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AESTHETIC TRANSFORMATIONS OF BALINESE WAYANG PARWA AND RAMAYANA PERFORMANCES IN THE GLOBAL ERA

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Since the 1970s, Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances in Bali have undergone significant aesthetic transformations in response to the currents of global culture. This study examines the forms and processes of these transformations, as well as their implications for the sustainability of Balinese shadow puppet theatre. The research employs a qualitative method, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using theories of transformation, aesthetics, and creativity. Findings indicate that globalization has influenced Balinese puppeteers (*dalang*) to innovate various components of the performance, including musical accompaniment, lighting, the screen (*kelir*), the use of comedic puppets (*bebondresan*), the structure of the performance, and the overall style of presentation. These creative efforts have succeeded in attracting public interest back to the shadow puppet performances and have also spurred innovations in other types of wayang performances, such as Wayang Calonarang and Wayang Babad. The aesthetic transformation of Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances has contributed significantly to the government, entrepreneurs, and society at large, as these performances are often utilized as a medium for communication and dissemination of information directly related to social life in the era of globalization.

Keywords: *Performance Aesthetics, Wayang Parwa and Ramayana, Balinese Shadow Puppetry, Globalization*

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INTRODUCTION

Balinese wayang kulit (shadow puppet theater) is a prominent traditional art form that continues to thrive and evolve within contemporary society. Given the widespread presence of shadow puppet performances across various global cultures, UNESCO, a cultural agency under the United Nations, officially designated wayang as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity on November 7, 2003. This recognition is formally documented in the charter titled "A Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" (S. Sutrisno, 2009).

In Balinese wayang kulit performances, the primary medium comprises puppets meticulously crafted from cowhide, manipulated by a single performer known as the *dalang*. Beyond the puppets themselves, the staging of wayang kulit also incorporates essential apparatus, including a stage, a *kelir* (screen), lighting, and musical accompaniment. Enthusiasts of wayang kulit in Bali exhibit a strong regionalistic spirit and demonstrate considerable dedication to their specific puppetry styles, or *pedalangan*. As Nanda (2010) observes, wayang performances in different countries are characterized by unique techniques and styles.

In Bali, the continued existence of wayang kulit performances is intrinsically linked to their role in religious ceremonies. The diverse types of wayang include, but are not limited to, Wayang Parwa, Wayang Ramayana, Wayang Cupak, Wayang Calonarang, Wayang Arja, Wayang Tantri, and Wayang Babad. Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana remain the most popular among these various forms. However, in line with contemporary global trends, these two prominent wayang forms have experienced the influence of globalization, leading to a transformation in their aesthetic presentation. This global influence has also impacted the mindset of Balinese *dalang* (puppeteers), leading to a decreased commitment to preserving traditional styles according to established norms (*pakem*). Consequently, traditional wayang performances are gradually seeing a decline in their fan base.

The aesthetic transformation of Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances has unfolded over several periods, marked by shifts in musical accompaniment, lighting, screen (*kelir*) modifications, puppet design, and overall presentation. This aesthetic evolution can be interpreted as the *dalang*'s (puppeteer's) artistic and creative response to the currents of globalization, resulting in new aesthetics that cater to contemporary audience preferences. According to Wicaksana (2016, p. 121), globalization depicts a more uniform world, characterized by technological standards, commercialization, and cultural synchronization influenced by the West. Consequently, globalization is closely intertwined with modernity, necessitating wayang performances adapt to audience tastes (where form follows fun).

The aesthetic transformation of puppet shows encompasses various aspects, including visual elements, performance techniques, and cultural symbolism. Traditional puppet shows, such as Javanese wayang, convey life values and norms through storytelling and humor (Fadri, 2021). In South Sulawesi, the Petta Puang theater group incorporates visual aesthetics that reflect local socio-cultural values, such as the symbolic meanings of costumes and colors (Mukadas & Florentinus, 2017). The 20th century witnessed a shift in puppet theater, influenced by avant-garde movements and technological advancements, leading to experimental and interdisciplinary practices in contemporary performing arts (Ersan, 2019). In Sundanese puppet shows, the puppeteer's expressive work plays a crucial role in building aesthetic communication, emphasizing the importance of the concept "Nyari" in creating a meaningful performance (Cahya, 2018). These studies highlight the evolving nature of puppet shows and their continued relevance in conveying cultural values and artistic expression.

