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### A SEMIOTIC STUDY OF KI ENTHUS SUSMONO'S CREATIVE MANAGEMENT IN WAYANG KULIT/LEATHER PUPPET AND WAYANG RAI - WONG/HUMAN FACE PUPPET

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The aims of the research are: 1. to show that the leather and human face puppet can be the media to promise the good attitude, behavior and personality of human being and 2. to describe that Leather puppet is one of the most decorative art which is adiluhung/precious and valuable (treasured) and edipeni/beautiful and interesting (dainty). 3. Wayang or puppet has very good language, full and deep meaning of philosophy, lots of advice and suggestion for the society about good and holy behavior, attitude and personality. Ki Enthus Susmono is among the innovative puppeteers whose leather puppet has already accepted by the modern society and the presence of the human face puppet has become very interesting phenomenon because of the public' attention and enthusiasm. This study discusses the human face puppet as the creativity of Ki Enthus Susmono from semiotic perspective. The discussion thus aims to discover the values, functions, and indigenous elements of the human face puppet. The method used is qualitative research and the data gathering techniques used by observation, in-depth interview and documentation. Then, through critical paradigm, the human face puppet is investigated by Pierce's semiotic theory. The research result showed that the human face puppet by Ki Enthus Susmono has lots of signs, symbols, and meanings. It also has a richer and more complex signs, meanings, and functions compared with the traditional leather puppet.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is very rich and abundant with beautiful and interesting cultures and traditions which spread out in many regions/islands. The Culture can be interpreted as a whole system of ideas, actions, and human's works in life which

is claimed belong to human being and society by learning (Koentjaraningrat, 2000). Every regions/islands has its specific culture, for example Javanese culture. Javanese cultural system uses symbols to convey messages, suggestion or advices. leather puppet has become a form of distinct art from Java. It is also a kind of decorative art which has become special and crucial Javanese decorative art.

The leather puppet is a part of puppet theatrical art. It can be used as a medium of education. It is made of leather, it is flat, colorful and it has handle stick. Bradon (1996) assumed that Javanese leather puppet has distinct structures. The distinctiveness depends on the characters being played. The standard play of leather puppet is usually adapted from Ramayana and Mahabarata. Every style of leather puppet' character has its own symbols with its own meanings. Leather puppet is very special because it is *adiluhung* means valuable and precious in meaning (treasured) and *edipeni* means beautiful and wonderful in meaning (dainty), it has ethic and aesthetic value. The oldest leather puppet is known as *wayang purwa*. The word *wayang* means shadow and *purwa* means old or ancient. Then, *Wayang purwa* is developed from the chapters in the works sanctions, especially Mahabarata.

(Mulyono, 1982) *Wayang purwa*'s structures and characters are based on Mahabarata play. That is why it is claimed to be the standard of *wayang kulit* or leather puppet. *Wayang kulit* continues to be developed in terms of the character and size. The types of leather puppet are developed based on the story of the play, for example: *wayang madya*, *wayang panji*, *wayang dupara*, and *wayang calon arang*. The developments of *wayang kulit* based on their shapes are as follow: *wayang kulit*, *wayang klitik*, *wayang kancil*, *wayang geger*, *wayang suluh*, and *wayang rai-wong*. Leather puppet continues to transform in order to follow the era of modernism.

From the point of view about the language of puppet has very good language, soft, tender, full and deep meaning of philosophy, lots of advice and suggestion for the people or society about good and holy behavior, attitude and personality. Sometimes their language also cheer and funny, full of humor and joke from day to day in the society' life. And the language can also be changed in melancholic and happy when someone falls in love. Indeed, this kind of Javanese culture has spread out the happiness, beauty and joyful to many people or society.

In the millennial era, leather puppet grows up rapidly and continues to be developed in order to meet the market tastes and needs. In the other hand, Ki Enthus Susmono is one of the condominium puppeteers from Tegal city – Central Java who continued to make innovations in creating wayang. Ki Enthus Susmono continued to develop and modify the traditional wayang or puppet figures, even creating new wayang designs. One of the phenomenal designs of Ki Enthus Susmono is what we called the human face puppet. It is a puppet that made inspired from the real human face characters. The figures made consist of contemporary fictional figures, leaders and political figures, or famous artists. the

human face puppet was first created due to Ki Enthus's concern upon the traditional culture.

## **THE RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method of this study is qualitative. The Qualitative research aims to understand the complex data which is generally found in certain contexts. Qualitative research has a flexible research design because researchers are the main instrument of the study and the reality of the field becomes an object that continually explored. Because of its flexibility, qualitative research is able to describe phenomena and social reality accurately, in detail, and deeply (Moleong, 2007). The research design that is used is a semiotic analysis method. Semiotic analysis is a research perspective that elaborates and explores signs (words or symbols) so that they lead to meanings in certain contexts (Patton, 2007). Critically, the findings of this study are interpreted in depth through descriptive qualitative techniques.

