

CONTEMPORARY WAYANG KULIT PERFORMANCE: A CRISIS IN JAVANESE CULTURE?¹

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Abstract: *Wayang kulit or shadow puppet theater performance has been greatly changing. Changes occur in many aspects such as in terms of the duration or length of the performance, its structure, the number of dalang who performs it, as well as the number of female singers (sindhen or waranggana) who accompany the dalang. Consequently, now wayang kulit performance is seen more as tontonan (entertainment) than as tuntunan (moral teachings). One of the main factors of this big change is the intrusion of western culture into Indonesia in general and Java in particular. This results in the reluctance of the young, especially, in watching this form of traditional art. Therefore, the change(s) in the performance of wayang kulit or shadow theater is one of the efforts to make this form of traditional art survive.*

Key words: *wayang kulit performance, traditional art, Javanese culture, tuntunan (moral teachings), tontonan (entertainment)*

“ ... it’s just weird that Desthrrastra preaches to Bisma in a major audience scene of Hastina. He is out of his mind ...” (Kisawa and Poerwono, 2002).

INTRODUCTION

The above quotation is a part of commentary of Ki Sayoko Gondokusumo, a conservative, senior *dalang* from Klaten, Central Java, when he watches a *wayang kulit* theater performed by Ki Joko Edan, a *dalang* from Semarang, Central Java. I should mention here that Ki Joko Edan is a nickname. His real name is Ki Joko Hadiwijoyo. He is a contemporary *dalang* who breaks the classical rules of *wayang kulit* performance. Therefore, people call him Ki Joko Edan, which means Crazy

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Joko. He is considered to be crazy because he does not care about the classical rules of *wayang kulit* performance. In a conservative, traditional performance, it is just impossible that Destharastra will preach to Bisma; rather, it will be the other way around. Spectators of Ki Joko Edan's performances are often very surprised at his innovations. Destharastra preaching to Bhisma is only one example. Another example is that in the middle of a performance, he will stand up and dance (Kisawa and Poerwono, 2002). Another *dalang* who is known to be too innovative is Ki Enthus Susmono, from Tegal, Central Java. In an *adegan perang* (battle scene), for example, it is not only the characters of *wayang* that kick and hit each other but so does he. Ki Enthus Susmono makes the spectators astonished when he hits, tears down and steps on an evil character of *wayang* again and again and finally throws it away (geocities.com, 2002).

Given the above illustration, I want to draw attention to the fact that *wayang kulit*, as a performance, has—to a large degree—greatly changed. These changes have been taking place at least for about the past eight years. It seems that young people enjoy such changes because they can laugh, get entertained, and do not have to think about the story or the message of the story seriously. In short, young people just love the innovations, the changes made by young *dalang*. However, this kind of phenomenon makes the old generation, like Ki Sayoko Gondokusumo for instance, worried; they are worried that someday, in the near future, *wayang kulit* will be merely a performance and an entertainment, that it will lose the values it has been carrying for centuries.

By presenting the differences in how *wayang kulit* was and is performed, this article will mainly discuss the cultural debates that happen in contemporary Javanese society. In other words, through the changes in *wayang* performance, we can look at the changes that happen in Javanese society and culture. Further, this cultural debate will lead to a question whether contemporary *wayang kulit* performance reflects that there is a cultural crisis in Javanese society. To organize the discussion, first of all I will present how *wayang kulit* was performed and how it is performed now. In the next part of the article I will discuss the cultural debates that reflect the changes in Javanese society and culture; and the last part of the paper will be the conclusion.

WAYANG KULIT PERFORMANCE: THEN AND NOW

Much has been written about *wayang kulit* as a performance, not only by Javanese people but also by foreign scholars. However, most of the studies we have now are concerned with the traditional performance of *wayang kulit*. Brandon (1970) and Keeler (1987, 1992), for example, give an excellent account on the traditional *wayang kulit* performance. In particular, Brandon not only gives a complete translation of three *lakons* into English, but also discusses almost all aspects of *wayang kulit*. In the meantime, Keeler (1987, 1992) enriches our knowledge of *wayang kulit* in a different way, i.e. from an anthropological point of view. For example, it is really interesting to know how a *wayang kulit* performance is prepared, how spectators enjoy the show, where they sit etc. Both of them see that as a form of art, *wayang kulit* is complicated and indeed this can hardly be denied.