Beyond the influence of globalization, creativity is also a key driver of these aesthetic transformations in Balinese wayang kulit performances. Creativity involves consistently

emerging new ideas, stemming from human and environmental interaction. Aligned with this principle, the essence of creativity in art lies in discovering something new or forging new relationships from existing elements. This statement has two crucial points: "the discovery of something new" and "new relationships from what already exists." Therefore, today's innovative wayang performances directly result from the *dalang's* creativity in leveraging modern technology within the global era. The implication is clear: audiences now prefer innovative wayang kulit performances over traditional ones bound by strict conventions (*pakem*).

The aesthetic transformation of Balinese wayang kulit performances can be traced to the 1970s. During this period, notable innovations emerged, including the late Ida Bagus Ngurah Arnawa (also recognized as Wayang Buduk), who pioneered the integration of Gambuh gamelan as accompaniment for Wayang Parwa. Subsequently, in 1971, the late I Wayan Rugeg from Padangsemblian Village, Denpasar, introduced Angklung Kebyar gamelan for Wayang Ramayana performances. This innovation trend continued with his younger brother, the late I Made Kembar, who adopted Gong Kebyar gamelan for Wayang Ramayana in 1984.

Further advancements in aesthetic elements became evident in 1988, when students from the Puppetry Department of the Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia (STSI) Denpasar (presently ISI Denpasar) began implementing electric lighting for illumination and developing larger screens, referred to as Pakeliran Layar Lebar. Entering the 2000s, *dalang* (puppeteers) innovatively introduced *bebondresan* (comic characters) to diversify performance repertoires. Concurrently, the integration of *gerong* (male chorus) and *juru tandak* (female vocalists) was initiated to augment the aesthetic richness of the musical accompaniment.

The aesthetic transformation of Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances in Bali in the global era is understood as a process involving changes in the form, characteristics, and functions of aesthetic elements. This process aims to create uniqueness and adapt to the evolving Preferences of contemporary audiences. To explore this phenomenon, the present study formulates two main research questions: (1) How does aesthetic transformation manifest in Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances in the context of globalization? (2) What are the implications of this transformation for the sustainability of traditional shadow puppet theatre?

This study aims to provide a scientific response to the concerns of wayang art enthusiasts regarding the potential extinction of Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances amid the currents of globalization. This research is expected to contribute to the development of other traditional wayang kulit performances, particularly in innovating their presentation to align with the aesthetic preferences of the millennial generation. To strengthen the analysis, this study employs three main theoretical frameworks: the theory of transformation, the theory of creativity, and the theory of aesthetics. This research continues previous studies that have generally discussed the aesthetics of wayang kulit performances. However, what sets this study apart is its specific focus on the forms and processes of aesthetic transformation in Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances under the influence of global culture.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design to investigate the aesthetic transformation of Balinese Wayang Parwa and Ramayana performances in the global era. The study aims to examine this transformation's forms, processes, and implications in detail.

Data Collection

Primary data will be collected through:

1. Direct Observation

Systematic observations of live Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances will be conducted, focusing on stage design, lighting, musical arrangements, and puppeteer performance techniques. Field notes and audiovisual recordings will document these observations.

2. In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with selected dalang (puppeteers), gamelan musicians, and performance organizers. The interviews will explore their experiences, perspectives on aesthetic transformation, and the impact of technological and cultural shifts.

3. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Where feasible, focus groups involving audience members, art scholars, and community leaders will be organized to triangulate insights from both the performers and the audiences.

Secondary Data

Secondary data will be obtained through a comprehensive literature review, including academic publications, historical records, and contemporary media articles that discuss Balinese wayang, aesthetic theories, and globalization's cultural impact. The data will be analyzed using thematic analysis guided by transformation theory (Nederveen Pieterse), aesthetic theory (Ratna, 2007), and creativity theory (Munandar, 1987). Coding will be performed to identify key themes and sub-themes. Triangulation will be employed to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings by comparing observations, interview data, and literature sources. Findings will be presented through a descriptive-analytical narrative that integrates empirical data with theoretical frameworks. This approach will allow for a comprehensive understanding of both the forms of aesthetic transformation and their implications for Balinese cultural performance traditions in the global era.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Balinese Aesthetic Concepts in Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana Performances

Wayang kulit, as a prominent Balinese performing art, has thrived and evolved due to its rich aesthetic values. The aesthetics embedded in wayang kulit performances are considered a vehicle for self-reflection and introspection, leading to inner and outer life satisfaction. Therefore, the deliberate expression of aesthetic elements aims to ensure that wayang kulit performances benefit every spectator. To fully appreciate the beauty and enjoyment derived from Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances, it is essential to understand the underlying Balinese aesthetic concepts, which are outlined as follows:

1). Rame

This term denotes beauty derived from a lively, festive, and boisterous atmosphere. It is particularly evident in scenes such as *panyahcah parwa* and *panyahcah kanda*, the *pangelangcara* (introduction to a scene) of battle sequences accompanied by rapidly rhythmic *bebatelan* musical pieces, and the departure of war troops, among others.

