

Da'wah in Wayang Art

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to discuss how to proselytize using puppet media. This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, namely by collecting data and information through observation and interviews. The results of research and discussion show that there is a way of da'wah using puppet media. This research concludes. Wayang still has an important role as a medium of da'wah in the modern era.

Keywords: Da'wah; Media; Relevant; Wayang

Introduction

Religion has an important role in human life, because religion is the motivation for life and life as well as a very important tool of development and self-control. For a Muslim, da'wah is a non-negotiable obligation. The obligation of da'wah is something that cannot be avoided from his life, along with his recognition as a person who identifies himself as an adherent of Islam. Da'wah is a sacred duty that is the responsibility of every Muslim and Muslimah to carry out, according to the level of their respective abilities (Saputra, 2024). Wayang was one of the most successful media for proselytizing during the time of Sunan Kalijaga. Sunan Kalijaga is one of the Walisongo whose name is most famous among the Javanese people, because he was very good at socializing in all walks of life and his tolerance was very high. The method of da'wah applied by Sunan Kalijaga is still preserved by some people who are involved in the world of puppetry (Solecha, 2017). Dawai itself is a way to increase the interest of the younger generation in art and da'wah and to realize that art is not completely free. However, art has rules and manners and great influence depending on who and how to use it. Therefore, an in-depth study of puppetry as a medium for da'wah is needed.

Article written by Dewi, Mukarom and Ridwan, (2018). "Wayang Golek as Da'wah Media Descriptive Study on Ramdan Juniarsyah's Da'wah Activities" published by the Journal of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting. This article aims to describe Ramdan Juniarsyah's preaching with puppets so that it is easily accepted, relevant to the existing culture, using local language, and so that preaching through wayang golek can be entertaining. The method used in this article is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, namely by collecting data and information through observation, interviews and documentation then analyzed by describing the information according to the data needed. The results of the research found that da'wah through wayang golek is easily accepted by the community in various forms, such as positive and enthusiastic responses from people who come and watch puppet da'wah. Then, da'wah through wayang golek is relevant to the existing culture, which can be displayed in community events such as PHBI, walimah, and others. This wayang da'wah also uses local language, which is Sundanese as well as Indonesian. And da'wah through wayang golek is not only for preaching, but can entertain the community in various forms, such as from the cuteness of the Punakawan character, improvising songs and fresh dialogue between the preacher and the puppet character (Ahmad et al., 2020).

The results of previous research and current research have similarities and differences. Previous research and current research both examine da'wah using puppets. The difference is that previous research discussed more about how this puppet da'wah could be more accepted by the community, while current research discusses how to da'wah using puppet media.

Da'wah is inviting people to the way of Allah (Islamic system) as a whole, either orally, in writing, or by deed as an effort or Muslim effort to realize the values of Islamic teachings in the reality of personal life (*shahsiyah*), family (*usrah*), and society (*jama'ah*) in all aspects of life as a whole so as to realize *khairul ummah* (civil society) (Ahmad et al., 2020). The word wayang (Javanese), varies with the word bayang, meaning shadow, as do the words watu and batu, meaning stone and the words wuri and buri, meaning back (Alrizqi, 2019). The b sound is symbolized by the letters b and w in the first word with the second does not result in a change in the meaning of the two words (Utomo, 2015). G.A.J. Harzeu says that wayang in Javanese means, shadow. In Malay it means, bayang-bayang, which means shadow, vague, dreamy (Tim Serat Bahasa, 2017). Wayang golek is a wayang performed with wooden puppets, three-dimensional, and dressed. In West Java the faces of wayang golek are more distilled. The puppets' colorful costumes include imitations of Javanese court dress (Budiharjo, 2007).

The concept of preaching in culture can be seen from the spread of Islam during the Walisongo period, where Sunan Kalijaga was a very influential guardian among other guardians. He was a Javanese culturalist who preached Islam with a social and cultural approach in teaching Islam at that time. In bringing teachings from time to time, it turns out that wayang, which comes from the roots of the Ramayana and Mahabrata stories, develops with other stories that face the present and the future (Budiharjo, 2007).

This culture in preaching can be seen from the spread of Islam in the da'wah used by Sunan Kalijaga with folk art in the form of puppets, gamelan, music, and songs. From there, wayang art emerged as a medium that could be used for preaching. So, it can be concluded how the concept of preaching in culture (Ahmad et al., 2020).

