

THE COMMODIFICATION OF THE WAYANG MASK AS LAKON "PANJI RENI" IN TERM OF VCD FORMAT

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ABSTRACT

Wayang Topeng (a kind of a puppet show performed by someone wearing a mask) is a performance in the form of a drama displayed by dancers wearing masks who perform not only hiding their faces, but there are also goals that are more essential and symbolic, or it is not a mere performance but also related to the life patterns of the people of Malang region, East Java, Indonesia. It can be realized that the existence of *Wayang Topeng* has a connection with the aspects of a belief, worshipping the ancestral spirits, that can survive as a performance of art and has some values related to the formation of structures, including (1). Society, (2). Environment, (3). Social system in a community, (4). Religious system. The change in format from the stage show to the audio visual format in the VCDs format with all its adjustments led to a shift in values towards the meaning of the *Wayang Topeng* show from traditional to mass culture. This phenomenon is seen not by adjusting the media format, but already in the form of commodification. This paper aims at revealing the forms, processes, and powers of commodification of *Wayang Topeng* in "Panji Reni" story.

Keywords: Commodification, *Wayang Topeng*, VCDs format

INTRODUCTION

Wayang Topeng which develops around Malang region is a drama performed by some dancers wearing masks. *Wayang Topeng* is a genre of dance and drama performance like *Wayang Wong* (a human puppet). *Wayang Wong* is etymologically derived from the new Javanese word. *Wayang* means 'doll of skin or shadow', and the word '*wong*' means person or human. Within the scope of Javanese dance, the word *Wayang* is always translated to drama (play), who was finally understood as dance-drama performed by humans (Sudarsono in Hidajat, 2011: 6).

Wayang Topeng from Malang is historically related to the culture of the local community. This is based on the word '*badut*' or clown which is also the name of the temple worshipping the Yoni Lingga, the saga of the princes (or *Panji*) during the age of Kediri kingdom, and its presence as a palace performance of art in the Majapahit kingdom lived as an oral tradition in the Malang community. Not only it is present as an entertainment or a show, but it is also related to a belief for the community's rituals to worship the ancestral spirits.

Wayang Topeng which relates to aspects of beliefs and to worship the ancestral spirits can survive because of the four influencing factors, they are; 1). Supporting community, 2). environment, 3). social, and 4). religious system. These factors form the continuous pattern of performance art from one generation to the next so that it has a link to the dynamics of the life of the supporting community (Hidajat, 2011: 10).

In reality, the development of today's society is that the continuity of art performance traditions has demanded many changes. The impact of technological development and communication as well as the changes in the mindset of society have changed the art performance tradition leading to commercial demands. The rise of the presentation of traditional art performances through screens makes traditional performances to be easily watched anywhere and anytime. Besides, *Wayang Topeng* from Malang region has become less attractive to the public.

It can happen because the art performance as a part of the culture in a society undergoes changes or shifts that are inseparable from the factors that cause changes coming from outside and within the culture (Hendropuspito, 1989: 266-267). The source of changes can be from internal factors, including the arts and the artists themselves as well as the existence of external factors such as political, economic, social and technological factors. The consequences of this change can be negative and positive for the community, both supporters (the artists) and the audiences.

The today's demands from the community raises that the traditional art performance must be able to adjust the situations and conditions. The rise of traditional art that has been packaged in the form of Video Compact Disk (VCD) is the answer to the existence of traditional art which is getting abandoned by the supporting community. People are now "reluctant" to flock to see traditional performances live and are more "comfortable" at home watching shows on their screen. The example is of course *Wayang Topeng* from Malang which has been packaged in VCDs. The space is no longer limited by time, and people will be able to enjoy traditional shows anywhere and anytime. The demands from the people no longer see traditional performances as something that is noble to have high spiritual values, but how those performances can only be watched and enjoyed as a pleasure or entertainment.

The entertainment on VCDs is a package that includes the need to obtain information and entertainment that is displayed more reliably because of its audiovisual nature. Therefore, while getting the information needed, the viewers will also be entertained at the same time with those recreation programs. According to Wahyudiyanto (2004: 33), the behavior in individual's independent subjectivity to institutional collective behavior above has provided diverse realities that shape the typical attitude of our social behavior. The plurality of values and behavior is also revealed in response to the development of today's entertainments.