2). Pangus and Lenggut

These terms describe the aesthetic harmony in singing, dialogue, and monologues between characters. They also embody characters' embodiment through vocal expression, movement, crafting *kanda* (narrative segments), and comedic elements.

3). *Lemuh*

This term signifies beauty in vocal artistry, encompassing various singing styles such as *alas harum*, *bebaturan*, *pengalang*, *angkat-angkatan*, *rebong*, *mesem*, and others. It also refers to the graceful movements of the puppets during dance sequences.

4). *Adung*

This term refers to the beauty and harmony achieved through the synchronized interplay between the gamelan music and vocal elements (*tetembangan* and *tetikesan*).

5). *Ngelangenin*

This term is used to express the beauty of harmonious vocal sounds (*tetandakan* and *gerong*) in conjunction with the accompanying music.

6). *Nges and Apik*

These terms denote the beauty and precision evident in the accompanying musical pieces (*tabuh*) and the dramatic movements (*tetikesan*).

7). *Metaksu*

This term refers to the aesthetic quality of artistic performance itself. *Taksu* is often associated with an artist's inner power or charisma that captivates and enthralls the audience, inducing a state of deep aesthetic appreciation (*kelangen*). Consequently, performers traditionally offer prayers to Sanghyang Taksu before commencing a performance. According to Kardji (2001), *taksu* can be acquired through innate talent, divine grace, or ritualistic acquisition.

The vitality and enduring appeal of wayang kulit as a Balinese performing art form are deeply rooted in its rich aesthetic values. The aesthetics embedded within wayang kulit performances are understood not merely as artistic qualities but as a profound vehicle for self-reflection and introspection, ultimately leading to a sense of inner and outer fulfillment. This perspective underscores that the deliberate cultivation and expression of these aesthetic elements are crucial for ensuring every audience member's profound benefit and enjoyment. Thus, comprehending the specific Balinese aesthetic concepts, such as *rame*, *pangus*, and *lengut*, *lemuh*, *adung*, *ngelangenin*, *nges*, and *apik*, and *metaksu*, is fundamental to appreciating the beauty and resonance of Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances.

These seven core aesthetic concepts collectively articulate the multifaceted dimensions of beauty and engagement within Balinese wayang kulit. From the vibrant energy of *Rame* and the harmonious blend of voice and movement in *pangus* and *lengut*, to the vocal grace of *lemuh* and the orchestral synergy of *adung* and *ngelangenin*, these terms provide a nuanced framework for understanding the art form. Furthermore, the precision of *Nges* and *apik* in execution, and the captivating spiritual charisma of *metaksu*, all contribute to an experience designed for entertainment and deep aesthetic and spiritual resonance. These concepts are integral to how the Balinese wayang has historically captivated audiences and continues to evolve while maintaining its cultural significance.

B. Aesthetic Elements of Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana Performances

The aesthetic elements within Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances are primarily discernible through their performance structure and the apparatus employed. *Dalang* (puppeteers) possess varied abilities in refining and presenting these aesthetic components within the performance structure to captivate audiences. This proficiency is contingent upon the individual *dalang*'s skill, talent, and *taksu* (inner power), collectively referred to as "ketakson" (Djelantik, 1994). The aesthetic elements found in traditional Wayang Parwa and Ramayana performances are elucidated below:

1). Antawacana (Character Voice Modulation)

Antawacana refers to the dalang's vocal modulation, tailored to each character's persona (e.g., Arjuna's gentle voice versus Bima's strong and valiant tone). A dalang must master vocal control to differentiate between high, medium, and low registers to effectively portray various characters (KBBI.web.id/antawacana, accessed May 25, 2025).

2). Language and Rhetoric

Language and rhetoric serve as the primary means of communication and narrative style. The core language in Wayang Parwa and Ramayana is Kawi for heroic characters and Balinese for the punakawan (clown servants) and bebondresan (comic figures). Balinese language encompasses various registers: basa alus singgih for characters of higher status, basa alus sor for those of lower status, and basa kepara (common Balinese) for punakawan and bebondresan. A distinctive linguistic hallmark in Wayang Parwa and Ramayana is the regional dialect employed by each dalang. Sedana (1994) posits that the language of pedalangan (puppetry) is a specialized idiom readily understood by Balinese wayang audiences, facilitating effective communication between the dalang and spectators.

