

***Bathara Kala* : An Interpretation of The Concept of Time in Javanese Culture**

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the concept of time in Javanese culture through the existence of the character Bathara Kala in the wayang kulit play Ruwat Murwakala and its influence on people's attitudes and habits in living daily life. The concept of time affects the cognitive processes in a person and subsequently has an impact on his reasoning. This will then also affect his behavior and character. In contrast to the western perspective, eastern people, including Indonesia, have a different perception of time. Javanese people have their own view of time. This can be seen from social attitudes, spiritual attitudes and attitudes towards what was being faced yesterday, today, and tomorrow. The semiotic perspective was chosen to analyze the data obtained through literature study techniques, interviews, direct observation and documentation. The results of this study shows that the Javanese concept and perception of time reflected through the character of Bathara Kala in ruwatan murwakala has an impact on the behavior and habits of everyday people. The influence is, among others, through a metaphor for time, for example the word “*sesuk* (tomorrow)” does not always mean the day after today, but can also mean the day after tomorrow or sometime in the future. In addition, the Javanese view of time also has an impact on the way Javanese people respond to important events by looking for “*sangat*” or good days because it is based on the understanding that the fate and fortune of human life are in absolute terms of the circle of time so that it must adjust to good momentum on that round of time.

Keywords: Murwakala, Bathara Kala, Concept of Time, Javanese Society, Culture

1. Introduction

The concept of time affects a person's cognitive processes and temporal reasoning so that it will affect their attitudes and behavior patterns [1]. The Western worldview shows that time as a linear entity, thus presenting perceptions of the past, present, and future. This concept took place for humans as 'rulers' over time so that what will happen in the future is very dependent on what is done today [2]. The basic of this thinking concept shows that time as having the same value because it moves straight ahead, so it is humans who will determine whether that moment of time becomes luck or misfortune and disaster. Westerners are known as a society that values time very much. This tendency can be seen from several aspects, for example, in music, the West is very 'disciplined' in dealing with time. In the area of musical arts, the tempo and rhythm in Western sheet music are written in great detail, not only writing the highs and lows of the notes, but also

the momentum of how they are sounded, the long and short counts of notes, all written with a precise count. Therefore, the beauty of Western music is when all the instruments and sound sources operate according to a definite count or timing principle. In the field of social sciences, the term 'time is money' appears in the West, an expression that emphasizes how valuable time is so that it is assumed to have economic value. In Western countries, even several Asian countries, such as Japan and Korea, time is highly valued so that they do not tolerate the habit of not being on time (procrastination). These things show how Western society values time so much because in their view it is humans who control time so humans must really use it well.

Meanwhile, the Javanese cultural view shows that time as something that is cyclical in nature, i.e. it rotates in a circle to form a spiral. In the concept of Javanese culture, time is a separate existence that is absolute and separate from human events involving success-failure, luck-accident, and so on. Thus, Javanese culture recognizes the idiom '*Sangat*', which is a moment when humans must stand themselves at a certain moment of time so that they can get safety, success, and luck [3]. Therefore, in the view of Javanese culture, the condition and destiny of man is not determined by how he prepares himself today, but rather depends on how he is able to position himself according to the logic of the current time. The character of *Bathara Kala* in the story of *Ruwat Murwakala* is a reflection of the concept of thinking that shows Javanese culture's perception of time. *Bathara Kala* as the name suggests, is a symbolism of time which at the same time also means disaster. Actually, in Javanese society, the concept of time has emerged simultaneously with the introduction of the existence of numbers. Namely with the emergence of the term *kala* which comes from '*cakakala*' which is the origin of the word *sengkala*, a collection of words to indicate the momentum of a certain time. In the view of Javanese culture, numbers have certain character, content, and properties [4].

