then that person issues Zakat (Anggoro in Fadli, 2019).

### **The Use of Wayang in the Wali Songo Era**

According to Imron (2002), the emergence of the term Wali Songo or nine waliyullah was aimed at nine Islamic religious leaders who were sacred and united in spreading the religion and organizing Islam in Java. They get the title of wali from the word "auliya" Allah (people close to Allah SWT, followers and lovers) who play a role in continuing the prophetic mission. According to him again, Songo also shows the Javanese count, which means nine. This number is a unique number for the Javanese people, which is taken from Ja, which has a value of three and Wa, which is worth six.

Wali Songo subtly and wisely has succeeded in applying Islamic values and the life and culture of the Javanese people. Wali

Songo not only approached the community with religious activities, but they also approached them by inserting Islamic insertions through cultural activities. Indirectly, the spread of Islamic da'wah and the continuity of Javanese culture can go hand in hand. The fact that da'wah needs to go hand in hand with culture is a fact that cannot be denied anymore. This fact is supported by the triumph of Wali Songo, who has incorporated elements of Islam characterized by the advice in the Javanese wayang kulit art. According to Zunaidah (2006), the spread of da'wah through wayang kulit is valid in Java, and several Arab countries, including Morocco, Tunisia and Syria, have used it as a send for the spread of Islam. Ahmad, M (1995) said that Wali Songo had used wayang kulit, which is part of the entertainment culture of the community and needs to be appointed as a medium of da'wah communication that has a significant influence on people's mindsets.

Walisongo applies Islamic elements based on samada da'wah through dialogue or moving statues. Even though the element of Islam is entangled, this does not mean it only acts as a decoration. Even symbolically, this effort to apply Islamic values implies that Islam is always brought together in all aspects of life. Wayang Wali Songo is also seen as containing a two-sided propaganda strategy. In addition to promoting it as a medium of da'wah on a cultural stage, wayang kulit has also succeeded in showing da'wah through its mother tongue, giving a profound impression. Through the use of the Javanese language in wayang kulit, the acceptance of Islam in Javanese society becomes more fluent and easy.

As in the previous discussion, Wali Songo has also changed several forms of images from those in human form to other forms justified by sharia. All of the storylines are also changed to stories with Islamic elements. With this change that does not touch any sensitivity, it turns out that the Wali Songo shadow wayang has stolen the hearts of the people to become loyal fans of the newly introduced Islamic culture. Wali Songo's approach through Wayang Kulit has shown that the wisdom through *uslub hiwar* or dialogue delivered through scripts in the form

of advice plays a vital role in influencing the target. This method indirectly shows that the guardians do not take a violent approach to eradicate traditions that contradict Islam.

### The Use of Wayang in the Modern Era

The use of wayang in the modern era is now seen as a literary art that is most effective in preaching noble values adapted to Islamic teachings through a cultural approach. Wayang has two dual functions: spectacle or entertainment and guidance or education in social life. Preservation of wayang art as the nation's noble cultural heritage, Indonesia certainly has the hope of being a medium to bring Muslims in Indonesia closer to their own culture, which is noble and contains the istibar and philosophical values of Islamic teachings.

There are several aspects of the advantages possessed by wayang as a medium of da'wah, namely:

1. Psychological aspects. Wayang media in da'wah can penetrate the emotional aspect. Islamic teachings will quickly enter the heart. Each character follows the Islamic perspective and is easier to accept because it does not seem patronizing.
2. Historical Aspect. Wayang is a show that people have favoured for a long time. Not only in Java, Indonesia. Wayang is also popular with Malaysians. The fans of wayang are not only those who are not literate but also those who are well-educated. In its history, wayang can be a historical and cultural appreciative media.
3. Pedagogical aspects. It contains the teachings of life of noble value as an effort to realize and socialize in realizing the life of a nation with character (national character building) to support government programs in character education.
4. Political aspects. The wayang media helps make it easier for Islamic da'wah to be accepted by all groups. It is flexible without being constrained by caste, such as education, social status, political aspirations, etc.
5. Practical Aspects. Wayang propaganda media is suitable because it is applicable and familiar in people's lives.

### The content of wayang as a cultural medium for Islamic da'wah

1. Trust in His power.
2. Philosophy, seeking the true nature of truth.
3. Moral morality, commendable actions will eventually get happiness, and vice versa.
4. Heroism, courage to defend the truth.
5. State how a country should be governed as state officials must act.
6. The ideal of life is to maintain happiness for the sake of democracy.

### Wayang Relevance to Modern Life

One worrying symptom that afflicts modern people's lives is alienation, which is the feeling of being alienated despite being in a busy life, according to Muhammad Shulton. On the other hand, modern society also needs entertainment. For spiritual needs to be fulfilled, and the need for entertainment is also fulfilled, modern society needs a facility or entertainment that has a dual function, namely one that can fill the spiritual aridity of religious spirituality values, even if it is entertainment. To fill this boredom, the art of wayang culture used to be an alternative media in addition to other media. By paying attention to the explanation from the above descriptions, wayang is still a cultural art relevant to modern life. It deserves to be preserved, especially by the Muslim segment of the movement.

### CONCLUSION

Wayang, as a medium of culture and entertainment, has a dual function. Wayang here are intermediaries for preaching messages that can fill the spiritual aridity of religious values and entertainment. Several aspects of the advantages possessed by wayang as a medium of da'wah make it still relevant to use today. Wali Songo, through this Wayang, has shown that the da'wah delivered through scripts containing cultural elements in the form of advice plays a vital role in influencing the target. Sunan Kalijaga played an essential role in modifying wayang, from the shape to the wayang stories that contain many religious values. Sunan Kalijaga uses wayang as a medium for his da'wah to attract

attention and sympathy from the community to embrace Islam. At the time of Wali Songo, wayang was known as a medium of da'wah. With the development of the times, da'wah media does not only use wayang. Like modern times, da'wah has used many various media for its dissemination. Likewise with wayang today, wayang stories are not only about preaching the religion of Islam; wayang has been used as entertainment and has varied stories such as comedy, history, and so on.

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