3). Tetembangan (Vocal Compositions)

Tetembangan refers to various vocal compositions, commonly termed tetandakan, bebaturan, and pengalang. Tetandakan are vocalizations where rhythm and tempo align with the gamelan accompaniment (e.g., alas harum, rebong, mesem, angkat-angkatan, pepeson Delem). Bebaturan and pengalang denote vocalizations where rhythm and tempo run parallel to the gamelan. Additionally, kakawin, kidung, sloka, and other forms of tetembangan are utilized to enhance the aesthetic quality of dialogue and narration (ROTA, 1990).

4). Tetikesan (Puppet Movement and Manipulation)

Tetikesan refers to the manipulation and movement of the puppets, encompassing both wantah (pure/basic) and maknawi (meaningful/interpretive) movements. Maknawi movements are aesthetic expressions interpreted as symbolic gestures in dance (M. Marajaya & Pradana, 2024). These symbolic movements are rich in meaning (Wicaksandita, 2019, p. 35). Tetikesan dictates the technique for moving puppets, determining their actions and postures on the kelir (screen). These movements must align with the characters' personalities to imbue them with distinct character and spirit. While comparable to dance, wayang dancing possesses a distinct aesthetic feel. In dance, all aesthetic aspects of movement (e.g., agem, tandang, tangkis, and tangkep) can be perfectly displayed and expressed. Therefore, a dalang proficient in dance may not necessarily excel at nikesang (moving) the puppet effectively, and vice versa (I. M. Marajaya et al., 2024).

5). Lelucon (Comedy/Jokes)

Lelucon refers to short phrases or humorous expressions (<https://www.google.com/search?q=arti+kata+lelucon>, accessed May 25, 2025). In aesthetics, comedy evokes smiles, while jokes elicit laughter. When a dalang intends to deliver a critique, it is often presented as a lelucon to soften its impact and enhance audience acceptance. Humorous lelucon containing subtle criticism is humor, often conveyed with an air of forgiveness. Conversely, sharp, unforgiving critiques within lelucon are categorized as satire, aiming to condemn and denounce (Widnyana, 2006). The mastery of lelucon is a primary requisite for a dalang's popularity, exemplified by figures like dalang I Wayan Nardayana (Wayang Cenk Blonk).

6). Cepala (Percussion Instrument)

Cepala is a percussive instrument, locally known as "pangeletakan," named after the striking sound it produces when tapped with the hand and foot against the side of the gedog or kropak (puppet box): tak..tak..tak..tak. Philosophically, the Cepala symbolizes *purusa* (masculine principle), while the gedog represents *predana* (feminine principle). The Cepala's functions include accentuating dialogue, marking transitions (*penyelah*), filling pauses,

signaling musical stops, and regulating the rhythm of the accompaniment (I. M. Marajaya, 2015).

7). *Iringan (Musical Accompaniment)*

Iringan is a paramount aesthetic element in Wayang Parwa and Ramayana performances. From beginning to end, the wayang kulit performance is inextricably linked to the musical accompaniment, which serves as illustration and supports tetikesan, tetembangan, battle scenes, and other segments. In traditional wayang kulit, dalang had the freedom to choose their preferred sekaa gender or *sekaa batel* (gamelan ensembles). However, in the global era, *dalang* often has its own gamelan sets and primarily focuses on securing musicians and composers to arrange the accompaniment.

8). *Lighting*

The lighting design illuminates the puppets on the kelir, creating perfectly formed shadows. Additionally, lighting can alter and intensify the atmosphere of a scene. Electric lighting, on one hand, sharpens puppet shadows, and on the other, can be manipulated to produce colorful beams favored by contemporary audiences. Light quality can also be adjusted using dimmers, allowing nuanced control over brightness to match the desired mood.

9). *The Dramatic Structure*

The Dramatic Structure, often termed "bah bangun satua" (story plot), generally follows a conventional dramatic arc: exposition (character introduction), rising action (tension build-up), climax (peak tension), falling action (tension decrease), and catastrophe (resolution). Waluyo (Badranaya & Sedana, 2021) states that dramatic structure represents the ebb and flow of dynamics, characterized by conflicts among characters within a play. These conflicts generate dramatic action and enhance the play's allure. However, in the global era, the plot has become less of a draw for audiences; instead, the primary attraction lies in the creativity that generates humor.

These detailed aesthetic elements collectively underscore the intricate artistry and profound cultural significance embedded within traditional Balinese *Wayang Parwa* and *Ramayana* performances. From the nuanced vocalizations of the *dalang* to the puppets' symbolic movements and the gamelan's precise orchestration, each component contributes to a rich, multisensory experience. Understanding these specific aesthetic principles is crucial for appreciating how *wayang kulit* functions not merely as entertainment, but as a dynamic medium for storytelling, philosophical discourse, and cultural expression in Bali.

