

## WayangBeberSudamala Design as A Means of Performance

Tatik Harpawati<sup>1</sup>, Ranang Agung Sugihartono<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Performing Arts, ISI Surakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, ISI Surakarta, Indonesia

**ABSTRACT:** Wayang Beber is one of the oldest Javanese performing arts. So far, Wayang Beber is known only for telling the Panji story, so Wayang Beber is synonymous with the Panji story. To remain sustainable, Wayang Beber must be developed. One of them is by transforming the Sudamala story on the reliefs in the Suku temple and the Kidung Sudamala manuscript into Wayang Beber so that it can be exhibited and performed. This artistic research aimed to produce Wayang Beber Sudamala as a performance medium for entertainment and education. The type of artistic research used is practice-based research with the material object of the Sudamala story. The creation process was carried out in the exploration, design, and presentation stages. This creation process resulted in a Wayang Beber painting, Sudamala, based on the Suku temple's reliefs and Kidung Sudamala in 4 jagong, 4 meters long, which are ready for use in performances. Wayang Beber Sudamala contains educational value about self-cleaning, which can be conveyed through the Javanese ritual, namely Ruwatan. This tradition can be disseminated through Wayang Beber performances so that it is easily spread and understood by the public, especially the younger generation.

**KEYWORDS :** *Sudamala, character, Ruwatan, Suku, Java*

### I. INTRODUCTION

WayangBeber is a performance by displaying pictures or paintings on a piece of paper or cloth and narrated in sequence according to the picture by a puppeteer [1]. WayangBeber originates from the end of the Hindu era in Java (late 15<sup>th</sup> century). At that time, the stories shown in WayangBeber came from the Mahabharata and Ramayana. After Islam began to spread in Indonesia, not only the Mahabharata and Ramayana cycles were performed, but also the stories of the Panji cycle, which originated from the Jenggala kingdom in the XIV-XV century, began to spread [2].

In its development, the stories used in WayangBeber became wider, for example, from chronicles, legends, fairy tales, etc. Examples of the creation of WayangBeber are Timun Mas [3], which originates from the Majapahit chronicle with the stories of JayakatongMbalela and AdegMajapahit[4]<https://youtu.be/SvzSkvAVOX0>), *Uthak-uthakUgel* from the PanjiWareng community of Mojokerto (<https://youtu.be/rVxbUJQ293A>), Pancasila and Haloo Moon and Corona from the Yogyakarta Sekartaji Museum (<https://youtu.be/iAqmHEWPE8E>). Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, the MahesaSura studio, WayangBeber conservationist from Paras Hamlet, Mojokerto district, has created many WayangBeber creations with up-to-date plays. WayangBeber's plays include *Cupitand Gonjang-Ganjing Pertiwi*, broadcasted live on the KambangSri TV channel (<https://youtu.be/TGiwqjVL6EQ>). Of the various creations of WayangBeber, there are no WayangBeber stories that originate from temple reliefs.

Temples are authentic sources regarding several aspects of life, including politics, social, culture, and religion in the past. This authentic depiction is generally seen in the relief carvings that usually decorate the buildings [5]. The story reliefs contain messages in the form of religious values, heroism, compassion, etc. [6]. The expressions on temple reliefs have a close relationship with existing elements in society, both elements that existed and lived in the past and elements that exist and live in society today [7]so that the messages conveyed are likely still many of which are relevant to life today. This research created a Wayang Beber model whose story comes from the Sudamala reliefs in the Suku temple.

Suku Temple is located in Suku village, Berjo, Ngargayoso, Karanganyar, Central Java. The art contained in the Suku temple has a distinctive characteristic that is different from the temples of its contemporaries. The building art is based on a terraced *punden* pattern. The higher the terraces go to the back. This kind of shape is similar to sacred buildings in prehistoric times. On the north side of the temple, there is a row of reliefs arranged neatly along east-west lines. This series of reliefs is no longer in-situ and the authenticity of its placement cannot be known. In this row, reliefs of animals (rhinos and elephants) were found as well as several scenes from the Sudamalastory [8]. The original location of the Sudamala relief is unknown and the

placement of the relief is a rearrangement. This Sudamala relief shows the existence of the *Ruwatan* aspect at Suku Temple [9]. The term *Ruwatan* comes from the word 'ruwat,' which means free [10]. *Ruwatanis* is used to free someone who has been *ruwat* (cleaned) from danger (catastrophe).



