

Analysis of Moral Values Embedded in Thengul Puppets Performances

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Abstract

Moral values are a guide for individuals to do a good attitude in every action they take. These positive values can come from religious guidance, education, social environment, or other external factors related to a person's daily life. One of these factors is the entertainment and spectacles presenting specific stories with moral values conveyed. This is also found in the performance of Wayang Thengul (Thengul Puppets), which is a distinctive art form in Bojonegoro Regency, East Java. This research is a descriptive-qualitative study aimed at exploring in-depth information about the stories of Wayang Thengul in Bojonegoro from the practitioners of this art form. The research aims to identify the moral values embedded in the stories of Wayang Thengul in Bojonegoro based on the narratives performed in the show. The research findings indicate the presence of numerous stories derived from the Javanese historical story and the Panji tales being performed in Wayang Thengul. These stories contain implicit moral values that encompass teachings of goodness, hard work, perseverance, and determination in the pursuit of happiness.

Keywords: thengul, moral values, art performance.

1. Introduction

Culture as one of the things inherent in human life cannot be separated from the development of society. Koenjaraningrat (in Dayakisni, 2004) defines culture as all forms of results from ideas, actions and human thought. These forms can be in the form of patterns, behaviors, beliefs, art performances or products from certain groups of people that have been passed down from generation to generation (Santrock, 1998). The richness of these cultural forms is maintained from time to time with certain preservation and development.

Wayang Thengul (Thengul Puppet) is a typical cultural form from Bojonegoro district, East Java which has existed since the 1930s. (Bojonegoro Culture and Tourism Department, 2015). This art is a cultural icon of Bojonegoro which received the title of Intangible Cultural Heritage (WBTB) from The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia in 2018. The word thengul comes from the word "methenteng" or extra energy and "methungul" which means to appear or be seen. The word thengul means a puppet that must be lifted with extra effort because it is made of wood so that it can appear/be seen by the audience. In a deeper sense, the thengul philosophy also means that a person or a group must be serious or put more effort into doing things to achieve success.

As a form of culture, Thengul Puppet has a value of knowledge, morals, and customs that are reflected in the stories narrated by the puppeteer. E. B Tylor (in Soekanto, 2007) states that complex forms of culture are acquired by humans in their interactions as members of society. Cultural performances can be a form of means to see local culture and wisdom in an area. The Thengul puppet itself is a three-dimensional puppet made of wood. The form is almost similar to the Wayang Golek from West Java but has a different type of story that is being told by the puppeteer. Wayang Golek usually contains Mahabharata or Ramayana stories which are more popular and well-known by the wider community, while Thengul Puppet contains stories from the chronicles of the land of Java and local legends from various regions according to where the performance takes place.

These stories have a rich meaning and moral values that can give positive lessons to the audience of the Thengul Puppet performance. These moral values, both in the form of good and bad, can be seen in the stories narrated by the puppeteer, both through the conversation of the puppet characters and the storyline in general. This can provide knowledge for connoisseurs of Thengul performances. Starting from this, this research was carried out to find out how the moral values that exist in Thengul Puppet performances can be implemented in individual and social life.

2. Research Methods

This research is qualitative descriptive research. The research was carried out by conducting interviews with informants, namely the puppeteer and Thengul craftsmen in Bojonegoro, East Java. In-depth interviews were used to obtain detailed information about the storylines that are usually performed in Thengul Puppet performances, as many as 5 popular stories. The data is then analyzed and presented in a descriptive narrative to answer the problem formulation being studied (Ali, 1982). Data collection was also carried out using secondary data in the form of photo documentation, writings, articles, books, and sources related to research. All of these sources provide a more detailed description of the moral values that existed in Thengul Puppet's performance.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Stories in the Thengul Puppet Performances.