### ***Data Gathering Techniques***

The data of this study are divided into three, they are: (1) visual data from the human face puppet, (2) data from the information or documentation about the interpretation of signs through semiotic analysis; and (3) data from interviews with the informants or resource persons. The data are collected by using observation techniques, literature studies, and in depth interviews. Observation is made by observing the visual forms of Ki Enthus Susmono's human face puppet, including: the patterns, lines, and colors. The literature studies are carried out by Charles Sanders Pierce's study of semiotic analysis. The interview was conducted with Ki Enthus Susmono and several semiotic analysis experts.

### ***Semiotic Pierce's perspective***

This study conducts a semiotic study of Ki Enthus Susmono's human face puppet. Semiotic studies are carried out by analyzing the signs and communicating the information found. Through a semiotic study, various meanings are explored from the signs in the human face puppet. The semiotic study that is used is based on Pierce's semiotic theory. Pierce divides semiotic analysis into three groups, they are: (1) Syntactic semiotics, studying the relationship of one sign with another; (2) Semantic semiotics, learning the meaning of signs; and (3) Pragmatic semiotics, studying the function of signs or the linkages of signs with the user (Hoed, 2011). Pierce's theory is used as a "scalpel" in studying Ki Enthus Susmono's human face puppet.

Semiotic or semiotics comes from the Greek word semeion which means "sign". The word semeion is taken from the hypocritical or asclepiad medicine term which meaning is almost the same as the symptomatology approach and inferential diagnostics (Sobur, 2004). Signs, at their first glance, only have

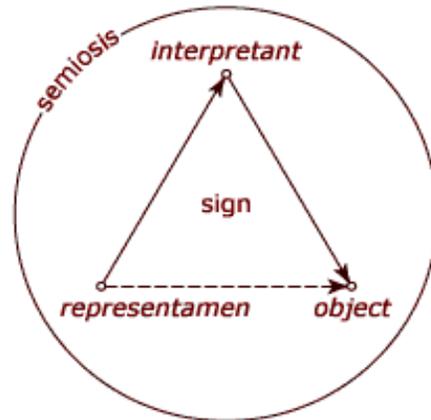
meanings which refer to the existence of something else. A terminologically, semiotics is defined as a branch of science that is related to the assessment of signs and everything related to signs, such as sign systems and processes that apply to signs (van Zoest, 1993). Related to this, semiotics means the study of a wide range of objects, events, and all cultures as a signs (Shabbir et al., 2020; Teeuw, 1984).

In its development, the study of signs was dominated by the work of American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). Peirce was a logician who is likely understood the human logic patterns. Throughout his life, Peirce did plenty of writings but none of them were preface and sketches so they were not published until his death. In 1931 –

1935, six volumes of Peirce's writings were recorded by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss under the title *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Furthermore, in 1957 volumes 7 and 8 of Peirce's writings were published by Arthur W Burks. Peirce had the belief that humans think in signs. These then became the basis for the creation of a study of sign called semiotics. Peirce's semiotics is equated with logic, which is literally said "we only think in signs". In addition, Peirce saw sign as an element in communication (Shabbir et al., 2020; Teeuw, 1984).

Peirce divided sign based on its ground into three groups, among them are: 1. quali signs, 2. sin signs, and 3. leg signs. Quali signs are signs which based on a trait. Sin signs are signs which based on appearance in reality. Any individual statement that isn't institutionalized is sin signs. Legs signs are signs which based on a generally accepted regulation, convention, and code (Van Zoest, 1993). Related to its signs and denotatum, Peirce focused on three aspects of sign, namely iconic, indexical and symbolic. Iconic means that something performs a function as a sign where it is similar to the physical appearance (shown in the picture or painting). Index means something that function as a marker that indicates its sign. Symbol is marker that functions as a marker which commonly used in society (Van Zoest, 1993).

Pierce's theory divides the sign into three main elements, they are: represent, object, and interpret. Represent is anything that functions as a sign, that is, it can be perceived and can be thought of. Object is a component that is represented by a sign, something that can be captured by the senses and can be mental or imaginary. Interpret is the meaning or interpretation of the sign. The three main elements in the Peirce 's theory are commonly called as triangle of meaning theory. For further explanation, Peirce's semiotic analysis technique is illustrated through the following diagram (Teeuw, 1984).