To understand *wayang* as the best art that Java has, we can rely on those scholarly works. However, to understand *wayang* performance in the present day, the scholarships we have fall short because there have been significant changes in the *wayang* performance especially in the last eight to ten years. Unfortunately, at this point we lack references and I think it will be very useful to present my own personal experiences as to what aspects of the performance have been changing. These changing aspects include the length of time (duration) of the performance, number of *dalang* who performs *wayang*, and what they do during the performance; the dialogues during the performance, the music that accompanies the performance, its structure, and where it is performed and who sponsors it. In the following I will describe the contrast of the above aspects.

A. Duration

Traditionally, a *wayang* performance lasted for about nine hours, starting from nine in the evening to around six in the morning (Brandon, 1970:20), if it was performed in the nighttime. I am surprised that Brandon does not mention the daytime performance because it was also common that *wayang kulit* was performed during daytime. Different from Brandon, Keeler (1987) does mention the daytime performance. According to him, the daytime performance was not as popular as the nighttime performance and men tended not to be interested in it. If *wayang* was performed during the day, it lasted from about ten in the morning to around six in the evening.

Whether it was performed during the day or in the night, the length of time for the traditional performance is about nine hours.

A contemporary performance, however, can last only for an hour, three hours, five hours etc. It does not mean, however, that there is no more performance lasting for about nine hours. My point here is that the length of time of a performance depends on the occasion. If *wayang kulit* is performed on television, for example, it lasts less than seven hours. The fact that *wayang kulit* is now performed on television is a big change. About ten years ago, or before, it was only TVRI [the government owned television station] that occasionally performed *wayang kulit*. During the past eight years, however, many private television stations have also been performing *wayang kulit* on a regular basis. On one occasion, Sujiwo Tejo, a contemporary *dalang* living in Jakarta, performed the Death of Bhisma (*Bisma Gugur*) in only one hour (*NOVA Tabloid*, 2002). And any performance that lasts less than nine hours, the standard time, is called as *pakeliran padat* (a compact performance).

B. Dalang

In the old days, there was only one *dalang* who performed a *wayang kulit* show. He would sit during the nine hours performance. The fact that a *dalang* could sit for nine hours without having meal, going to the bathroom etc. was not a surprise; in the sense that that was the way a *dalang* did his job. In other words, Javanese people just did not question that. However, to foreign scholars, at least to Brandon (1970) and Keeler (1987, 1992), it was something extraordinary. Brandon and Keeler are amazed with the fact that a *dalang* could sit, speak and sing for the whole nine hours. Traditionally, a *dalang* had his own singers (*sindhen* or *waranggana*). Usually in a performance, a *dalang* was accompanied by two or three *sindhen*. He would be accompanied by the same *sindhen* whenever and wherever he performed *wayang kulit*. In addition, he also had the same musicians.

Although many performances are still done traditionally, it is common now for spectators of contemporary *wayang kulit* performance to watch a performance done by more than one *dalang*. There can be two or even three *dalang* doing a single performance. When there are three *dalang* and the performance lasts for nine hours, which is the standard, conventional length of time, then they will perform for about three hours each. Based on the dramatic structure of *wayang kulit* performance (Brandon, 1970), it seems that the first *dalang* performs the first part, *pathet nem*, the second

plays the second part, *pathet sanga*, and the third plays the third part, *pathet manyura*.

The number of *dalang* who perform *wayang kulit* is not the only significant change in contemporary *wayang kulit* show. In fact, the number of *sindhen* (singers) also changes. In a traditional *wayang kulit* show, as I have stated, there were only two or three singers. However, in a contemporary *wayang kulit* show, there can be more than ten singers. In addition, now *dalang* seem to have no fixed number of singers as they used to. Usually, it is the sponsor of the show who chooses which singers should accompany the *dalang*. In choosing the singers, the sponsor takes the spectators' favorites seriously. It is just amazing that in Java now there are many young talented *sindhen* and more amazingly, they are considered pretty in the spectators' eyes. Perhaps Waljinah from Surakarta and Yati Pesek from Yogyakarta are the only exceptions. Both of them are senior *sindhen* but they prove that their quality is beyond average. The other singers are, as long as I can recall, young and pretty.

Another aspect that is also a big change is that often spectators can watch the performance of a guest star. In addition to inviting many *sindhen*, the sponsor may invite a famous comedian. Usually the comedian is one of the members of Srimulat, a group of comedians founded by the late Teguh decades ago. Srimulat has been the most favorite comedian group to millions of the Javanese. When one or two of the members of the group are invited to perform a live show together with a *dalang*, it is sure that there will be thousands of people coming to watch the show.