Figure 1. Sudamala relief at Suku temple  
(Photo: Ranang AS, 2023)

Not all Sudamala stories are depicted entirely in relief, but only some. This happens because relief is a work of art that can be used as a medium to convey messages to the public. The message conveyed must be captured well. For this reason, the visual expression on the relief must have adequate communicative value. Armed with their skills, the sculpting artists choose several important events that are key to the story. The Sudamala relief tells the story of the Goddess Uma, who was cursed into *Raseksi* (a giant) by Bhatara Guru because of a mistake. Goddess Uma, in the form of Goddess Durga, lives in Setra Gandamayit and will return to her original form when she has been "ruwat" by Sadewa, the youngest of the Pandavas [11]. The story of the origin of the *Ruwatan* tradition in the Sudamala story became the *Ruwatan* tradition. To this day, the *Ruwatan* tradition is still believed by a small portion of Javanese society. This story, which reflects the existence of the traditional *Ruwatan* customs in Java so that they do not disappear and can still be understood by the younger generation, was composed in Wayang Beber. "The various genres of wayang theater are among the most eye-catching manifestations of Indonesian artistic culture" [12][13], and Wayang Beber is one of them. The presentation in pictures, especially the spoken Wayang Beber, is considered easy to understand. The local wisdom in the Suku temple can spread widely to the community, especially the younger generation.

The creation of the relief-based Sudamala Wayang Beber model at the Suku temple is based on: (1) the story presented contains local wisdom in the form of the *Ruwatan* tradition; (2) the story presented contains character education values; (3) there are many figures, trees, animals, ghosts, and giants based on reliefs; (4) the language is presented in a simple form and according to contemporary tastes so that it is easy for the younger generation to understand; and (5) the script is structured into an interesting plot.

The model that is the output of this research is 4 *Jagong* works of Wayang Beber paintings based on the Sudamala reliefs of the Suku temple. This Wayang Beber model is intended as a medium to revive local wisdom stories that have begun to be forgotten and instill moral values in the younger generation through traditional painting and performing arts. Based on the description in the background, a problem formulation can be drawn: What is the model of Wayang Beber painting based on Sudamala reliefs in Suku temple?

The research carried out has a novel aspect in terms of output, namely in the form of Wayang Beber paintings based on the Sudamala reliefs of the Suku temple. So far, the Sudamala reliefs in the Suku temple can only be seen in situ, with artistic research that transforms the reliefs into Wayang Beber paintings to be displayed in performances. This makes it hoped that all groups, especially the younger generation, can enjoy this Wayang Beber model. Furthermore, we hope that the younger generation will appreciate the work of their ancestors more so that they will remember the history of their nation.

## II. METHOD

The type of research used in this artistic research is practice-based research. This choice of practice-based research as an approach was deemed appropriate, as Candy argued that this type of practice-based research is used in fields such as design, health, creative arts, and education [14]. Candy further said that in visual arts, the emphasis is on the creative process and the works that result from that process. This research was carried out through artistic practice activities, namely performing story-based Wayang Beber on the Sudamala reliefs at Suku temple.

The research object used as a reference is the Suku temple in the Karanganyar district. Data sources used: (1) artifacts, namely the Sudhamala reliefs at Suku Temple, and (2) literature containing Sudamala's story. Data collection was carried out using documentation, literature study, and interviews. Documentation was carried out by photographing and identifying the Sudamala reliefs in the Suku temple, especially their embodiment, characterization, composition, and ornamentation. An in-depth interview was conducted with the resource person, Mangku Jito, a clergyman or holy man in the Hindu faith in Demping Hamlet. Spiritualists

classified as Ekajati are called Pemangku [15]. MangkuJito represents the Hindu community around the Suku temple, placing the Sudamala story as part of their religion. The literature study focused on the book *KidungSudamala*, which contains the story of Sudamala. The collected emic and ethical data were used as material in the design process of WayangBeberSudamala.