C. Aesthetic Transformations in Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana

The aesthetic transformation of Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana in the era of globalization is intrinsically linked to evolving audience perceptions and technological advancements. Contemporary audiences increasingly favor visually engaging and realistic performance forms, characterized by elements such as colored lighting and dramatic smoke effects. Modern spectators exhibit greater enthusiasm for *dalang* who incorporate disco lights and smoke into specific scenes, including the *panyahcah parwa/ kanda*, *pangelangkara*, or battle sequences.

This phenomenon highlights two distinct approaches to aesthetic appreciation: first, directly examining the inherent beauty of the artwork; and second, focusing on the subjective aesthetic experience of the audience (M. Sutrisno, 1999). The latter approach holds greater relevance in the current context, as the audience's aesthetic experience becomes paramount. As Kutha Ratna (2007) asserts, artists play a crucial role in manifesting divine beauty for societal enjoyment, consistently receiving commensurate recognition for their abilities.

In the global era, *wayang* performances, according to Ra'uf (2010), frequently function primarily as entertainment, serving as captivating spectacles to alleviate fatigue and

provide mental diversion. Even within traditional contexts, the sense of beauty in *wayang* art was termed *kalangwan* or *langob* (Hartoko, 1993). The aesthetic transformations observed in Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana reflect contemporary visual preferences. Technological progress has spurred *dalang* to innovate, creating new aesthetics that resonate more with current audiences. The *sundaram* (beauty) concept in Balinese *wayang kulit* is now manifested through diverse performance elements, encompassing form, apparatus, and techniques (Wicaksandita et al., 2024).

From a creativity perspective, Sternberg's theory (Munandar, 1987) posits that creative artistic works emerge from a fusion of cognitive ability, intelligence, and innovation. As outlined by Junaedi (2016), the artistic creation process itself encompasses pre-creation, creation, and post-creation stages. Consequently, art is a conduit for an aesthetic life that strengthens the bond between artist and society (Hidayatullah & Kurniawan, 2016). As globalization progresses, wayang performances increasingly adapt to technology and their surrounding environment. Jan Nederveen Pieterse (Wicaksana, 2016) defines globalization as a cultural hybridization process wherein diverse cultural elements merge to form new expressions. This phenomenon is evident in Wayang Parwa and Ramayana performances, which have evolved to meet contemporary audience preferences. One significant aspect of this transformation is using the *kelir*, or screen. Historically, traditional *kelir* measured approximately 2.75 x 1.25 meters and were illuminated by a *blencong* (oil lamp). In contrast, innovative performances today, such as those by Cenk Blonk, utilize screens up to 6 x 3.5 meters. Incorporating concealed modern lighting creates more dramatic illumination, fostering a new aesthetic experience for the audience.



Figure 1. Visually Illustrates the Significant Aesthetic Transformation in the Kelir (Screen) Used for Wayang Parwa Performances.

(Source: Youtube)

The traditional cast of Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances encompasses many characters, including deities, kings, warriors, giants, genies, animals, chariots, trees, and weapons. Traditional performances generally exclude *bebondresan* (comic characters) beyond the established *punakawan* figures: Tualen, Merdah, Delem, and Sangut. An exception is found in the Tabanan region, where *bebondresan* such as Nang Keliliran, Nang Klimun, Nang Klenceng, and Nang Eblong have long been commonly featured.

In recent developments, a new generation of *bebondresan* characters has emerged, including Joblar, Mekar, Sebit, Jedug, Kebyor, Jero Mangku, and Sokir. These innovative *bebondresan* figures have inspired the naming conventions of contemporary wayang performances. For instance, Wayang Joblar is derived from the character Joblar, Wayang D-Karbit from Mekar and Sebit, and Wayang Dug Byor from Jedug and Kebyor. Similarly, the popular Wayang Cenk Blonk takes its name from a contraction of the existing characters Nang Klenceng and Nang Eblong.

Beyond the expansion of *bebondresan*, contemporary *dalang* in the global era have also introduced new puppet designs. These include Wayang Kayonan, which resembles the *Gunungan* puppet from Javanese wayang, and Wayang Gapura (depicting a sacred temple gate). Furthermore, a range of new character types has been incorporated, such as a cafe girl, *joged* dancers, *janger* dancers, *barong*, herons, tigers, dogs, butterflies, and rabbits. In addition to adding new characters and animal types, *Dalang* has increased the size of the puppets by up to 40%. This enlargement ensures that the shadows are not obscured on the *kelir* (screen), enhancing their visual impact for the audience. The following section will present five visual examples of these new *bebondresan* characters featured in innovative wayang performances.