The term '*candra sengkala*' is a popular term to indicate the momentum of a particular event or event which is shown through a collection of words that are associated with the properties of numbers, for example, the word '*bagaskara*' (sun) to represent the number 1, '*ilang*' (missing) represents the number 0 and so on. In principle, a number of words that are attributed to certain numbers are used to describe the time or year of an event that is very important and meaningful to many people. For example, *sengkala* who the sound of *sirna ilang kertaning bumi*, which is interpreted as the number 0041, but then to read the *sengkalan* in reverse so that the sentence means 1400, which marks the momentum or time of the collapse of the Majapahit Kingdom in 1400 AD. However, in reality it is not only words that are chosen to compose *sengkala* (*candra sengkala*). In Javanese cultural discourse, it is also known as *sengkala slanting*, *sengkala memet*, *sengkala sastra*, and *sengkala lamba* which use images, ornaments, statues, puppets, and the shape of buildings to show the momentum of that time. The term '*sengkala*' can be equated with the science of chronogram (chronogram) which comes from the Greek "chronos" which means time and "gramma" which means letters or characters. Thus, chronogram means the science of letters or characters that are used as signs / marks the existence of time [4].

Research conducted by Dyah Triarini Indirasari, Harry Susianto, Guritnaningsih (2019) stated that there were several findings related to the topic of time metaphor and

temporal reasoning, namely the influence of culture on the conception of time. Through several proposed discussions, this study concludes that the conception of time will affect a person's behavior patterns. Recommendations from this study even mention the limited research conducted on the effects of time metaphor and temporal reasoning and their effect on behavior. According to this research, Indonesia has a concept of time that is different from the Western world which is seen through metaphors and temporal reasoning which is seen through the use of the language used. This factor is one of the causes of differences in the behavior patterns of Indonesian society and Western society.

Hariawan Adji (2008) conducted a study that discussed the differences in the concept of time between the Western world and the Eastern world. Based on this research, Westerners see time as something linear. Western views of time are heavily influenced by Parmenides and Immanuel Kant who see time subjectively. This view states that the existence of time is highly dependent on human existence. The view that puts time as linear motion produces a concept of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. On a practical level, this belief produces a type of behavior that sees humans as the main subject of time. Humans are the central ruler of time and become the most decisive variable on the circumstances they will live in life. Meanwhile, the East view is contrary to the West in seeing time. The Eastern concept of time shows that time is outside of human reality and is cyclical. For Easterners, life depends not primarily on human effort, but on how he places himself and behaves with time. This is based on the fact that the reality of time is absolute and outside of human reality. Therefore, in order for man to get good luck and salvation, especially in big things in his life, he must be able to read the character and nature of time.

This research will explore the character of *Bathara Kala* in the ritual of *ruwat murwakala* which is a representation of the perception of Javanese people's time. In the *ruwatan murwakala* ritual which is usually held by the community as an effort to get rid of bad luck or *sukerta*, *Bathara Kala* is described as a scary figure who has a habit of eating *sukerta* humans. Therefore, then the *ruwatan* ritual was carried out, namely a ceremony to clean someone belonging to *wong sukerta* so that he was freed from the threat of *Bathara Kala*. This ritual is a suggestion to provide awareness to the community through reflection activities, namely recalling the origins of events through the analogy of the figure of *Bathara Kala*. In several aspects, the story of *Bathara Kala* is an expression of Javanese culture in seeing time and the consequences if it is not properly managed.

Symbolic languages can be used to access knowledge stored in various cultural artifacts, including literary arts, rituals, and other visual works [5]. This research is essentially to contribute thoughts and insights, especially to the world of education about the importance of symbol literacy, which is an effort to explore and interpret past wisdom stored in the results of local culture, in this case the figure of *Bathara Kala* in the *ruwatan murwakala* ritual. This paper will present the concept of Javanese culture thinking about time and its influence on the patterns of attitudes and behavior of the community in dealing with the events and realities of everyday life.