**Picture1.** Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotics Analysis

The model proposed by Peirce is trichotomic or triadic. It means that Peirce's interpreting process follows the relationship among three points which are represent, object, and interpreting. Peirce's theory of signs shows that the meaning of a sign is more to a cognitive process than a structure. The process of interpreting signs involving cognitive is called semiotics. According to Peirce, signs are not only representative but also interpretative. Peirce assumes that the interpretation of sign is done through three stages. The first stage is when the sign is recognized as a principle only. The First means that the existence of a sign is just as it is without refers to something else, the existence of potential possibilities. Then the second stage is when the sign is interpreted individually. The third stage is when the sign is interpreted permanently as a convention. This three-stage concept is important to grasp since the level of understanding of signs is not the same for all members of the culture.

According to Peirce, the sign on that image can be classified into three basic elements, namely: represent, object, and interpret. The general perception or representation of the image is the form of human (uwong) figure of the character Werkudara. In terms of quali sign, the image consists of several forms, they are: (1) two-dimensional images of human's realistic face facing to the side including the forehead, eyebrows, eyes, nose, mouth, cheeks and chin; (2) two-dimensional images of realistic human body covering the neck, neckline, chest, chest line, stomach, and stomach line; (3) a picture of a hand cut in pieces with nail hooks on the shoulder, arm, and elbow joint, clenched fingers with one long nail on the thumb; (4) realistic foot shapes including calves, legs, feet and toes with proportions that are longer and clearly visible; (5) traditional Javanese clothing decoration includes Kuluk means headdress, snake necklace, kelat bahu means arm bracelet, wristband, anklet, pants, bow, batik (One of Indonesian traditional textiles) sarong, belt, and keris or dagger (A kind of Javanese traditional weapon; a double-edged wavy blade; and (6) colors in which brown for skin, black for eyeballs, eyebrows and hair, as well as a blend of indigo, brick red, black, white, and gold for accessories. Those appearances refer to the real human form.

## THE RESEARCH RESULT

Based on the sign analysis, appearance raises personal (individual) impression based on the empirical experience of the researcher. This personal impression is the basis of the sign analysis which is further explained as follows. First, the realistic image of the human face suggests that the human is still young. It is discovered from the relatively smooth skin texture, the less facial lines, and the black hair. Second, the body shape of the figure displays a firm chest with clear abs on the abdomen which gives the impression that the character is sturdy and strong. Third, a smooth picture of the shoulders, arms, and legs without lines can be interpreted as a depiction of a young human figure. The hand that is clenched with a towering thumb with long nails indicates that the figure is aware, tough, and has the strength from its long nails. Fourth, the muscular foot along with the large soles of the feet and long fingers gives the impression that the figure has a strong footing. In addition to that, the figure is not wearing shoes. It gives the impression that the character is populist and down to the earth. Fifth, the impression on the accessories used by the character can be divided into several parts: (a) the kuluk (headdress) which is large and majestic in brick red and indigo gives the impression that the figure is a knight or nobleman with nurturing or reassuring nature; (b) a snake necklace with a gaping mouth and tied tail gives the impression that the figure is able to control himself, his emotions, his anger, and fear so that he has harmony in his life; (c) the kelat bahu, the black, red, and gold wristband bracelets with golden flower motifs indicates a figure of a respected knight; (d) the golden keris or dagger with a red line accent becomes a sign of a weapon with a strong impression but protecting others; and (e) the black and white patterned lancingan means sarong, fabric give the impression that the figure has assertive attitude.

Sixth, the colors selection of the human face puppet has their own impressions. The brown color on the skin and black on the eyes, eyebrows, and hair gives a natural and realistic impression of a human figure. In addition, brown skin along with eyeballs, eyebrows, and black hair give the impression of being communal, earthy, charismatic, and soothing. The choice of black, white, brick red, gold, and indigo colors in the accessories also give certain impressions. Black and white gives the impression of unequivocal difference between good and bad choices. The red brick gives the impression of immense strength. Gold gives the impression of glory and wealth. Indigo colors give the impression of life that is in harmony and nurturing others.

## DISCUSSION

Ki Enthus Susmono is one of the masterminds who continued to develop wayang creation. Ki Enthus Susmono's wayang creations including: wayang planet, wayang with cartoon characters such as Superman, Batman, Satria Baja Hitam, robots, dinosaurs, and The human face puppet like George Bush, Barrack Obama, Donald Trump, Saddam Hussein,

political figures, and artists. Ki Enthus Susmono's wayang rai-wong is a phenomenon in the world of Indonesian art. The human face puppet is rich in signs and meanings because it contains the elements of traditional puppet and also the works of modern art. Here is one form of the work of Ki Enthus Susmono's human face puppet



**Picture2.** The Human Face Puppet or Wayang Rai-wong Werkudara

Based on the legs signs" point of view, the appearance of the human face puppet signifies the figure of Raden Werkudara when he was young and commonly called Bratasena. This is shown by several signs that exist in the appearance of wayang rai-wong or The human face puppet based on the consensus in the puppet world, specifically the nail element and the lancingan (sarong cloth) element. Based on the standard play, the image of a long nail dangling on both thumbs is called the pancanaka nails. Pancanaka nails are only possessed by 7 descendants of Bathara Bayu. Therefore, the pancanaka or the nails in the picture indicate that the owner of the nail has the power of Bathara Bayu. In addition to that, there is also black and white checker pattern in the world of wayang/puppet that is commonly used by Raden Werkudara. In the world of wayang, Raden Werkudara is known as a character which has a firm stance, assertive, and is not tedheng aling-aling means no shield and said the truth. This is in line with the meaning of black and white tails which is clear differences between good and bad.