Culture is basically all forms of human symptoms, both those that refer to attitudes, conceptions, ideologies, behaviors, habits, creative works, and so on. Koentjaraningrat, who quotes Claude Kluckhohn's opinion that culture is all ideas, ideas, and human actions in order to meet the needs of daily life through the teaching and learning process (Rofiani et al., 2021). In other words, culture is a complex fact that in addition to having specificity to a certain extent also has universal characteristics (Muhadjir, 2011). Thus, wayang is one type of culture that can be used to influence habits, daily human actions through the learning process, especially learning things related to Islam so that wayang becomes a culture that can be a forum for da'wah in spreading Islamic teachings or Islamic ideology.

Based on the explanation above, this research tries to compile a research formula, namely the formulation, questions and research objectives. The formulation of this research problem is how to preach using puppet media. The main question of this research is how to preach using puppet media. This study aims to discuss how to preach using puppet media.

Research methods

The method used is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, namely by collecting data and information through observation and interviews and then analyzing it by describing the information according to the data needed (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2020). This data was collected through interviews with Tantan Sugandi (Ahmad et al., 2020). Tantan Sugandi is a puppeteer born on March 6, 1966 in Bandung. Tantan Sugandi studied at the IKIP Yogyakarta Theater and STSI or what is now better known as ISBI Bandung. Tantan Sugandi is a puppetry teacher at SMKN 10 Bandung and Tantan Sugandi is also one of the 9 Manggala or Professor of Puppetry. Tantan Sugandi has been a professor for approximately 12 years and is irreplaceable for his contribution to the world

of puppetry. Many young and senior puppeteers consult him. Tantan Sugandi is also the originator or creator of the Ringkang puppet innovation. Wayang Ringkang itself is a puppet that goes against the rules of puppetry. Where the Ringkang puppet goes against the rule that initially the puppeteer sits on a stand. And puppets that are usually only 1 puppeteer become 100 puppeteers and play not a few puppets but can reach 1000 puppets. Wayang Ringkang itself was initially rejected and widely criticized by puppet artists or puppeteers. However, in 2012 wayang ringkang was recognized by UNESCO and is one of the most important achievements of the world.

Results and Discussion

1. The History of Da'wah Using Wayang Media

Wayang is one of the media that has been used for da'wah since ancient times. Before it became an entertainment medium as it is today, wayang was originally a tool for da'wah used by the wali, especially Sunan Kalijaga, to spread Islamic teachings in Java. Sunan Kalijaga incorporated Islamic elements into wayang stories, which were previously heavily influenced by Hindu-Buddhist traditions (Syalafiyah & Harianto, 2020). This was done as an adaptive da'wah strategy to the local culture so that the community could more easily accept Islamic teachings.

The da'wah method using wayang media involved utilizing stories that were already embedded in the community, then incorporating Qur'anic verses and Islamic values into them. Sunan Kalijaga adapted wayang stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics, modifying them to include Islamic da'wah messages. This was intended to attract the interest of people who still adhered to Hindu-Buddhist beliefs (Farobi, 2019). Thus, wayang became an effective medium to capture the community's attention and gradually introduce Islamic teachings to them.

Wayang underwent transformations in form and delivery (Nurgiantoro, 2018). Initially, wayang was in the form of rigid statues heavily influenced by Hinduism. These statues, known as Pratima, were made of stone and used as places to store the ashes of the deceased. Later, wayang evolved into paintings on cloth called wayang beber. Da'wah was conducted by pointing to these paintings while narrating the stories. After the story was finished, the painting was rolled up and stored in a box called a kandaga, made of metal and coated with gold.

Over time, wayang kulit emerged, made from animal skin and separated from its image. Wayang kulit became a popular da'wah medium in the community. Performances typically took place at night, based on the belief that spirits emerged in the darkness of night. During the performances, a lamp was used to illuminate the wayang, creating shadows on the screen. The dalang, or puppeteer, played a crucial role in delivering

da'wah messages through the stories presented (Muthowah & Muthowah, 2023).

2. Da'wah through Wayang in the Present Day

The role of the dalang (puppeteer) in wayang da'wah is crucial. The dalang must possess good rhetorical skills and engaging communication styles to effectively convey da'wah messages (Hayah, 2022). The dalang must also understand their primary roles as a guide (ngudal piulang), educator, and entertainer (trikaradarma). However, many dalang today focus primarily on entertainment aspects and neglect their main duties of providing guidance and education through wayang.