2. Methodology

This research is a qualitative research with semiotic analysis technique because it sees data in the form of words and text as symbols that can be interpreted. The data that will be interpreted is the character of *Bathara Kala*, which includes his birth process, name, character, and his habits. The main data collection (primary) is carried out through interviews with resource persons consisting of puppeteers and academics who have competencies and qualifications in the field under study, including: Prof. Dr. Soetarno, DEA, a puppeteer who is also an academic from the Indonesian Art Institute (ISI) Surakarta. Another resource person who is also the main source of data in this research is Manteb Soedarsono (late), a well-known puppeteer who has the competence and credibility to provide information about the object of research. Data mining through interviews was carried out by in-depth interviewing or in-depth interviews through the technique of asking "open-ended" questions to obtain in-depth information. Interviews were conducted in an informal but structured way, in order to build a comfortable atmosphere for the interviewees and interviewees so that information extraction would be more extensive and in-depth. Other data sources are come from previously existing journal articles that contain information about the object of this research. The data search was carried out to collect information about the character of *Bathara Kala* in *ruwat murwakala*. In addition, data collection was also carried out through direct and indirect observations and documentation through recordings data, both audio and visual. The process of data analysis with a semiotic approach is carried out to interpret the collected data related to the existence of *Bathara Kala* and its relevance to the concept of time in Javanese society.

3. Result and Discussion

The main problem in the wayang kulit story of *ruwat murwakala* is the story of *Bathara Kala* who was born because of the behavior of *Bathara Guru* who did not pay attention to time and place. Once while walking with his wife, he suddenly wanted to making love but Dewi Uma refused *Bathara Guru's* wish. Dewi Uma's refusal resulted in the fall of *Bathara Guru's* sperm into the ocean [6,7]. The sperm then grows into a giant creature that is a threat to humans. *Bathara Kala's* sperm which grew into a giant creature was then known as *Bathara Kala*. In Javanese society, *Bathara Kala* is known as a figure who is a symbol of life's misfortune, danger, and difficulty [8]. The word "Kala" is often interpreted as "time", so, Manteb Soedharsono, a famous puppeteer from Solo, said that *Bathara Kala* is actually represented of time [9]. The interesting thing that is obtained from the story about *Bathara Kala* is how this character is depicted in a scary form even though he is a symbol of time. In general view, time is an opportunity that can be used to do many things. Humans often say that time is an opportunity to do many things that are useful for themselves and for others. However, time is depicted through the scary character of *Bathara Kala*. In addition, in the story of *ruwat murwakala*, the character *Bathara Kala* has a habit of eating humans. The paradox about the character of *Bathara Kala* is also apparent from the meaning of the word "kala", especially in Javanese society.

This word not only means 'time', but is also often interpreted as "disaster", "difficulty", "suffering", and so on.

Efforts to subdue or rather free oneself from the threat of *Bathara Kala* can be done by means of the *ruwatan murwakala* ceremony. The ceremony, which is still carried out by many groups to this day, is essentially a medium for self-reflection so as not to repeat the mistakes that have been made as well as a means to look back in order to learn lessons from the things that have been done. The play *Murwakala* is formed from 2 words, namely *Murwa* which comes from the word "*purwa*" which means "beginning", "starting" and the word "*kala*" which means "time". So, *murwakala* which tells the story of the main character *Bathara Kala* is actually an attempt to convey messages through idiomatic aesthetics so that humans are always aware of the law of cause and effect. More than that, the play *Murwakala* is a means to convey a message to humans to always understand and be aware of the origin of a case, namely that an evil will only lead to badness and a good will in the end also give birth to good.