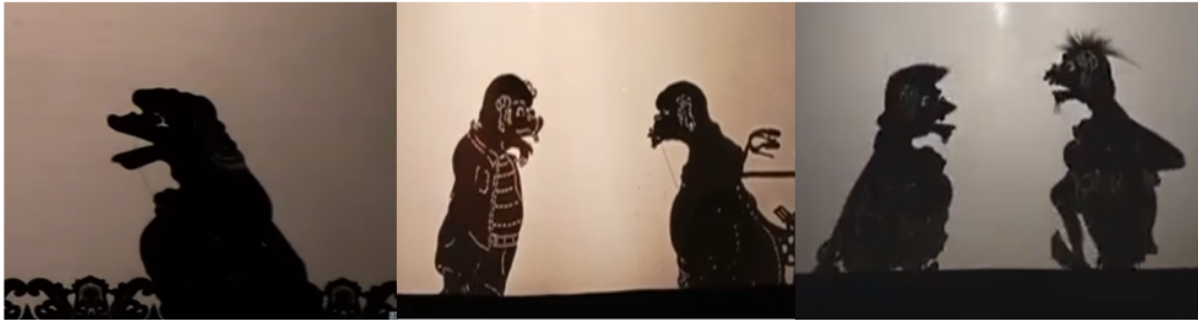


Figure 2. Joblar, Mekar, Sebit, Jedug, and Gebyor Characters.

(Source: Screenshot from YouTube)

Lights are used to illuminate and create shadows in wayang kulit performances. Traditional wayang performances use lamps made from coconut oil called *damar* or *blencong*. However, in more modern performances, these lamps have been replaced with 300-watt electric lights so that the lighting can be adjusted according to the mood of each scene. Below is a comparison of the lighting in traditional Wayang Parwa and Wayang Joblar performances.



Figure 3. Lighting in Traditional Wayang Parwa and Lighting in Wayang Joblar.

(Source: Personal Document Marajaya)

Gamelan, *gerong*, and *juru tandak* are three aesthetic elements of the innovative wayang parwa and ramayana performances. New types of gamelan are often used in these performances, including Angklung Kebyar, Gong Kebyar, Gong Gede, Semarandana, Semar Pagulingan, Selonding, and Sekar Langon. Meanwhile, *gerong* is a group singing performed by two to four women to complement the musical accompaniment. *Juru tandak* involves one or two men singing songs that follow the melody of the musical accompaniment. Traditional Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances do not include *gerong* or *juru tandak*, as the *dalang* performs all roles. The following comparison features images of traditional Wayang Parwa drummers and Sekar Langon gamelan drummers with *juru gerong*.



Figure 4. Image of Gender Wayang Players and Sekar Langon and Gerong Gamelan Players.

(Source: Personal Document Marajaya)

Beyond the aesthetic modifications observed in the physical apparatus, significant structural changes, particularly in the second act (*pepeson*), have emerged. In traditional Wayang Parwa performances, the second act typically commences with the *pangelangkara*, followed by the appearance of the *punakawan* characters, Delem and Sangut. However, in innovative Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances, the *pepeson* entrance of Delem and Sangut is now preceded by a king or warrior figure.

Further alterations are evident in the *jejer* (court scene) sequence. Traditionally, numerous wayang characters were positioned on the *kelir* (screen); in contrast, innovative Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances feature only a limited number of characters from both the right and left sides. Consequently, the duration of this scene is also impacted. Several traditionally protracted scenes have been condensed, such as the *patangkilan* (deliberation) scene, which is now replaced by a *petangkilan berjalan* (walking deliberation) where puppets are not statically affixed to the *kelir*. This structural streamlining has reduced performance duration considerably, from the traditional 3-4 hours to approximately 2 hours, with performances typically commencing at 9:00 PM. The following visuals illustrate the distinct atmospheric differences between a traditional Wayang Parwa performance and a Wayang Cenk Blonk innovative performance.



Figure 5. Kayonan Dance Traditional Wayang Performance and Scene from *Parwa/Kanda* Innovative Performance.

(Source: Screenshot from YouTube)

D. The Aesthetic Transformation Process of Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana Performances

The aesthetic transformation of Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances in Bali commenced in the 1970s, primarily driven by changes in musical accompaniment. Initially, Wayang Parwa was accompanied by Pegambuhan gamelan or suling Pegambuhan,

notably by *dalang* Ida Bagus Ngurah Arnawa. In 1971, *dalang* I Wayan Rugeg introduced Angklung Kebyar gamelan for Wayang Ramayana, a practice subsequently adopted by *dalang* I Made Sidja (1975) and I Made Kembar (1984) with Gong Kebyar. Since 1988, a wider array of gamelan types, including Gong Gede, Semar Pagulingan, Semarandana, Sekar Langon, and Selonding, have been incorporated, leading to the emergence of innovative groups such as Wayang Joblar, D-Karbit, Genjek, and Cenk Blonk. Notably, the Sekar Langon gamelan itself was a creation of the late I Wayan Subandi from Batuyang Village.