C. Music

In a traditional *wayang kulit* show, there was only one kind of music, i.e. gamelan. Keeler (1987) makes an excellent observation that gamelan music can be played by at least seven people. In the old days, people came not to enjoy the music but to enjoy the *wayang* show. If the *dalang* who performed the show was a famous *dalang*, then people would be satisfied. However, in a contemporary *wayang kulit* show, music tends to become an important show itself. In addition to gamelan, there are also other kinds of music such as pop music, *ndang dut* music, rock etc. This means that spectators not only see gamelan instruments, but also modern musical instruments such as drum, saxophone, guitar, piano and the like.

Suara Merdeka, a daily newspaper in Semarang, Central Java, notes that these kinds of music have been a part of *wayang kulit* show since 1996. Sujiwo Tejo (*Suara Merdeka*, 1996), Enthus Susmono, and Wisnu Warsito (*Suara Merdeka*, 1998) are examples of young *dalang* who perform modern music in their *wayang kulit* show. But then two of the best *dalang*, Anom Suroto and Manteb Sudarsono, later also began to perform modern music in their shows. Very often, pop singers, *ndang dut* singers, and comedians are invited to join a *wayang kulit* show. Indeed, they themselves are the show. And finally, the Javanese people realize that *wayang* performance has greatly changed. This kind of new phenomenon not only attracts young people but also the old. In the end of the 1980s, Keeler (1987) still could claim the gamelan orchestra as the only music that accompanies *wayang kulit* performances. I believe that if he had done his research some years later, he would have been amazed with the development of the show.

D. Dialogue

Pakeliran padat (compact performance), more than one *dalang* performing a show, and modern music are not the only outstanding changes that happen in a *wayang* performance. One more thing that characterizes the changes is dialogues. During the show, the *dalang* actually does not only do the dialogues among the characters of *wayang*. In addition, the *dalang* also does the *suluk* or “mood songs sung by the *dalang*” (Brandon, 1970:394), and *janturan* or “narration introducing a major scene; intoned to pitch and rhythm of soft background music” (Brandon, 1970:385). However, it seems that there is no changes concerning with *suluk* and *janturan*. The *dalang* still uses the same language and songs. In doing the dialogues, however, the *dalang* makes very significant changes.

The dialogues among the characters of *wayang* used to be performed by the *dalang* only. But now the *dalang* also does the dialogues with other people, especially when the time comes for *adegan limbukan* (the maidservant scene before the inner palace scene) and *gara-gara*. Often Petruk speaks to some *sindhen* or to a musician. When there are guest stars, either comedians or pop singers, then Petruk, representing the voice of the *dalang*, speaks to them. This kind of dialogue is mostly *guyonan* (jokes) and is aimed to entertain spectators-and to be sure, *wayang kulit* performances done in this way are much more lively than they used to be.

Surprisingly, the *limbukan* and *gara-gara* scenes take longer than in a traditional performance.

E. Structure

Brandon (1970) gives an excellent explanation of many aspects of *wayang kulit* as a performance, including his discussion about the structure. In this paper, it is not my purpose to discuss the details of the dramatic structure of *wayang kulit* theater. It is sufficient to agree with Brandon who states that the show consists of “three parts: *pathet nem*, which theoretically lasts from nine in the evening until midnight; *pathet sanga*, which lasts from midnight until three in the morning; and *pathet manyura*, which lasts from three until the gray of dawn around six” (Brandon, 1970:20). Brandon also mentions that *gara-gara* (nature’s turmoil and clown scene) is in the beginning of part two or *pathet sanga*. In a traditional performance, this scene lasts about one to two hours. It is in this scene that the *dalang* entertains the spectators with jokes from the Panakawan, i.e. Semar and his children. In addition, there is actually a scene in which two maidservants also entertain spectators with their jokes. Many people in Java call this scene as *adegan limbukan*, named after Limbuk, one of the two maidservants that is fat. The other, skinny one, is Cangik. Brandon (1970:21) does not mention this scene before *adegan kedaton* (inner palace scene). It is in this scene that Limbuk and Cangik come out before the queen(s). Traditionally, this *limbukan* scene lasts about thirty minutes.