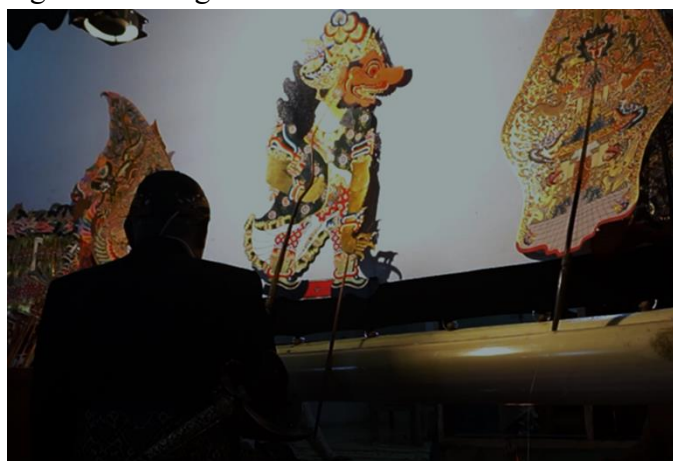


Figure 1. Bathara Kala

The Javanese perception of time as presented in the figure of *Bathara Kala* in the *Murwakala* story shows that the Javanese are very attentive and careful with time. How Javanese culture perceives the existence of time can be observed from the physical and non-physical description of the existence of *Bathara Kala* as presented in the *ruwat murwakala* ritual.

Table 1. The embodiment of Bathara Kala and its meaning

Physical Appearance	Meaning
Eyes wide, bulging, and red	Have a watchful eye, lustful, angry
The dominant face is red and black	Expressions of anger, darkness, and sorrow/suffering
Creepy face	Its existence creates a feeling of fear in humans
Wide mouth and fangs	Greedy, vicious and cruel nature

Bathara Kala is described as a figure with wide and bulging eyes, which is an analogy that his existence as an existence is always watching humans very carefully. In the depiction of the figure of *Bathara Kala* in other areas outside Surakarta, there is a depiction of the figure of *Bathara Kala* with two eyes. This is an affirmation of the

characters who have scary traits and characters and have the habit of watching and seeing very carefully. The color of the face of the character of *Bathara Kala* is described as dominant in red and black. In the world of art, color has its own characteristics and characteristics. red and black symbolize a color that has the nature of anger, heat, and wrath. While the black color represents the nature of darkness and suffering. The scary face means *Bathara Kala* for most humans is very scary. In many stories and fairy tales that are still developing in Java to this day, *Bathara Kala* is always introduced in negative traits that represent something scary, terrible, dangerous and threatening to humans. The shape of a wide mouth and has fangs is an analogy of the nature of savage, cruel, and greedy. The shape of the mouth that is depicted in the embodiment of the character of *Bathara Kala* shows the expression of greed and cruelty as possessed by wild animals that have a mouth shape as the visual image of the mouth of *Bathara Kala* and the wayang *ruwat murwakala*.

Table 2. The origin, character, and meaning

Origin and Nature/Character	Meaning
Born directly from the 'seed' of the leader of the gods	Created directly by God
It's very powerful because it doesn't work with any weapon, even the weapons of the gods can't kill it	It cannot be destroyed, it lives as long as life exists.
Eating <i>Wong Sukerta</i> (dirty humans), which are very large	All humans can not escape the threat of time
Will not attack and eat and submit to people who can read the writings hidden in the 4 parts of his body. This essay was written by <i>Bathara Guru</i> , his parents.	Time will be controlled by humans who can control and know time, namely people who are careful, careful in their behavior, and actions, and words and humans who have the will to always be introspective and know their own history.

The description of the symbolism of *Bathara Kala* as a representation of time in the realm of Javanese cultural thought above shows the Javanese cultural view of humans towards time, namely that time is an absolute entity that comes from God because he was born from the supreme leader of the Gods. As a child of a God, he was given privileges and imposed a separate law of destiny that was outside the law of destiny possessed by humans. From this it becomes clear that time for the Javanese is a separate existence that is beyond human existence. However, between these entities there is a relationship pattern that places time more powerful than humans and even becomes a threat to its existence. *Bathara Guru's* decision to make *Sukerta* humans as food for *Bathara Kala* implies an information that humans are very risk to enter the vortex of time (eaten by *Bathara Kala*). Therefore, so that man is not eaten by time, he must know time well. In the *Murwakala* ritual, the condition for defeating *Bathara Kala* is the ability to read tattoos / writings on 4 parts of *Bathara Kala's* body. The ability to read and understand the writings in 4 parts of *Bathara Kala's* body (throat, forehead, dadi, and back) made *Bathara Kala* believe that the human must be older than him because he knows the secrets of writing on his body.