The subsequent wave of transformation involved the *kelir* (screen) and the introduction of electric lighting. In 1988, STSI Denpasar students began experimenting with larger screens and electric lights during their puppetry art examinations, which led to the Pakeliran Layar Lebar performance experiments. Innovative groups like Cenk Blonk, Joblar, D-Karbit, and Dug Byor regularly utilize large-sized *kelir* (ranging from 4x2 to 6x3 meters) for performances in public squares and open fields. Electric lights have also become the standard, replacing traditional *blencong* lamps, a transition initiated in 1988 by artists such as I Ketut Kodi, I Dewa Ketut Wicaksana, I Made Yudabakti, and Larry Reed.

Another significant transformation is the emergence of *bebondresan* (comic characters) such as Joblar, Mekar, Sebit, Jedug, Kebyor, and Sokir. These characters serve a neutral role, providing both entertainment and educational content to audiences, whether in live performances or on platforms like YouTube through "Wayang Virtual." Traditional *punakawan* figures; Tualen, Merdah, Delem, and Sangut, maintain their vital function as story interpreters and narrators. The fifth transformation involves the integration of background scenery and computer technology to create more immersive atmospheres, complete with smoke, lighting effects, sound effects, and even thunderclaps. Finally, Wayang Parwa and Ramayana performances in Bali now incorporate *gerong* (male singers) and *juru tandak* (supporting dancers/female vocalists). This innovation, pioneered by Wayang Cenk Blonk, has become an established element of contemporary wayang performances in the global era.

These transformations in Balinese Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana are emblematic of a broader innovation trend in Wayang Kulit. As the traditional Indonesian shadow puppetry, Wayang Kulit has experienced significant innovation in the modern era to ensure its continued relevance and appeal among contemporary audiences. Wayang Kulit, the traditional Indonesian shadow puppetry, has experienced significant innovation in the modern era to ensure its continued relevance and appeal among contemporary audiences. In response to changing audience expectations and technological advancements, modern performances frequently incorporate multimedia elements such as sophisticated audio-visual technology and cinematic techniques to enhance the spectacle. These additions, including dynamic lighting, sound effects, and even smoke machines, enrich the sensory experience and create a more immersive environment for viewers.

The integration of wayang kulit with modern theater and other performance arts has fostered the emergence of hybrid forms that not only preserve core cultural elements and adapt to contemporary tastes. These hybrid performances often blend traditional narratives with current social issues, making the art form more relatable and engaging for diverse audiences, including younger generations. Such transformations have contributed to the revitalization of wayang kulit, with artists experimenting with innovative approaches to storytelling, stage design, and musical accompaniment. Moreover, the collaborative efforts between local puppeteers and international artists have further enriched the art form. These partnerships have led to creative reinterpretations of classic stories, the introduction of new characters, and the infusion of diverse artistic traditions, thereby expanding the reach of wayang kulit beyond its traditional cultural boundaries. By embracing these innovations, wayang kulit has maintained its cultural significance and positioned itself as a dynamic and evolving art form that continues to captivate and educate audiences in the modern era.

Discussion

The aesthetic transformation of Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana in the global era presents both positive and negative implications. Positively, these changes offer audiences a fresh experience in wayang performances. What was once predominantly a male-dominated audience now encompasses diverse demographics. Furthermore, these transformations open avenues for dalang to continually innovate, catering to the evolving aesthetic preferences of their fan base. According to Dibia (2012), modernizations in wayang kulit performances, adapted to societal demands, have significantly boosted their popularity. This transformation also encourages Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances to prioritize audio-visual forms more readily accessible to contemporary audiences. This, in turn, stimulates efforts in preserving and developing wayang art by creating new characters, gamelan arrangements, stage designs, lighting techniques, and dramatic structures. Moreover, these changes contribute to the improved livelihoods of dalang, craftsmen of wayang performance equipment, and other supporting artists.