The *Wayang Topeng* performance in VCD packaging on the "Panji Reni" story performed by Padepokan Seni Mangun Darmo is the artists' attempt to respond to the problem of the difficulty of *Wayang Topeng* performance being received by the younger generation and as a strategic step in voicing the existence of *Wayang Topeng* from Malang which are now rarely watched and enjoyed in the community. The hope is that with the existence of *Wayang Topeng* in VCDs, the existence of traditional arts could be preserved and developed.

Related to this article, the *Wayang Topeng* "Panji Reni" story can be seen in conjunction with the process of creation in VCDs, equipment and performance techniques/ stage performance techniques, whether it is still held overnight or half night or even just for certain purposes. In addition,

commodification also involves the internal fields of dance, costumes, musical accompaniment, the order of presentation and the external fields (the people supporting the art performance and the situation as a form of folk art in packaging).

According to Kuntowijoyo (1987: 18-19), the growth of popular arts supported by technological advances and economic organizations requires the masses to have a large role in the formation of artistic tastes. This does not mean that popular arts have a decadent tendency like the possibility of cultural contradictions, as seen in capitalist society which include rational economic ethics and consumptive tendencies.

Capitalist industry according to Wahyudiyanto (2004: 38) does not consider ethical moral values, prioritizes behavior and generates a lot of profits, and money becomes a capitalist industrial orientation. This orientation is developed from every value to goods which means that it is oriented to the public's needs and demands.

DISCUSSION

Wayang Topeng's Packaging Process in VCDs

Media VCD or Video Compact Disk is an audio visual media which is a technology product whose existence is very potential for the purposes of documenting and delivering information media. This VCD product can be in the form of political, economic, social and cultural records. The potential of this media is as an important formula for the makers of moving image documents based on grammatical motion language, editing dynamics, and understanding or interpreting the scenarios.

As a media for documenting and delivering information, it basically functions as a medium of information, education, entertainment and promotion. *Wayang Topeng* performance is an entertainment for rural communities, some of whom still believe that *Wayang Topeng* show is a ritual related to the life cycle of the Malang people whose show was originally on stage now starting to made in VCD packaging. This transition has the consequence of packaging techniques concerning to the technology used to produce it.

The *Wayang Topeng* show that is displayed in VCDs will have limitations compared to the live stage performance, because its two-dimensional nature and the eyes of the audience are represented by a video camera to project the reflection of light and sound into the form of an audiovisual image. This is related to the time and the presentation techniques that are considered to reduce the interaction that exists between the audience and the performance itself.

The production process of VCDs was held at the pavilion of Padepokan Mangun Darmo Tumpang. During the process of making, there were two procedures that must be carried out, namely (1) the audio recording process and (2) the visual recording process carried out inside and outside the studio. The determination of the theme and title of VCD packaging was done by (1) the themes and titles available were packaged in cassette tape recorders, (2) based on ideas from the mask artists and the producer of Riwayat Record.

The production management carried out by Riwayat Record used standard operating procedures that have been approved. The steps taken by a producer are: (1) Program Planning, (2) Research, (3) Location Hunting, (4) Contact person, (5) Script writing, (6) Shooting, (7) Editing. In carrying out its duties, a producer always tried to develop creative ideas, and will oversee all forms of production from program planning (pre production meeting) to the end of video tape editing. The producer has a full responsibility for each element, both in technical and operational stuffs, all of which are put into production.

Every producer of folk arts, including in this *Wayang Topeng* show, must have good artistic sensitivity because in the production process, both shooting and editing process, the producer should know the strengths and weaknesses of the *Wayang Topeng* show. According to Sastro Subroto (1994: 172) a producer must not ignore his high level of creativity, so it is no wonder that a producer has a "showmanship" spirit.

In the making of *Wayang Topeng* show in VCDs, a director must be able to communicate the performance that will be packed, mainly related to the structure of the show, the sequence of performances, the position of the players, and the 'missions' conveyed by the artists in order to be well captured by the audience. For the presentation of this *Wayang Topeng* show, the types of kinetic performances will have specific presentations and enjoyment techniques.