### ***The Achievement of Ki Enthus Susmono***

The puppet or wayang that is begun to be shifted with the foreign culture and it is expected that the human face puppet with its beetling character is also able to penetrate into millennium market share. Various circles of societies respond positively toward the presence of the human face puppet. Wikipedia noted many successes of Ki Enthus's the human face puppet, some of them are: (1) Grand launching wayang rai-wong at the Central Java-Surakarta Taman Budaya or The Cultural Park Fine Art Gallery, 2006; (2) The human face puppet exhibition, in Merah Putih Fine Art Gallery- Surabaya, 2006; (3) The human face puppet

exhibition in the National Wayang Week at Cipta II TIM Fine Art Gallery-Jakarta in 2007; (4) Joint wayang exhibition at Wayang Museum Indonesia in Jakarta, 2007; (5) Superstar Wayang or puppet Exhibition: The Theatre World of Ki Enthus Susmono in Tropen Museum - Amsterdam-Holland, 2009; and (6) Ki Enthus Susmono's wayang exhibition in the Kampung Budaya or the cultural kampung of Universitas Negeri Semarang, 2016.

As reported from Wikipedia, The human face puppet/wayang rai-wong was able to make Ki Enthus Susmono get various achievements such as: (1) The best puppeteers in Indonesia at the Indonesian Wayang Festival in 2005; (2) The winners of the Youth Award in Arts and Culture from the DPD HIPMI Central Java, 2005; (3) The Doctor of Honoris Causa in the field of arts from the International University of Missouri, U.S.A Laguna College of Business and Arts, Calamba, Philippines, 2005; (4) Muri's record as a creative puppeteer with the most types of puppets in 1491, 2007. In addition to that, so Ki Enthus Susmono's the human face puppet is collected by various international museums such as: (1) Tropen Museum in Amsterdam, Netherlands; (2) Museum of International Folk Arts (MOIFA) in New Mexico; and (3) Walter Angsts Puppet Museum in Germany. Those achievement records make wayang rai-wong/ the human face puppet considered to worth the further study. The phenomenal art is also considered to be able to provide many benefits in the field of art and culture.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

From that analysis of signs, we can conclude that the object in the image of the human face puppet can be linked to Raden Werkudara. The person who play the character of the Wayang Rai-wong or the human face puppet is expected to have the same traits as Raden Werkudara, in which, among others: (a) have strength or can be interpreted as have wide knowledge; (b) have a wise nature so they can control their emotions and desires; (c) have the great language that is full and deep meaning for human being, (d) have the wisdom to be able to protect and provide benefits to others; (e) have assertiveness in attitude so that they can distinguish the good and the bad; and (f) have the prosperity and wealth that is beneficial to others.

Ki Enthus's the human face puppet has many signs, symbols and meanings. The signs obtained include color, appearance and expression. The signs of the human face puppet show clear and straight forward symbols. Each sign such as color, appearance, and expression in the human face puppet is differ in meanings depending on the context of the face. The signs contained in the human face puppet can be interpreted conventionally and modernly. Conventionally, the sign is interpreted according to the meaning agreed in standard leather puppet as an interpretation of the figure of Werkudara. In the modern interpretation, the sign is interpreted according to the social context of the form, such as colors, expressions, and accessories associated with the social issues related to the wayang/puppet as the incredible traditional culture.

The forms, meanings, and functions of the signs in the Ki Enthus Susmono's wayang rai-wong or the human face puppet can be explored. The semiotic study of knowledge about the specialties of the signs and their relation to other signs in wayang rai-wong; (2) through extracting the meanings of the signs, advices can be obtained; (3) information about the functions of the signs can facilitate practitioners in performing the human face puppet; and (4) indigenous elements in the human face puppet can be explored so that they can be used in preserving Javanese culture.

### SUGGESTION

The human face puppet or Wayang Rai wong can be the best media for conveying the good and holy characters, such as: honest, brave, diligent, reliable, strict but caring and kind heart. And also can be able to form the wonderful behavior, attitude and personality of people or society to have the great treasured and dainty in this modern life.

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