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SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATIONS IN RUWATAN PUPPETRY: A CASE STUDY OF KI MUHYAD ADI CARITA PREPARATORY INCANTATIONS

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Abstract

This study explores the dynamics of discursive and presentational symbols within the context of the preparatory incantation recited during a Wayang Kulit Ruwat (Purifying Shadow Puppetry) ritual, as performed by Ki Muhyad Adi Carita. In the modern society, incantation within puppetry are frequently misunderstood due to their archaic language and their association with mystical or esoteric practices. Employing a qualitative ethnographic approach within a single-case study design, data were gathered through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Three specific mantras were analyzed using indicators established prior to the analysis. The results indicate that these mantras encompass both a discursive layer (the implicit meanings within the text) and a presentational layer (the manner of recitation, accompanying objects, and the context of the ritual actions). However, the boundaries between these two layers are not rigid; spiritual expression manifests presentationally within the text itself and extends across the entire preparatory process, reaching beyond the confines of the performance stage. The verses within these mantras do not merely transmit meaning; they serve as a bridge connecting the profane and the sacred within the ritual.

Keywords: discursive symbols, presentational symbols, incantation, ruwatan, puppetry.

INTRODUCTION

The art of *pedalangan* (puppetry) is an intangible cultural heritage, complex in its history, meanings, symbols, and philosophical values. Nowadays, *pedalangan* and/or *pewayangan* (puppetry) also transforms into a melting pot where Javanese traditions,