A contemporary *wayang kulit* performance, to be sure, still maintains this conventional structure if the show lasts for nine hours. The difference is that the *dalang* now spends more time for *adegan limbukan* and *gara-gara*. When there are guest stars, the *dalang* will extend the two scenes to have dialogues with the guest stars. When there is no guest star at all, still the *dalang* spends more time entertaining the spectators with his jokes than in a traditional performance. However, in a *pakeliran padat* or compact performance, it is very difficult to maintain this structure. When Sujiwo Tejo performed *The Death of Bhisma* in only one hour—as I have mentioned, it is very difficult to tell what kind of structure he used. One thing is sure; he left out so many important things compared to a traditional performance.

F. Place and Sponsor

Traditionally, *wayang* has been performed almost always as a ritual, for instance to celebrate a circumcision, a birth, or a wedding. On such occasions, *wayang kulit* show was usually held in the *pendhapa*, a special structure apart from the house of a family. The *pendhapa* is usually open in the front (a *pendhapa* has no front wall). The guests invited by the sponsor usually sat behind the screen while casual spectators were scattered all over the place (see Keeler 1987, 1992).

Referring to Emerson, Sujamto (1992:12) says in an interview that traditionally *wayang kulit* was performed in the *pringgitan*. *Pringgitan* is a part of a Javanese house that connects the *pendhapa* and the main house. Etymologically, “*pringgitan*” comes from the stem “*ringgit*,” which is the *krama* (refined) version of *wayang*. Thus in the old days, *wayang kulit* was performed in the *pringgitan*.

By contrast, a contemporary *wayang kulit* show can be performed both indoors and outdoors. Individual sponsors of *wayang kulit* show nowadays tend to decrease drastically because it is very expensive; only individual sponsors who are very wealthy can afford it. If this is the case, usually a performance is held outdoors. The sponsor usually makes a temporary *pendhapa* that can be disassembled after the show. However, if the sponsor is the provincial government, for example the provincial government of Central Java, the show is held at the front yard of the governor’s office and everybody can watch the show for free. Often, a show is only for a limited audience. If this is the case, the show then is performed indoors and common people will not be able to watch it.

CULTURAL DEBATES ABOUT WAYANG

Central to the cultural debate about *wayang* is the function of *wayang* in Javanese society. For centuries, there has been an assumption that *wayang* and Javanese culture are identical. This means that when people talk about *wayang*, at the same time they also talk about culture and vice versa. Anderson (1965:2), for instance, says that “tolerance is the characteristic of Javanese culture.” When he talks about tolerance, Anderson refers to *wayang* as both the source and the result of Javanese tolerance. In addition, he also says that “(t)raditional Javanese civilization developed a style of ethics,

morality, and philosophy, best expressed in wayang ..." (1965:30). Similar to Anderson, Keeler (1992: 59) states that "As for the ethical side of wayang, many Javanese, and certainly many dalang, believe the stories to contain moral teachings of great value, and of central importance to Javanese culture." In addition, Irvin (1996:170) also has the same account when he says that "Wayang purwa has traditionally been an important medium expressing and reinforcing a strong sense of Javanese identity, personality and culture." Traditionally, the Javanese themselves also claimed that wayang is identical with Javanese culture. Suyamto (1992:15), claims that those who want to "understand Javanese culture must understand wayang. The Javanese who do not understand wayang do not understand their own identity". In short, I can say that all references about wayang consider that wayang and Javanese culture are identical.

The question is, however, are those all accounts of wayang and Javanese culture still applicable to contemporary Javanese? This is a really difficult question to answer. Although contemporary wayang kulit performance is still based on the pakem or guide-for-the-dalang (Brandon, 1970:390), it seems that its functions have been shifting in Javanese society. As a traditional art, for centuries wayang kulit has functioned as a means of transferring traditional values in Javanese societies. Anderson (1965), Brandon (1970), Keeler (1987 and 1992), Sumantri and Walujo (1999) all agree that wayang kulit in Javanese society is not only entertaining but also educating. As in any other traditional forms of art, wayang kulit also functions as a ritual in the sense that "(r)itual seems to say the same thing—repeat the same message, in so many ways, through different channels" (Leach, 1966:229). Wayang kulit, then, in this case can be viewed as a channel to transfer messages—which are traditional values—in Javanese society. Therefore, in the eyes of the Javanese, wayang kulit traditionally was viewed more as *tuntunan* (moral teaching) rather than *tontonan* (entertainment) although everyone agrees that it also has high aesthetic value as an art form. This is to say, there used to be a balance between the aesthetic value and the moral teachings of wayang.

