

# Coastal Community Perceptions of the Purwa Shadow Puppet Performing Art

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the perception of coastal communities towards the art of wayang kulit purwa performances and examine the community's role in supporting the existence of the arts to survive and develop using a qualitative method with a descriptive approach that used observation and interview techniques with 25 residents of Masangan Village, Bungah, Gresik Regency, and 2 puppeteers as resource persons. The results of this study indicate that (1) there are social and economic characteristics of the coastal community, (2) the perception of the coastal community towards an art performance, and (3) the position of the wayang kulit purwa performing arts in the community. From the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that coastal communities consider the art of wayang kulit purwa performances to have an important position in their lives.

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## Abstrak

### Persepsi Masyarakat Pesisir Terhadap Pertunjukan Seni Wayang Kulit Purwa

Tujuan penelitian ini untuk mengetahui persepsi masyarakat pesisir terhadap seni pertunjukan wayang kulit purwa dan mengkaji peran serta masyarakat dalam mendukung eksistensi seni tersebut untuk terus hidup dan berkembang. Menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif yang menggunakan teknik observasi dan wawancara dengan 25 orang warga desa Masangan Kecamatan Bungah Gresik serta 2 orang dalang sebagai narasumber pendukung. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa (1) Adanya karakteristik sosial dan ekonomi pada masyarakat pesisir, (2) Persepsi masyarakat pesisir terhadap suatu pertunjukan kesenian dan (3) Posisi dan peran seni pertunjukan wayang kulit purwa di masyarakat. Dari hasil dan pembahasan penelitian dapat disimpulkan bahwa masyarakat pesisir menganggap seni pertunjukan wayang kulit purwa memiliki posisi penting dalam kehidupan mereka.

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## 1 Introduction

Perception is an experience formed in the form of data obtained through the senses, the results of brain processing and memory. The perception process is initially caused by a stimulus captured by the five senses and then brought to the brain to form an impression (Lewis, 2015). Perception can be interpreted as an impression of an object obtained through the process of sensing, organizing, and interpreting the object received by the individual so that it is a meaningful and integrated activity within the individual (Supiani et al., 2021). The process of perception is not just a psychological process but begins with a philological process known as sensation. Perception can also be interpreted as a process by which individuals select, organize, and interpret a stimulus into something meaningful.

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Coastal communities are people whose lives depend directly on marine products, either by catching or cultivating them. Coastal communities generally live on the coast; residential areas close to the location of their activities. The condition of coastal communities is a group of people who are relatively left behind economically, socially (especially in terms of access to education and health services), and culturally compared to other community groups (Fatmasari, 2016). Inequality is common for this community group. It is related to the economic benefits of using coastal and marine resources, which have only been enjoyed by certain community groups such as ship owners and fisheries entrepreneurs, but they have not enjoyed equally. (Mamengko & Kuntari, 2021).

Coastal communities have several different social characteristics. These differences can be seen in age, education, social status, and beliefs. Internal cohesion differences are often found within one coastal community group, understanding their relationship with other groups.

As a society that lives in a harsh environment, coastal communities often adhere to the theory of functionalism. This theory states that society consists of interrelated parts (religion, education, political structure, family), and each tries to achieve balance and harmony (Kristianto, 2019).

To this end, coastal communities are usually bound to the habit of spending time together. One of the activities that can start this is watching a puppet show. Puppets are considered as a medium for disseminating knowledge, both in general and in particular. As a cultural product, *wayang* cannot be separated from society and its environment (Pratama, 2015). The puppet showroom is a social arena built by institutionalized traditions to maintain a sense of social solidarity in coastal communities.

This paper aims to describe the perception of coastal communities towards the art of *wayang purwa* performances. Where it is known based on some of the explanations above, *wayang purwa* performances have a place in coastal communities and are something interesting to capture people's perceptions of them.

## 2 Methods

The research method used a qualitative approach. The research location was in Masangan Village, Bungah District, Gresik Regency. This study aimed to find out two things, i.e. a) how was the existence of *wayang kulit purwa*? and b) how were the role and perception of the community towards its existence? Considering that there had never been any research on coastal communities' perception of the *wayang kulit purwa* performances, the researchers chose this research topic.

The data sources in this study were divided into (1) primary data sources in the form of information from parties related to the object of research, namely the translation of interviews with people in Masangan village related to their perceptions of *wayang kulit purwa* performances, (2) secondary data sources were in the form of transliteration of interviews with puppeteer artists in the *purwa* area and sources of archives and documents related to the research object.

Data collection steps used: (1) interviews with 25 people addressed to villagers with various professional backgrounds, (2) documentation aimed at strengthening the obtained data from interviews related to research problems, and (3) field observation methods.