This WayangBeber creation was carried out in three stages: exploration, design, and presentation. Exploration was carried out to find the visual characteristics and values contained in the Sudamala reliefs at Suku Temple as a source of inspiration for the next stage. The design was done by preparing cloth media, drawing WayangBeber on cloth, and *nyungging* (painting) WayangBeber and the Sudamala manuscript. The presentation was carried out in the form of a limited Wayang Beber performance to measure the level of success of the work in front of the public. Apart from performances, they are also exhibited and published on social media. So, this allows more interaction to occur between the general public and scholars [16], artists, cultural figures, and even religious scholars.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This applied research began with compiling a synopsis of Sudhamala's story. The story is designed into 4 *Jagong*. *Jagong* is the term for singing in WayangBeber performances, depicted in one panel. This term is like a scene in a film, the place or setting where the incident occurs. One *Jagong* allows for a lot of dialogue between characters, which will be narrated by the puppeteer.

The preparation of the synopsis is based on the text *KidungSudhamala*, a wayang literature included in Central Javanese literature. This text is read from the book *CandiSukuh and KidungSudamala*, by Padmapuspita Y. The synopsis of Sudamala is arranged into four acts, including (1) *kahyanganJonggringSaloka*, (2) Dewi Kunthi in *SetraGandamayit*, (3) Sadewa was tempted and threatened with death, and (4) *Ruwatan*. Each of them will be transformed into a *Jagong* (scene). This synopsis is the basis for the next step in drawing WayangBeber. Apart from that, it becomes the basis for compiling a story script, which will later be performed by the puppeteer during the performance.

Before making a WayangBeber painting, research was carried out on the Sudamala reliefs in the Suku temple. Data collection was carried out by documenting (photographing) the reliefs with a focus on the Sudamala story, and collecting the building structure and decoration that are the characteristics of the temple. The photos from the relief documentation were then visually analyzed to obtain characteristics regarding depiction, composition, and scene.

Visual data analysis produces various forms of figures/characters, poses/scenes, and ornaments. Then, it becomes material for designing scenes and visualizations of WayangBeber in the WayangBeber style, both in the wayang embodiment and the *sungging* technique (graded coloring). *Sungging* is a Javanese term for a typical traditional painting technique with color gradations from dark to light. Apart from WayangBeber, this technique can also be found in glass painting and Cirebon batik. The Sudamala puppet story is designed as 4 *Jagong* in the format of a cloth roll 4 meters long.



Figure 2. The process of painting WayangBeber: sketching the characters on paper (left), implementing the sketch on cloth (middle), and coloring using the *sungging* technique (right)

(Creators: Nina EP and Ranang AS)

Figures, trees, animals, buildings, weapons, and other objects are depicted in sketch form, arranged according to the sequence of scenes, painted using the *sungging* technique, and ended with finishing. Finishing is done by either giving *isen-isen* or giving *prada* (golden stripes). Once finished, the process ends with writing picture captions in Javanese script under each *Jagong*. The result is a 4-meter-long Sudamala puppet play consisting of 4 *Jagong*.

*Jagong* 1 in Figure 3 depicts a scene in *kahyanganJonggringSaloka*. Bhatara Guru held a palace meeting which was attended by Narada, Dewa Indra, Sang HyangWenang, and others. Bhatara Guru conveyed instructions from Sang HyangWenang, that his wife, Dewi Uma, had been away from home for 3 days. Bhatara Guru was angry and cursed Dewi Uma to become a *Raseksi*, named DewiDurga. The residence of Goddess Durga was in *SetraGandamayit* and oversaw all spirits.