However, this transformation also carries negative consequences. The original identity of Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana becomes blurred as accompanying music now predominantly features more common gamelan ensembles like Sekar Langon, Semarandana, Semar Pagulingan, and Angklung Kebyar, diverging from the traditional Gender Wayang and Batel Gender Wayang gamelan. Consequently, distinctive *tetembangan* (vocal compositions) specific to Wayang Parwa and Ramayana, such as *alas arum*, *bebaturan*, *pengalang*, *angkat-angkatan*, *rebong*, *mesem*, *bendu samara*, and *candi rebah*, are gradually disappearing. Interest in traditional performances among the younger generation, particularly millennials, is also declining. Traditional Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances are becoming marginalized due to a lack of public support, directly impacting the income and well-being of dalang (Yudabakti, 2016). Additionally, the symbolic meaning within performances is often lost as everything is presented explicitly on stage. Audiences also lose their imaginative engagement, becoming captivated by the glamorous atmosphere created through elaborate lighting, sound, smoke effects, and cinematic techniques. Ultimately, Wayang Parwa and Ramayana performances in the global era emphasize mere entertainment over traditional guidance (*tuntunan*). This is a significant shift, as traditional *tuntunan* art forms are meant to enlighten audiences through philosophical, religious, literary, moral, and character-building teachings (I. M. Marajaya, 2007).

Similar aesthetic transformations can also be observed in wayang traditions across Southeast and South Asia, particularly Thailand and India. In Thailand, *Hun Lakorn Lek* (small rod puppetry) has adapted to modern audiences by integrating popular culture references, elaborate lighting effects, and crossover characters such as Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson (Kaneko et al., 2016). This evolution mirrors the shifts in Wayang Parwa and Ramayana, where dalang now prioritize visual spectacle over nuanced symbolism. While these transformations attract a broader demographic, including international tourists, they risk reducing the pedagogical function of traditional performances to mere entertainment. Likewise, traditional shadow puppetry forms such as *Tholpavakoothu* have also undergone significant transformations in India. Traditionally confined to temple settings with strict ritual contexts, *Tholpavakoothu* now appears in university campuses and film festivals with condensed narratives and social issue-based themes, effectively democratizing its reach and altering its traditional identity (Koonathara & Cohen, 2023). Innovations such as robotic puppetry and digital projection mapping have further transformed the aesthetics, enhancing audience accessibility but sometimes overshadowing the contemplative aspects inherent in traditional performances.

The transformations in these contexts reflect a broader regional trend: a shift toward hybridizing tradition and modernity, where the aesthetic experience is increasingly mediated by technology and popular culture. This pattern underscores the need for sustainable strategies that balance innovation with preservation, ensuring that wayang remains relevant

and authentic to its cultural roots. To address these challenges and harness the opportunities of aesthetic transformation, three recommendations emerge: 1). Encourage collaborative projects that blend traditional and contemporary elements while maintaining the pedagogical and philosophical core of wayang performances; 2). Develop educational initiatives that raise audience awareness about wayang's historical and symbolic dimensions, ensuring that modernization enhances rather than erodes cultural heritage.

Leverage digital technologies, such as augmented reality, interactive streaming, and mobile applications, to engage younger generations and expand wayang's global reach, without compromising the integrity of traditional narratives and forms.

CONCLUSION

The aesthetic transformation of Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances in the global era must be understood as an inevitable consequence and a dynamic aspect of artistic evolution. In terms of audiovisual presentation, this transformation is reflected in changes to several aesthetic elements, including the accompanying music, screen (*kelir*), lighting, puppets, props, scenery, and the overall staging of the performance. The implications of this aesthetic transformation in Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana performances during the global era have inspired and encouraged young *dalang* (puppet masters) in Bali to introduce new techniques in packaging their performances. This movement not only affects Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana, but also extends to other types of wayang kulit performances in Bali, such as Wayang Calonarang (also known as Wayang Dug Byor) prevalent in the Gianyar area, Wayang Babad in the Sukawati region, Wayang Ledem in Tabanan, and innovative forms of Wayang Calonarang in Denpasar. The theory of transformation, the theory of creativity, and the theory of aesthetics have proven effective in strengthening the analysis and addressing the research questions in this study. These transformations have contributed to developing a new cultural paradigm in the performance of Wayang Parwa and Wayang Ramayana in Bali, from the 1970s to the present. This wave of creative, innovative, and adaptive renewal in response to the times has successfully helped preserve traditional performing arts, particularly wayang kulit, in the era of globalization. This study primarily focused on the observable aesthetic transformations and their immediate implications. A limitation of this research is its qualitative nature, which, while offering rich descriptive detail, does not allow for quantitative analysis of audience demographics or economic impacts. Future research could delve into the specific audience reception of these transformed performances through quantitative surveys, or conduct economic analyses to more precisely measure the financial impacts on traditional and innovative wayang practitioners. Additionally, further studies could explore the perspectives of younger generations on the traditional wayang to inform strategies for revitalization.

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