Bathara Kala eats many types of humans who are told as *Wong Sukerto* [10]. The term of *wong sukerta* does not refer to a person, but is a group of various types of humans that have been outlined as food for *Bathara Kala*. Based on literature sources which are the main reference for the implementation of the *Murwakala* ritual, the number and types of humans belonging to the *Wong Sukerta* group vary, namely 17 species, 18 species, 60 species, 136 species, and 146 species [11]. The number of types of humans that belong to the *Wong Sukerta* group, broadly speaking, humans who can enter the 'dirty' human group and become *Bathara Kala's* food are caused by 2 factors, namely congenital factors, and the human behavior factor itself (wrong actions that have been committed). An example of a human being included in the *sukerta* group because of innate nature is someone whose birth is defined as *sendang kaapit pancuran*, namely 3 sisters with a man as the second child, *pancuran kaapit sendang*, namely 3 brothers with a woman as the second child. then *Ontang-anting* (only child), *Kedana-kedini* (a pair of boys and girls).

Table 3. Types of Wong Sukerta based on causes and origins

Type of Wong Sukerta	
Due to hereditary factors	Consequences of actions
<i>Ontang-anting</i> (only child)	The person who destroys the place cook rice when cooking rice.
<i>Uger-Uger Lawang</i> (2 children, both boys)	The person who breaks the anvil and stone tools grinder for grinding traditional medicinal herbs
<i>Kedana-kedini</i> (children in a pair, boy and girl)	People sleeping on mattresses without bed sheets (mattress covers)
<i>Kedini-kedana</i> (a pair of children, a girl and a boy)	People who have granaries or warehouses where food is stored without being given a base and roof
<i>Sendang kaapit pancuran</i> (anak 3, laki-laki-perempuan-laki-laki)	People who put things in a place without a lid.
<i>Sendang Kaapit Pancuran</i> (child 3, girl-boy-girl)	The person standing in the middle of the door
<i>Kembang Sepasang</i> (2 children, both girls)	People who like to sweep trash without throwing it away or burning it all at once
Kembar (2 male twins or female twins or twins "dampit" is a man and a woman (born on at the same time)	People who like to throw garbage or dirt under the bed
<i>Srimpi</i> (4 children, all girls)	People who sleep at sunrise
<i>Saramba</i> (4 children, all boys)	People who sleep at sunset (<i>wayah surup</i>)
<i>Pandawa Lima</i> (5 children, all boys)	People who cook rice, then left to go to the neighbors.
<i>Mancalaputri</i> (5 children, all girls)	People who like to throw garbage through the window.
<i>Pipilan</i> (5 children consisting of 4 girls and 1 boy)	People who like to claim the rights of others
<i>Anak bungkus</i> (children who are still wrapped in the placenta when they are born)	People who sleep at noon (middle day)

This can be interpreted that time can threaten anyone. Through the play *Murwakala*, it is described that *Bathara Kala* has a habit of eating *Sukerta* humans, namely dirty humans

or unlucky humans. The number of *wong sukerto* is very large which can be grouped based on the factors that cause it. Table 1 above shows that the source of dirtiness and misfortune (*sukerta*) comes from 2 causes, namely congenital and the result of actions. If interpreted, *sukerta* that comes from innate implies that *sukerta* is a condition that comes directly from the Creator. This assumption is reinforced by the fact that until now there has been no research that explains why humans born *ontang-anting*, *kedana-kedini*, and so on are included in the *sukerta* category [12]. Literary sources that currently exist only mention that the causes of certain births as a group of human beings without mentioning reasons or explanations. Meanwhile, the type of human being *sukerta* because the results of actions can be explained, or at least the reasons are found. For example, humans who leave food when the food is not cooked. This act can be judged as an act that does not heed ethics, so as a moral effort, then an act like this is considered to cause sin because it is irresponsible. This is an ethical teaching that is conveyed symbolically through a form of art.