Although wayang remains relevant as a medium for da'wah in modern times, interest among the younger generation in preserving this cultural heritage has been decreasing. This is due to several factors, such as dalang prioritizing entertainment over da'wah, a lack of understanding of their roles as guides, educators, and entertainers, and the increasing commercialization of wayang. Additionally, technological advancements and changes in lifestyle present challenges in maintaining wayang as a medium for da'wah.

Wayang still holds a unique appeal in the modern era (Paneli, 2017). This appeal depends on the creativity of the wayang performers in presenting shows that are engaging and relevant to contemporary times. Wayang continues to evolve, both in form and content, incorporating current issues such as effective corn planting techniques, selecting good leaders, or proper ways of worship. Thus, wayang can serve not only as an entertainment medium but also as an educational and da'wah tool that aligns with today's societal context. Wayang can also be used as a medium for propaganda or advertising to promote candidates in elections. This demonstrates that wayang has significant potential as an effective communication medium, not only in the context of da'wah but also in political and social spheres.

3. Challenges in Da'wah Using Wayang Media

There are several challenges associated with using wayang as a medium for da'wah. One major issue is the shift in focus from da'wah to mere entertainment. Many dalang (puppeteers) prioritize entertainment aspects and neglect their primary role in conveying da'wah messages. Additionally, public understanding of the philosophy and symbolism within wayang has diminished. Each color and character in wayang carries its own meaning, which should serve as a lesson for the community (Prasojo & Arifin, 2022).

These challenges do not diminish the potential of wayang as a medium for da'wah. With creative and innovative approaches, wayang can remain relevant as a medium for da'wah amidst the evolving times. For

example, adapting wayang stories to contemporary contexts, using more accessible language, or integrating wayang with modern media such as animation or film can enhance its relevance.

Essentially, stories within wayang, such as Si Kabayan and Abu Nawas, also contain da'wah values conveyed through language and actions. These stories can serve as sources of inspiration and lessons about virtues such as goodness, honesty, justice, and truth. Therefore, wayang still plays a significant role as a medium for da'wah, conveying moral and spiritual messages to society.

Wayang continues to be an effective medium for da'wah today. Through creativity and innovation in its presentation, wayang can remain relevant as a da'wah tool amidst modern developments. Wayang is not only an entertainment medium but also serves as an educational tool, a means of conveying moral and spiritual messages, and an effective communication medium in various contexts, including social, cultural, and political.

From a communication perspective, wayang can be used as a traditional media with the power to influence society. Through stories, characters, and symbolism, messages can be conveyed subtly and impactfully. Wayang can also be used to build cultural identity and reinforce noble values within the community (Alfaqi et al., 2019).

Wayang can also promote peace and tolerance in a pluralistic society. The stories often depict values such as harmony, unity, and respect for differences. By conveying these messages through wayang, it is hoped that societal awareness of the importance of living peacefully and tolerantly amidst diversity can be enhanced. However, to maintain the relevance of wayang as a medium for da'wah in the future, ongoing efforts in preservation and development are needed. Preservation can be achieved through various means, such as training and regenerating dalang, developing wayang education curricula, or organizing regular festivals and performances. Development can involve adapting stories and characters to current contexts, using modern technology in performances, or collaborating with artists from various disciplines.

Both the government and the community should actively participate in the preservation and development of wayang as a cultural heritage and da'wah medium. The government can provide support through policies, funding, or facilities necessary to sustain the art of wayang. The community should also have awareness and appreciation for wayang, and actively participate in preservation and development activities. In the context of da'wah, wayang can also build synergy between da'wah and culture, serving as an example of how Islamic teachings can be delivered in a culturally friendly and locally adaptive manner. A harmonious approach between da'wah and culture is expected to foster a religious community while preserving the nation's cultural heritage.

Conclusion

Wayang continues to play a significant role as a medium for da'wah in the modern era. With creativity, innovation, and sustained preservation efforts, wayang can remain relevant for conveying messages of goodness, building cultural identity, promoting peace and tolerance, and creating synergy between da'wah and culture. Wayang is a valuable cultural heritage that must be continuously preserved and developed to benefit both current and future generations. It is hoped that this research can contribute to the study of the essence of the meaning of water in the Qur'an. The lack of reference materials represents a limitation of this study. This research recommends that students of Religious Studies further explore this topic using different approaches from those employed by the author.

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