With all the development and changes in recent years, it will be too idealistic to say that wayang still has exactly the same function as it used to. On the other hand, it is not correct either to say that wayang has completely changed its functions in Javanese society. In line with modernization and

globalization, wayang, as the most outstanding characteristic of Javanese culture, is always undergoing changes. Therefore, I do not intend to answer the above question by a “yes” or “no” answer; rather, I want to discuss the changes themselves, why wayang performance changes or what causes are behind those changes. By discussing this issue, I hope we can see that the changes in wayang performance are actually an ongoing process, a process that goes side by side with Javanese society itself.

Wayang kulit performance that we can see now is, I believe, unimaginable ten to fifteen years ago. The fact that a dalang during a performance will stand up and dance, that he will hit an evil wayang by using his own hand, that a performance will have more than ten sindhens, be performed by three dalangs, and so on are just beyond the comprehension of the old generation. Yet, all these changes are not without any reasons or causes. It should also be born in mind that these changes constitute a long process. These changes actually are not recent, but date back to the beginning of the 1960s. Anderson (1965) notes that the Javanese at that time wanted the dalang to change. Javanese people did not like the dalang who were out of date and criticized them. According to Anderson, in the beginning of the 1960s there was

... increasing criticism of the traditional “philosophizing” of the puppeteer (dalang) as “feudal” and “out of date.” There is a growing demand for the dalang to be “modern.” This modernity, however, turns out to be simply the more superficial ideas recues of Westernized bourgeois culture (1965: 27).

Like Anderson, Javanese people themselves also believe that Western culture is one of the main causes behind the changes in wayang kulit performances. Although in the beginning of the 1960s Sukarno was anti-Western—including Western culture, still the penetration of Western culture into Indonesia, especially into Java, is inevitable. As soon as Suharto stepped into power, the modernization door was opened up widely. Java was the first place to be modernized. Indeed, Anderson was right that Western culture was soon more and more familiar to Javanese people. The process of modernization continues and Western popular culture and art are accepted especially by young people in towns and cities. Consequently, as time goes on, they tend to love Western cultural products and art more than traditional

culture. The young Javanese generation knows more about Hollywood films than traditional theater like wayang kulit and kethoprak and other traditional theaters. In every big city in Indonesia, they like to eat American fast food more than traditional food. They also drink Pepsi, Coca-cola and other imported drinks. Believe it or not, fast food, soft drinks, American movies, pop music, video games, and play stations—just to name a few—have been a part of modern Javanese people's lifestyle. (At this point, often I think that actually there is no big difference between Java and America).

To a certain segment of the Javanese society, especially the old generation, this is a sad fact. However, personally I see this phenomenon as an ongoing, inevitable process. Like huge flood, the coming of foreign cultural products and art cannot be stopped. No one can stop them. This makes the traditionalists have a very hard time to maintain the traditional culture and art. Take ten young people randomly in a big city in Java and ask them about wayang; only God knows how many of them understand it. By contrast, if we ask them to talk about an American film star or an American pop singer, I definitely am sure that only one or two of them do not know him or her. Even in Javanese villages, children are more familiar with "American heroes" like Superman, Batman, and the like than local heroes. These are all facts that the Javanese must face today.

To a large degree, these all are the causes behind the changes of wayang kulit performance into its shape now (and actually all kinds of traditional culture and art have been changing). Because of the above reason, wayang kulit performance has to be changed in order to survive, or, at least, to attract the young generation. If wayang kulit, as a performance, remains traditional in all its aspects, in the near future there will be no young people who watch it. This sounds very pessimistic, but I think this is not exaggerated.

In addition, it is also very interesting to take a look at Keeler's idea about what actually changes wayang kulit as a performance. Keeler is of the opinion that

... many other changes, such as agricultural development and urbanization, are critical parts of Java's recent and ongoing history. But they do not bear on the future of wayang quite as directly as do education, electrification, and consumerism (1992: 66).

I think this is a very reasonable argument. The impact of education is that there are more and more Javanese who can speak Indonesian language

and consequently cannot understand complicated Javanese language. In terms of electrification, electricity not only happens in towns and cities but also in villages. The result of village electrification is that people then buy television sets and instead of watching traditional art, they watch television programs. This is exactly what Keeler (1987) points out. At this point, he is not different from Anderson who says that Western culture to a large degree changes wayang kulit performance.