Thengul Puppet is an art form that originates from the local wisdom of Bojonegoro. This makes the plays performed in Thengul Puppet performances vary greatly depending on the location, the puppeteer, and the type of the show itself. Performances that are delivered at events in a hamlet may originate from local legends where the performances are performed, while stories for larger events originate from stories from the chronicle of the land of Java and Panji stories. In general, several types of stories in the Thengul Puppet performances are as follows:

a. Panji Stories

The Panji are stories from the island of Java that appeared during the kingdoms of Kediri and Jenggala. Several sources indicate that this story originates from Kakawin Smaradahana (the ancient literature book from Java Island), which was written by Mpu Dharmaja. Some of the Panji stories performed in the Thengul Puppet performances include the Panji Kuda Semirang Saga, the Tale of the Dalang Indera Kusuma, Mesa Lara Kusuma Cabut Tunggal, Mesa Urip Paji Jayalelana, and so on.

b. Majapahit story

The Majapahit story originates from Serat Damarwulan, which tells of Damarwulan's heroism in conquering Minak Jingga from Blambangan.

c. The Minak Stories

The story of the Minak in the Thengul performance is taken from the Serat Menak Book. This is the story of Amir Hamzah (Wong Agung Menak Jayengrana) from Mecca in conquering the great warriors and kings. Some of the plays from the Minak story include Menak Sarehas, Menak Lare, Menak Sulup, and so on.

d. Walisongo stories

Thengul Puppet also tells the story of the presence of the Walisongo (the spreader of Islam religion in Indonesia) after the collapse of the Majapahit kingdom and the establishment of the Demak kingdom as an Islamic kingdom.



Figure 1. A Thengul Puppets performance in Bojonegoro

3.2. Moral Values in the Thengul Performances

As a cultural art performance, Thengul Puppet has messages and moral values that are conveyed indirectly through the stories that are narrated by the puppeteer. Elly Setiadi (2006) defines value as something that has benefits and is valuable for human life, both moral values, religious values, ethics, and so on. Some of these moral values are as follows:

a. Kindness

The message of kindness in the Thengul performance is found in the stories that are told. Kindness itself refers to attitudes, actions, and good behavior from one person to another to form healthy relationships and create a positive social environment. One of the good values contained in the story of the Thengul performance can be found in the "*Angling Dharma Palakrama*" story when Angling Dharma took part in a contest to marry Dewi Ambarawati. Even though he was a king, he still took part in the competition according to the procedures given by Dewi Ambarawati's father along with other youths. He even disguised himself as ordinary youth without showing his status as a king.

In the story of "*Jaka Tarub*" there is also a moral message to always be honest because no matter how well somebody keeps it, a lie will definitely be revealed at an unexpected time. In the story, it is told about Jaka Tarub who hides Nawang Wulan's shawl so he could make her his wife but in the end, his lies were revealed so Nawang Wulan left him to return to heaven.



Figure 2. Some characters of Thengul Puppets.

b. Hard work

Many of the stories performed in the Thengul performance have war plots and power struggles between kingdoms. The story illustrates the hard work and sacrifice of the king and his people to defend their territory. This is also illustrated in the story "*Angling Dharma dadi Mliwis*" about three daughters of the Mlaya Kusuma kingdom named Widata, Widati, and Widaningsih who had to fight against Angling Dharma.

c. Determination in the pursuit of happiness

It is told in the story of "*Damar Wulan*" about Damar Wulan's struggle to become the king of Brawijaya. He had to take part in a competition to beat Minak Jinggo and suffered defeat. It didn't stop there, he changed his strategy and attacked Minak Jinggo again and finally won. However, when he was about to announce his victory to Kencana Ungu as the queen of Majapahit, he was confronted by Seto and Kunitir who claimed to be the winner in the fight against Minak Jinggo. Damar Wulan as the real winner is not at his wit's end, he asks for witnesses to be present for his victory over Minak Jinggo until finally he has to fight again against Seto and Kunitir. It was only after the war that he was recognized as the real winner and entitled to become king.

The snippets of the story illustrate the determination to continue to do anything in order to achieve happiness and goals to be achieved in life.

4. Conclusion

Thengul Puppet as one of Bojonegoro's unique cultural forms is not only a way of preserving stories from the chronicles of the land of Java or local legends of the local community but is also capable of being a means of inviting the audience to find values that must be imitated or avoided in life. This could be more valuable for further cultural development through innovative efforts by various actors.

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