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DRAMATIC STRUCTURE AND PHILOSOPHICAL MEANING OF SHADOW PUPPET PERFORMANCE WITH THE STORY OF *ANOMAN OBONG* BY KI PURBO ASMORO

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explain and describe the dramatic structure of and philosophical meaning contained in shadow puppet with the story of Anoman Obong by Ki Purbo Asmoro. The method employed in this research is the qualitative one with content analysis approach and using dramatic structure theory and hermeneutic theory for explaining dramatic structure and philosophical meaning of the story. The data sources of this research are puppet shadow videos with Anoman Obong stories by Ki Purbo Asmoroh having been uploaded on Youtube. Data collection techniques used were documentation and contents analysis. The validation of data was carried out using theory and source triangulations. The data analysis technique used was interactive model analysis. Result of this study indicate that the dramatic structure of this story includes characters and characterization, flow, setting, theme, and value. Then, philosophical meaning contained includes Rama Wijaya's self-instrospection, Lesmana's vigilance, Semar's advice about intentions and endeavor, and God's contribution in life.

Keywords: *dramatic structure; philosophical meaning; shadow puppet*

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INTRODUCTION

Shadow puppet is one of so many types of puppets developing in Indonesia, exactly in Central Java and East Java Provinces. While it is possible for the shadow puppet to exist and develop somewhere else, majority of its development occurs in the two provinces located in Java Island. Sulaksono (2020) said that in this millennial era, shadow puppet performance is still found frequently, although there are several types of new modern-nuanced puppet such as *wayang kancing*, *wayang kampung sebelah* (WKS), *wayang suket*, etc. Considering the reality, it can be said that shadow puppet keeps existing and being favorite within its fan communities until today. Nugroho, Wijayanti, and Suryanto (2022) confirmed that *wayang* (puppet) is one of Javanese arts still popular among the public until today.

Shadow puppet performance is presented by a figure called *dalang* (narrator), accompanied with *karawitan* (Javanese traditional) music using Javanese *gamelan* medium. Shadow puppet performance often presents stories largely taken from Ramayana and Mahabharata epics. However, both sources have been actually composed and adjusted with Javanese people's life condition by Javanese man of letters. It was carried out to make the stories composed relevant to and in harmony with Javanese people's religion, belief, culture (Sulaksono, 2020). Therefore, shadow puppet is a component inherent to and very close to Javanese community's concept. This statement is confirmed by Habsy's (2017: 19) research entitled *Semar Puppet Counseling Model* found that "One of the Javanese cultures that seem to be soul of the Javanese philosophy is Puppet (*wayang*)". In the statement, puppet becomes one of so many Javanese cultures being the soul of Javanese people's philosophy.

On the other hand, young generation or now called Gen Z can be said having been far from puppet or even many of them do not know the stories of puppet replete with *adiluhung* (sublime) meaning. This is as suggested by Kusumastutik, Anindyarini, and Rahadini (2021) that young generations are interested more in modern dramas than in shadow puppet. Meanwhile, shadow puppet also has dramatic element just like dramas in general. Message and moral teaching also have never been separated from the stories of shadow puppet. Therefore, the research related to dramatic element of puppet's stories must be conducted continuously to find out the hidden meanings.

Viewed from its dramatic aspect, shadow puppet actually has intrinsic elements just like drama. Theory usable to analyze the elements is dramatic structure theory aiming to find out intrinsic elements contained in a story. Soetarno and Sarwanto (2010) said that intrinsic elements integrates with each other and construct the structure of a storyline in shadow puppet, including theme, moral teaching, plot, characterization, and setting. The way to find those elements is, among other, through dialog uttered by the characters. In puppet performance presented by *dalang*, the dialog is called *ginem* or *antawacana* or *pocapan* (Guritno, 1988).

In addition to having intrinsic elements like drama, the story of shadow puppet also has implicit philosophical meaning. This is as stated by Setiawan (2017) in his research entitled *Makna Filosofi Wayang Purwa dalam Lakon Dewa Ruci* (Philosophical Meaning of Classic Puppet in the story of Dewa Ruci), that numerous puppet stories and characters become role models, idols, life principles and sources of searching for social life value, whether social or religious value. Therefore, the

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implicit philosophical meaning needs to be studied and analyzed. One of theories usable to analyze is Gadamer's hermeneutic theory. Suprabowo and Wiradharma (2018) suggested that Gadamer's hermeneutic theory is an interpretation theory that can be applied to analyze and to interpret what is contained in the literary works.