Thus, we see that the changes of wayang kulit performance are the result of ongoing processes that are taking place in Java. The question now is, does wayang still serve as the characteristic of Javanese culture? Does it still represent the identity of Javanese people? If the answer is yes, to whom, to which segment of Javanese society, does it apply? If not, then, is it true that modernization and Western culture so easily change wayang which also means change Javanese identity?

As I stated above, I'd rather not answer this question. This is, if I may call it, a kind of cultural tension that is not only faced by the Javanese but also by other traditional societies or even nations that are moving towards modernization. Therefore, it is normal that in Java there are many people who worry that the traditional values will soon be ignored by the Javanese. These people belong to the traditionalist group that should not be necessarily old; they may be village people but they can also be towns people, both young and old. This group of people criticizes the contemporary wayang kulit performances which are so glamorous. The glamour of the performance will, in their eyes, leave out the *tuntunan* (moral teachings) of wayang because it only emphasizes the *tontonan* (entertainment) aspect of it. On the other hand, those belonging to the modernist group argue that if there is no innovation of, no changes in wayang kulit performance, soon the young generation will neglect this *adi luhung* (noble) culture. Therefore, every effort must be made, whatever it takes, to attract as many spectators as possible, to make the young generation of Javanese society keep loving wayang. The result is that there are pop singers, comedians, modern musical instruments, and also dalang that stand up and hit an evil wayang character in a contemporary performance. It is also interesting that the modernists also work hard to constantly maintain the traditional values in wayang. For example, although there is a *pakeliran padat* (compact performance), many people still prefer the standard performance, i.e. a nine-hour show.

Interestingly, this tension is also an ongoing process. According to Magnis-Suseno (1991:71), “the Javanese society has gotten involved in a cultural transformation that has no certain end yet.” This can be interpreted that Javanese values are not static values but changing ones. But what kind of values will the Javanese have in the end as the result of this process? I think it is interesting for us to wait and see. Or, maybe there will be no fixed values. However, there are many Javanese people who keep saying that Japan can be a good example. According to them, Japan is a modern country but still preserves its traditional culture, still maintains its traditional values.

Another question related to Magnis-Suseno’s conception of the cultural transformation is this: Does the contemporary wayang kulit performance reflect that traditional values are in crisis? From Magnis-Suseno’s point of view, I think there is no value crisis in this transformation because values are always changing. And I doubt that cultural transformation—not only in Java but also in any society—will ever reach an end, meaning that it will not reached fixed, certain values. Rather, I wish to address it from a different angle, i.e. from traditional versus modern perspectives. At this point, it is very interesting to get back to the quotation at the beginning of this paper, i.e. that in a major audience scene of *Hastina*, Destharastra preaches to Bisma. From the traditional point of view, this is a kind of value crisis. Traditionally, the Javanese respect the elders. In respecting the elders, the young not only do whatever they are told to do but they do not preach to the elders either. I believe that Ki Joko Edan did this scene on purpose because in fact in modern Javanese society, the conception of respecting the elders, as a traditional value, has been changing. In the old days, this is the value that the young took it for granted. By contrast, today the young will only respect the elders when the elders are worth respecting. If the elders are corrupted, immoral, or do anything wrong to society, the young will not respect them. What happens to the former President Suharto is a good example in this case. Thus, it may very well be that in the scene, Ki Joko Edan wanted to address this matter; so this is a kind of satire. Seen in this way, it is not wayang kulit show that loses its traditional values but the show changes greatly because contemporary Javanese society ignores traditional values.

CONCLUSION

The changes in wayang kulit performance are the result of a long process dating back to the beginning of the 1960s. There are various factors

that make wayang kulit as a performance change. However, it does not mean that all kinds of changes in the performance make wayang kulit automatically lose its functions as a means of transferring traditional values. Rather the changes are a matter of survival, because wayang kulit has to compete with foreign cultural products that keep coming to Indonesia in general and to Java in particular. If wayang kulit remains to be performed in the old fashioned way, in the near future it will be neglected by most of the young generation of Javanese. The worry of some people, that the contemporary performance is not Javanese in a broad sense, should be accepted as a debatable discourse. Therefore, it is also important to think that the present wayang kulit performance actually reflects changes that the Javanese have been undergoing.

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