Figure 3. Visualization of *Jagongin kahyanganJonggring Saloka*  
(Creator: Nina EP and Ranang AS)

*Jagong2* in Figure 4 shows Goddess Kunti alone meeting Goddess Durga and her troops. The *Jagong* depicts the story of Goddess Kunti, who was concerned when she heard the news that her children, the Pandavas, were defeated by two giant messengers from the Kurawas. Then, Dewi Kunthi went to SetraGandamayit and met Dewi Durga. He would help Kunthi as long as he was willing to offer Sadewa to him. Kunti disagreed and left Goddess Durga. Genie Kalika was ordered by Goddess Durga to possess the body of Goddess Kunti.



Figure 4. Visualization of DewiKunthi's *Jagongin SetraGandamayit*  
(Creator: Nina EP and Ranang AS)

*Jagong3* in Figure 5 shows Sadewa tied to a tree and surrounded by many spirits with the genie Kalika in the background. In front of him, Goddess Durga appeared with her dreadlocked troops. This *Jagong* depicts Sadewa searching for Dewi Kunthi to go to SetraGandamayit. Genie Kalika bounced off Dewi Kunti's body because she felt hot. When he regained consciousness, the genie Kalika saw Sadewa and immediately fell in love, but Sadewa rejected him. Sadewa was tied under a gurda tree by the genie Kalika, then reported his whereabouts to Goddess Durga. Meanwhile, Sadewa was tempted by various spirits. Goddess Durga asked Sadewa to do Ruwat to herself, but Sadewa was unwilling. Goddess Durga was angry and wanted to kill Sadewa. Bhatara Guru saw from heaven and felt pity, so he came down to earth and possessed Sadewa's body.



Figure 5. Visualization of Sadewa's *jagong* being teased and threatened with death  
(Creator: Nina EP and Ranang AS)

*Jagong* in Figure 6 depicts a *Ruwat* scene. Goddess Durga was helpless before Sadewa. He saw Bhatara Guru's throne above Sadewa's head, then Durga worshiped in front of Sadewa. Durga begged forgiveness from Bhatara Guru. Sadewa, possessed by Bhatara Guru, forgave Goddess Durga and gave *Ruwatto* her. Sadewa chewed palm sugar, spat on the Goddess Durga's *smbun-mbunan*, and uttered the magic spell. Durga was successfully purified (*Ruwat*) and returned to being Goddess Uma. Bhatara Guru came out of Sadewa's body and went to *kahyangan* (heaven) with Goddess Uma.



Figure 6. Visualization of *Jagong Ruwat*  
(Creators: Nina EP and Ranang AS)

The Wayang Beber visualization uses a red brick background, adapted to the characteristics of Majapahit heritage temple buildings, mostly made of red brick. Red brick architecture is identical to the architectural style of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century Majapahit Kingdom [17]. Furthermore, philosophically, red brick symbolizes the human condition, which consists of the elements of fire, water, earth, and wind [4]. The top border decoration also refers to the ornaments on the edges of the temple building. Likewise, the divider between the *Jagong* uses the image of the Parudaksa gate. Gapura Paduraksa is a complete gate that has a door and a slender roof, on either side connected by a fort (fence) [18]. Apart from the temple building complex and tombs, the Paduraksa gate can be found in the temple reliefs. Since the era of Hindu cultural influence and Islamic cultural influence, until Indonesia today, the gate continues to show its existence.

Some of the ornaments in Wayang Beber paintings, such as palm trees, birds, and plants, refer to the decorations carved on the reliefs of the Suku temple. The empty background with minimal decorations gives the impression of a more illusive visualization, providing room for imagination for the audience. This is by the main building of the Suku temple, where reliefs are not carved but are placed separately in the temple complex. The reliefs, as are the statues, are in the yard at one with nature.

The depiction of four elements in the form of figures, animals, plants, and buildings in Wayang Beber, which refers to the story of Sudamala and the reliefs of the Suku temple, is by the landscape pattern found in the temple reliefs. Previous research states that the landscape elements carved in temple reliefs consist of four groups: human, nature, vegetation, and artificial [19].