Factors that come from the consequences of someone's actions that can cause humans to be included in the *Wong Sukerta* group and need to do *ruwatan* that Javanese people in living life must be careful and always vigilant. This is because the types of actions that become sources of *sukerta* for someone as mentioned earlier are actions that are closely related to daily activities in Javanese society. Thus, speed and accuracy in doing something is not the benchmark but rather the suitability of momentum that is in harmony with good time. In the socio-cultural mechanism of Javanese society, this is known as '*sangat*'. Javanese people have a tendency to look for good days, especially to carry out events that are considered important, for example marriage, building a house, opening a shop, starting a big job, and so on. In addition, caution and vigilance are always put forward in daily life regarding their relationships with other people and with the environment. In addition, the understanding and perception of time that encourages Javanese people to act cautiously also encourages them to always pay attention to ethics and morals in their actions and actions.

Daily activities related to ethics and morals are not only ethics towards fellow human beings but also to the environment, including in terms of ethics in disposing of garbage, sleep ethics, and other ethics related to daily routines. Carelessness, recklessness, and the absence of good ethics in these matters by the Javanese people are understood as the origin of the arrival of *sukerta* which will harm and endanger their lives in the form of bad luck and luck. The Javanese perception of time that is seen in everyday life which is a reflection of the perspective on time is also seen in the flexibility, '*luwes*', and 'uncertainly' attitude that is expressed through the meaning of words, for example the word '*sesuk*' does not always mean 'days after today' but could mean 2 days later, another week, another month, or a few years later. The schedule of an event that is planned to start at 08.00 AM but can start only at 09.00 or even at 09.30 AM without having to cause serious problems. The idiom of '*kahanan ing ndunya iku cakra manggilingan*' (the situation in this world is like a spinning wheel) very clearly shows the Javanese view of the nature and character of time to life which is cyclical.

The cultural view of the Javanese society sees time as an order that is outside of human existence with dynamics within it. Time is original, absolute and runs based on its certainty. All events that occur in the universe are in the line of destiny, therefore humans must adapt to these provisions and regularities in order to live in harmony. This understanding implies that in front of humans, time is of double value, both good and bad which become a single unit in the timeline. Humans meet aspects of good or not in the cycle of time it becomes a major part in the discourse of Javanese society. Bad time is the time ruled by Bathara Kala. The time controlled by Bathara Kala manifests as misfortune, bad luck, distress, and disaster faced by a human being. However, this bad time can be neutralized and cleaned through the ruwatan ritual, which takes the form of a symbolic communication between humans mediated by the dalang and Bathara Kala as a symbolism of time.

Recomendation

The existence of the term "*wong Sukerto*" which seems to be absolute "unlucky" because of its innate nature gives a message that humans cannot avoid destiny or reject their way of life. Meanwhile, the source of *sukerta* that comes from behavior actually reminds humans to always pay attention and be careful with their actions and behavior in living with other people and in front of the universe. This is an ethical and moral teaching that aims for Javanese people to be able to live in harmony with nature and always pay attention to the principle of harmony with others so as not to get the result of 'dirty' which is symbolized as *sukerta* which causes them to fall into misfortune and danger. However, these disasters, misfortunes, and inherent dangers can be avoided by carrying out the *Murwakala* ceremony, which is to understand the character and nature of time by looking for *Sangat*, namely the momentum of time either based on the disposition or signs found in the universe because essentially the circulation the universe is a harmony and balance. Thus, the character of *Bathara Kala* in *Ruwat Murwakala's* story as a representation of the existence of time can be a source of local strengthening material in an effort to teach the character and moral values of the community, especially to have a wise concept and perspective on time through an understanding of *Sangat*.

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