In the production of *Wayang Topeng*, the producer and the director were required to recognize the type and size of the image (shot) that is aired on VCD media, because the audience cannot freely see what is presented in the *Wayang Topeng* live show or on the stage. In VCDs, viewers are only represented by the camera through the image media on the screen. Cameras and/ or VCD screens have limitations, namely the presence of vertical and horizontal frames (that VCD is a two-dimensional media which only has long and wide aspects). Because of the limitations of the frame, the camera was required to produce an image that is clear and able to be understood by the audience. The ability to produce images that have such quality is called the quality of cinematography techniques (Suprihono, 200: 193).

Cinematography technique is basically an attempt to convey a message to the audience through the language of the picture, on how to accompany the audience to understand the plot of the *Wayang Topeng* performance. It is related to the composition, size/ type of shots and the use of camera angles. Almost all of the objects or image on the VCD screen are humans, that is why the standardization of the image's size is directed to humans, while the size is written in the form of generally agreed codes. It can be seen in the figure below:

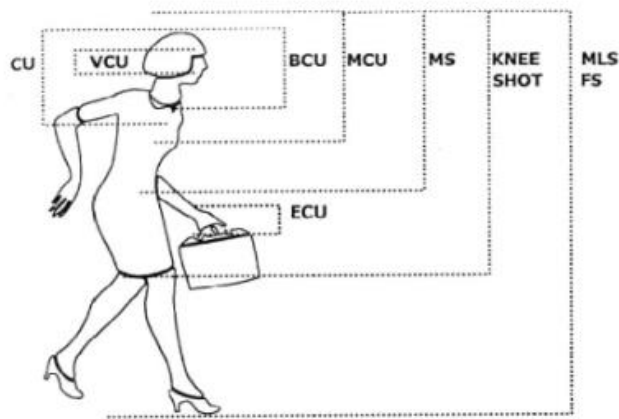


Figure 1 The scheme of standardizing size in a camera

There are 5 basic shots which a camera takes in recordings, namely close-up (CU), medium close-up (MCU), medium shot (MS), knee shot (KS), medium long shot (MLS) or full shot (FS). With these five basic shots accompanied by the movements of the camera and lens will result on a variety of images and the number of objects can be more than one (person).

The camera's ability to produce several types of shots can be explored to target certain parts of the *Wayang Topeng* performance series that will become an interest or receive special attention. Each type of shot specific to a particular object will give a different meaning when using another type of shot. Some examples of 5 basic shot types and their applications are:

1. Close Up (CU)

This type of shot will direct the attention of the audience to see objects closely. This will be beneficial if it is used to capture the face of a dancer and his head or neck movements, such as: *tolehan kepala* (head's turning left or right), *godeg* (head shake), during the romantic scene between Panji Asmara Bangun and Dewi Anggraeni.

2. Medium Close Up (MCU)

This shot can show movements that emphasize chest movements upwards, such as the motion of *ngungak bolo*, *srodokan*, *penthangan*. The example is in the scene when Dewi Anggraeni pulled the *keris* (a asymmetrical dagger) from its frame and then it was plunged into her own chest.

3. Medium Shot (MS)

This shooting technique is suitable for capturing movements from the waist up like: *medar malang* motion, *puketan*, *pilesan*.

4. Knee Shot (MS)

This type of shot can be used to give the audience's attention to the activities of 2/3 of the dancer's body, for example the movements of a dancer which include his/ her head to feet, like in *labas* movement, *junjung sikil*, and *jalan kencak*. The scene include the fainting of Panji Asmara Bangun when he heard that Dewi anggraeni had died

5. Full Shot (FS)

This technique is interesting if it is directed at the movements performed by dancers whose shape and appearance are good, too. Besides, this type of shot is able to cover more than one object (dancer). The example is the *pasewakan agung* scene in the pavilion of the Jenggala Kingdom.

The process of shootings during the production of *Wayang Topeng* show in VCD often used the straight angle and low angle position, because the process of recording *Wayang Topeng* in VCD was not done in a representative studio like in some national TV studios, but it was carried out at the pavilion located in Padepokan Mangun Darmo. This was done because of the limited funds to have a representative recording studio.

The Commodification Process of *Wayang Topeng* in VCDs

Adorno in Ibrahim (1997: 24) states that the birth of Indonesian commodity communities can be characterized by phenomena that show the support of the cultural industry for the mass public, for example the proliferation of popular magazine publishings, private TV stationz, VCD and DVD products, luxurious housing complex, entertainment centers, tourist resorts, and modern shopping centers.