Sukuh Temple is a temple built during the era of influence of Hindi culture in the East Java period, so the WayangBeberSudamala style has a strong East Javanese feel, both in shape, color, and ornamentation. This is relevant to the tradition in the world of puppetry, in which the sense of artistic and aesthetic fanaticism of the people in one place is guarded by the puppeteers in each region [20]. WayangBeberSudamala was created while still paying attention to its origins so as not to be uprooted from its cultural roots, even though currently the Sukuh temple is in the administrative area of Central Java Province.

The *Jagongin* Figures 3 - 6 are actually 4 meters long cloth, called *gulungan* (rolls). Each roll contains four scenes (*Jagong*: in Javanese) [21]. WayangBeber rolls usually consist of 4 *Jagong*. We can roll up the WayangBeber to store it. Likewise, its use when performing is the opposite: unrolling it, then plugging it in and stretching it out in front of the puppeteer. *Jagong1* to *Jagong4* is a series of sequential stories.

The creation of the wayang with the Sudamala story was staged by the young puppeteer Shihab during Galungan Day in Demping Hamlet, Karanganyar district, not far from the Sukuh temple. Most of this hamlet's residents are Hindu-Javanese and use the Sukuh temple as their place of worship. MangkuJito said, "I asked that the theme be *RuwatanSudamala*, meaning that Sudamala will give *Ruwatanto* Durga, where she will rule the earth. This dharma cannot be born if these unfavorable qualities dominate the earth." So, the story of Sudalama in WayangBeber is closely related to the Galungan ceremony." Considering that the aim is self-cleaning, it is very appropriate to carry it out on the Galungan holiday [22]. *Ruwatanas* self-cleaning can be seen in the Sudamala WayangBeber (Figure 4), which depicts the scene of Sadewa chewing kinang and spitting on the *mbun-mbunan* of the Goddess Durga and chanting the magic spell, and Goddess Durga successfully purified and returned to the beautiful Goddess Uma.



Figure 7. Young puppeteer Shihab is performing WayangBeberSudamala  
(Photo: Ranang AS)

The transformation of the Sudamala reliefs from temple reliefs to WayangBeber was carried out correctly and following its purpose, namely *Ruwatan*. This is in line with previous research, stating that wayang performances are a medium that can be used as a means of any kind in the lives of Javanese people, one of which is for the ritual purposes of the *RuwatanSukerta* ceremony, *Ruwatanwayang* performances sometimes also present the Sudamalaplay [11]. The Sudamala story WayangBeber has become a means of religious education for the residents of Demping hamlet. To learn from the story of Sudamala, they can now go through wayangbeber, besides coming to the Sukuh temple where the Sudamala relief is located.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The Sudamala Relief and KidungSudamala can be a source of inspiration for storytelling in traditional Javanese painting, namely WayangBeber, including other arts. Not only is the story interesting, but its values are useful for life. Temple relief panels and WayangBeber have the same characteristics; the storytelling is presented in several continuous scenes (panel or *Jagong*). The difference only lies in the medium. The relief is carved on stone, while WayangBeber is painted on long cloth. Wayangbeber has great flexibility because it can be carried anywhere, rolled up, and spread out for performances.

This artistic research resulted in a WayangBeberSudamala with a length of 4 meters consisting of 4 *Jagong*. The visualization of the WayangBeberSudamala is East Javanese style, both in shape, coloring, and ornaments, which are adapted to the era in which the temple was built, namely the end of the Majapahit Kingdom. WayangBeberSudamala can be exhibited or performed for entertainment and held in connection with Hindu religious education, namely self-cleaning or *Ruwatanin* Javanese tradition.

WayangBeberSudamala has been performed in a wayang show during the Galungan Day celebration in Demping Hamlet, Karanganyar. WayangBeber can be collaborated with other types of performing arts, such as shadow puppetry, traditional theater, and so on. This is intended so that the educational value in the Sudamala story can be disseminated to the younger generation, the noble values of the nation's culture continue to be preserved, and the Sukuh temple is increasingly recognized as a distinctive and unique tourist destination.

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