## 3 Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Characteristics of Economic and Social Conditions of Coastal Communities

It has become a kind of dogma that *Wayang* art was originally an art that was born from the process of introducing Islam to Javanese society. In addition, *wayang* art is also often attached to the art of established people (A. Pudjastawa et al., 2021). In other words, the person who utilizes the art is considered as a wealthy person. This is not surprising because all matters related to the art of *wayang kulit* do require a large amount of money.

So when a group of people is able to perceive *wayang* art as such, the assumption appears that the utilizer is an established person. Socially, it can be a certain pride even though poverty in the household area can be easily seen as a first impression when visiting coastal communities. There are limited access to capital, technology, and markets that affect business dynamics and weaken socio-economic and institutional functions. It happens due to the low quality of human resources produced by limited access to education, health, and public services, degradation of environmental resources both in coastal areas and weak policies. (Massalinri et al., 2019).

Among these people, heavy loads have to be carried out in addition to other household tasks. It makes some coastal communities have the habit of carrying out double loads (Utami et al., 2021). This relationship sometimes leads to a close cooperative relationship between elements of society in coastal areas.

One of the relationships that often occurs in coastal communities is a structured symbiosis where someone considered rich will lend business capital and help someone considered less wealthy. This behavior sometimes leads to feelings of “indebtedness.” At first glance, this cooperative relationship is mutually beneficial, but in reality, someone less capable is structurally escorted to remain in the same position.

To divert themselves from the burden of coastal communities and then busy themselves by holding celebrations, a celebration is a form of fulfilling wishes and planting positive expectations from the organizers. Celebrations can be atonement for an adverse event or critical phenomenon that is felt or experienced by individuals or groups to create a harmonious atmosphere of daily life (Nugraha & Rich, 2012).

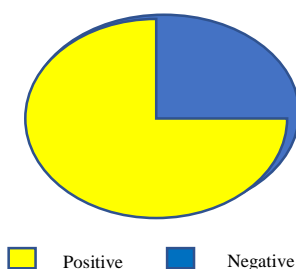
The preparation period for the celebration is generally carried out approximately three months in advance. The donating pattern becomes a tradition in this celebration. In this society, this pattern is named: *njaluk-njaluk* (begging). This term does not have a negative meaning, such as begging, but (1) announces the plan for the celebration, (2) reminds the *gentian* process, the family takes turns to hold the celebration and asks for their willingness to help.

Other social and cultural values reflected in these activities are the addition of fulfilling needs and the effort to show how strong the social position in society is. The invited neighbors, relatives, and acquaintances come when the celebration begins. This event can determine how far a person's position is in a community.

### 3.2 Coastal Community Perceptions of Performing Arts

As it has been discussed in the above sub-chapter, the celebration event is something important in the life of coastal communities. The strong reasons underlying this reason are: (1) a strong sense of doing something together; (2) the desire to present an activity that can divert the burdens of life; and (3) the efforts to show their existence in the midst of society.

**Figure 1.** Distribution of Respondents' Perceptions



Based on Figure 1, we can see that the respondents generally consider performing arts to be something important that must be included in a celebration event. Most of the respondents stated that a work of art could add to the splendor of the event they are organizing; on the other hand, there is a self-narcissistic effort from the event organizer. This positive answer supports the research from Wiyoso & Putra (2020) that coastal communities have unique artistic tastes.

In addition, the presence of art in a celebration can be interpreted as a denial of the emphasis. Art is a form of expression for people who feel that the reality of their life is full of pressure. Therefore, art serves as a balancer for the soul of society. Art can also be expressed as a form of social criticism for the blessings that befell them.

Art in coastal communities is like a rite. It is a behavior that is not a daily occurrence, which at certain times is repeated but is accompanied by one or several certain symbols (Kurniawan, 2019). Like rites, art is behavior or action that is not an everyday occurrence that can cause pleasure. One form of pleasure that can be presented in watching art is the opportunity to laugh. Humans need laughter to balance their souls, namely, venting their depressed feelings in a cheerful way (Nerhardt, 1970). This concept is similar to that of Mohammad Sobary's, who states that art could be an attempt to show conditions in which poor people can live well in the world, villages, and cities (Sobary, 1996).

### 3.3 The Position of Purwa Shadow Puppet Performing Arts in Society

As an illustration of the position of the art of *wayang kulit purwa* performances in the Masangan village community, the researcher took the votive redemption event which was held at the house of Mr. Sugiyat, who had the intention of organizing a puppet show as a wish for his daughter marriage plan that involved a future husband serving in the army. The celebration was held on July 11, 2021, and fell on Wednesday. At 10.00 Western Indonesia Time, the sound of musical instruments began to be heard. The *panjaks* in charge of playing the gamelan were dressed modestly. In fact, some people took off their clothes, only wearing sleeveless shirt because the air around the celebration venue was scorching. Meanwhile, the guests went back and forth to meet Mr. Sugiyat, who organized a celebration to carry out the *buwuhan*, that according to the custom held to support the celebration in the form of visiting, greeting, and giving donations (money, food ingredients, and other materials)

The Masangan Village community is a Muslim coastal community, but most people still consider *wayang* to have an important position in their life. The *wayang* performance ceremony can be held jointly by Pak Sugiyat and his relatives with the real support of the women who voluntarily help or '*mbiyada*'. Moreover, there are parts of the donations they received due to Pak Sugiyat's position as a '*kamituwa*' (respected elder person) in the village.