The emergence of VCD products in music, dance, art performances, and other products demanded by society shows the symptoms of the emergence of commodity communities. Commodity, according to Lull (1998: 223), is everything that is produced or offered for sale. These goods and services always have ideological origins and consequences.

The *Wayang Topeng* from Malang performing "Panji Reni" story which has been packaged in VCD gives an illustration as one of the popular cultural products. The popular culture supported by the culture industry has reconstructed society that is not just consumption-based, but also makes all cultural artifacts as industrial products and certainly becomes a commodity. In industrialization, it is necessary to standardize the cultural products which has been adapted to the market.

Meanwhile, the large amount of efforts to sell *Wayang Topeng* in VCDs is unavoidable. The fact is that the commodification of these VCD products is determined by a recording producer or the owner of the recording company, Riwayat Record. In the consumer society, there are at least three forms of power that operate behind the production and consumption of aesthetic objects, namely capital power, producer's power, and the power from the mass media (Piliang, 2018: 221).

In this case, the one who holds capital power and producer's power is the owner of the recording studio or the producer of the VCD recording, named Mustofa (Riwayat Record). The producer has full power over the original package of *Wayang Topeng* VCD. That is why the copyright and patent rights of the VCD for the show are owned by the producer. As a result, the artists do not have the freedom to process their own artistic results. This also meas that the artists are only used as a tool for an industrial product that sometimes does not favor the interests of the artists themselves.

The artists of *Wayang Topeng* are not given the opportunity to express their own cultural products, so what actually happens is that their appearance sometimes does not look optimized. The role of the mass media in shaping the image or view of the community towards the *Wayang Topeng* show is very strong. This can be seen in the display of VCD products of some folk arts, especially *Wayang Topeng* which are shown on local TV stations such as Malang TV and Batu TV. They are giving a picture that *Wayang Topeng* in the form of VCD packaging is not only a means of entertainment but also a means of information and a promotion in the preservation of traditional arts.

It can be said that the role of the producer is the sole controller of power, or as the owner of the capital. Besides, as the controller of the mass media, the producer can freely regulate the productivity of VCD packaging for *Wayang Topeng* performances. As a result, there will be more traditional art businesses in VCD packagings.

The victim of the reality in the commodification of the VCD product is the perpetrator of *Wayang Topeng* itself, that the role of the producer becomes the holder of power. Folk art performances held in a public space are oriented to commodities (both political and economical), which politically means that art is utilized by certain groups for certain purposes as well (Budiyono, 2005: 219).

VCD packaging product of *Wayang Topeng* is an effort in the form of documenting a good traditional art product done by the capital owners in this case business people in looking for business opportunities, when modernizing it with increasingly sophisticated technological equipments. Similarly, it also happens to some art institutions or institutions that have a concern for the continuation of traditional arts that are being affected by modernization.

They actually have the same purpose; the preservation of traditional arts, but producers see good market opportunities or have high sale values, because television is starting to bloom with the display of traditional art as a show that is getting popular to the public these days. The fact is that people nowadays need entertainment that can directly be seen by not taking the time to come to the art performance. They just need to play the VCD cassettes or turn on the television channels which air traditional art forms.

For the institutions that have the role of preserving traditional arts, especially *Wayang Topeng* performances, their aim is to document these traditional arts as cultural products that must be preserved and protected. Therefore, this documentation is only used as an effort to conserve and save the traditional art products.

CONCLUSION

Commodification of *Wayang Topeng* in VCDs is seen as an attempt to "stretch" the dynamics of cultural development. Likewise, the format of showing the performance in VCDs with their strengths and weaknesses must be observed as an alternative to a new show that tries to utilize technological advances and innovations that are indeed created as tools or instruments to ease the problems of human life.

The growth of the cultural industry is expected to be able to play a role as a means of forming and strengthening aspects of national identity. The effects of industrial culture have a very strong influence on the formation of character and resilience of the nation, because in it there are messages, both real and veiled from the substance of cultural industries such as understanding, responding, disclosure, taste, and partiality. The process of making *Wayang Topeng* in VCD packaging is an effort in the form of documenting a product of traditional art which has begun to be marginalized.

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