Mothers are also busy with various activities that make them very vital in this votive redemption ceremony. Three months prior to the votive redemption ceremony, a family meeting was held, and finally, it was decided to hold the ceremony. The family's fathers then raised the funds they could and gave the news to their relatives. The mothers went around the village visiting their neighbors and relatives, telling them about the plans for the ceremony. The process of going around the mothers to their neighbors and relatives is called *njaluk-njaluk* 'begging' among others. The utterance example is as follows: "*Rek, sasi Juli aku arep duwe gawe engkok gantenan ya*" ("Hey, later in July we will hold an event, you need to help me and someday I will help you as the 'replacement'"). The meaning of the word 'replacement' is to ask for donations and one day they take turns. There was a positive or affirmative answer confirming the agreement from the mothers. Then, in June, the mothers came to Ibu Sugiyat's house to donate essential food ingredients and raw cooking ingredients, namely rice, cooking oil, kerosene, sugar, noodles, fruits, and bananas. This process of donating raw materials among mothers is called *ndekek* 'laying'. It is followed by *warah-warah* 'notification' process. In



*warah-warrah* process, a mother is assigned with a payment of Rp. 50,000 to go around the hamlet informing the *nebus nadzar* plan. Meanwhile, the notification to more comprehensive news spread between hamlets or between districts is carried out by a father and several heads of families. The male officer is paid Rp. 150,000 to get around on a motorbike.

One week before the day of *nebus nadzar*, the invited families, especially the mothers, began to come to Ibu Sugiyat's house to donate some food, raw materials, or money. All these contributions, namely *ndekek* and *buwuh*, must be recorded by a mother assigned by a relative. The *buwuh* process must be directly addressed by Mrs. Sugiyat and her relatives in the form of giving ready-made food to the *buwuh*, which is called an incision. It can be in the form of ready-made food or raw materials in the form of dry snacks, and instant noodles in a neatly wrapped plate.

On the day of the *nebus nadzar* ceremony, the invited families were present to witness the *buwuh* ceremony performed by the fathers to Mr. Sugiyat as the head of the family who held the celebration. At that time, the family was obliged to reply with an incision. Meanwhile, the process of food preparation and offerings production are carried out by mothers. The mothers have raised funds and food ingredients, cooked, made offerings, arranged all the celebration parties, and served meals for all guests and performers, namely *dalang* 'shadow puppet master', *sindhen* 'singer', *panjak* 'singer or dancer', security officers, and guests.

In the afternoon, before *nebus nadzar* ceremony, a puppet show is played by Ki Pugu Prasetyo. Precisely at 12.30 Western Indonesia Time, Ki Pugu Prasetyo sat in front of the screen to present the story of the day's play. After the puppet show, which lasted from noon to dusk, the *Jekdong* puppet show was held as all-night long entertainment. In this implementation, the mothers assisted by the youths had to serve all food and drink until the following day. It was a very tiring process that took up energy and time.

#### 4 Conclusion

*Wayang Kulit Purwa* has a big role in coastal communities as a folk performance. Its existence is a form of expression that has been going on for a long time. The shadow puppet show is a depiction of life that is not considered to arise from the individual but emerges from the community's conscience (A. W. Pudjastawa et al., 2021). *Wayang Kulit Purwa* in coastal communities is part of the "periphery" culture, thus showing the unique role of individuals in society.

Some of the perceptions regarding *wayang kulit purwa* in coastal communities are motivated by their desire to fight against the situation. *Wayang*, which is associated as an established art of people becomes the legitimacy of the position of coastal communities. On the other hand, coastal communities argue that performing puppet arts can increase their income due to several religious considerations behind it.

The *Wayang kulit purwa* performance that thrives in the celebration arena also requires adequate social capital. People realize how important it is to form social networks to build beneficial social capital for betting in a complex and multidimensional social arena. In this respect, *wayang* seems to be a game structure that shows unique phenomenon. On the one hand, *wayang kulit* is an effort that seems to direct its stakeholders to mobilize economic capital, social capital, and political capital to achieve the accumulation of symbolic capital, as well as the *wayang* performances involved in the celebration. On the other hand, *wayang* plays a role as an intention which is part of the habitus practice of the local belief system held to achieve or measure the power of one's control over the economic, cultural, and social capital one has.



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