With this as a starting point, the philosophical meaning of shadow puppet story can be analyzed through interpreting the dialog of its characters. This statement is confirmed by Hartati's (2019) research entitled *Pembacaan Heuristik dan Hermenutik Puisi Indonesia Modern Bertema Pewayangan* (Heuristic and Hermeneutic Reading of Indonesian Modern Poetry themed Puppetry), stating that interpretation and comprehension related to the meaning of a literary work is not only limited to symbol, but also can view literature as text. This proves that dialogs of characters as uttered by the narrator (*dalang*) can be viewed as text and can be studied using hermeneutic theory. This argument is confirmed by Hasanah's (2017) research entitled *Hermeneutik Ontologis-Dialektis Hans-George Gadamer (Produksi Makna Wayang Sebagai Metode Dakwah Sunan Kalijogo)* [Hans-George Gadamer's Ontological-Dialectical Hermeneutics (The Production of Puppet's Meaning as Sunan Kalijogo's Proselytizing Method)] that the concept of hermeneutics has some advantages in finding the latest meaning of puppet in line with the context of human civilization. It means that the interpretation of shadow puppet performance by interpreter, in this case the author, can be relevant to people's today life situation and condition.

The story of shadow puppet studied in this research is *Anoman Obong* presented by Ki Purbo Asmoro. This story derived from parts *Aranya Kandha* and *Sundara Kandha* of Ramayana. These two parts tells the Sinta abducting process and end with the act of burning *Anoman* in Alengka (Sulaksono, 2020). The story presented by Ki Purba Asmoro also told how the process of abducting Sinta was, committed by Rahwana helped by his servant, Kala Marica, having shape-shifted into a *kidang kencana* (a golden deer). This story was selected because it is presented concisely and takes only about 40-minute duration. This *Anoman Obong* story contains many moral teachings and philosophical meanings applicable to daily life.

Many researches on puppet have been conducted by analyzing its philosophical values and meanings. Even some of them have been published in book format. One of them is Eko Setiawan's research in 2017 entitled "*Makna Filosofi Wayang Purwa dalam Lakon Dewa Ruci* (Philosophical meaning of *Wayang Purwa* in the story of Dewa Ruci)". The studies equally addressed philosophical meaning in a story of puppet performance. The difference lies in the object taken. Eko Setiawan's study took Dewa Ruci belonging to Mahabharata story as the object of study, while the author's study took Anoman Obong belonging to Ramayana story as the object. The story of Dewa Ruci tells about Bima character having strong will and determination to find holy water, as described by his master – Sage Drona – to get genuine happiness and to be useful for other humans. The result of research exposed the philosophical meaning of Bima's journey symbolizing a human journey to find self-identity, origin, and life objective.

In addition, a research on puppet has also been conducted by Sri Teddy Rusdy and published in book format in 2015 entitled "*Semiotika dan Filsafat Wayang* (Semiotics and Philsophy of Puppet)". This research's result discussed the symbols contained in the performance, including physical symbols like *blencong*, *kelir*, etc.,

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and non-physical symbol like *pathet gamelan*, *pakem wayang, sulukan,* songs, and *gending* (music) accompanying the puppet. In addition, this study also discussed the philosophy of puppet, including three pillars of knowledge: metaphysics (ontology), epistemology, and axiology of puppet. The basic difference between this research and the one conducted by the author lies in their object. Sri Teddy's research focused on puppet in general, while the author's research focused on one story, *Anoman Obong*.

Reviewing those researches, the one studying the philosophical meaning of *Anoman* story has never been conducted yet. Departing from this, the author was interested in analyzing dramatic structure and philosophical meaning of shadow puppet with the story of *Anoman Obong* presented by Ki Purbo Asmoro. This research is entitled *An Analysis of Dramatic Structure and Philosophical Meaning of Shadow Puppet Performance with Story of Anoman Obong by Ki Purbo Asmoro*.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative research method with content analysis approach to literary works. Moleong (2017) said that a qualitative research is the one intending to understand a phenomenon experienced by the subject of research by means of describing it in words and language and utilizing various scientific methods based on its context. Meanwhile, the content analysis approach to literary works is an act of analyzing the messages of a literary work obtained through interpretation (Ratna, 2004). These method and approach were selected because the literary work object to be studied, shadow puppet with the story of *Anoman Obong* by Ki Purbo Asmoro, contains many words uttered through dialog and implicit messages needing to be analyzed and interpreted.

Data used involves dialogs in the story of *Anoman Obong* by Ki Purbo Asmoro (a prominent narrator or *dalang* from Surakarta). The data was downloaded from https://youtu.be/z499fNaNDmM?si=PqPCMf5X0fpcnZ2q. In addition, supporting data was also collected from many sources, including KBBI (Indonesian Big Dictionary), Bausastra Dictionary, and reference book and journal article considered relevant to the topic of research.

This research employed a purposive sampling technique to select the subject of research. Purposive is a sampling technique having been adjusted with the objective of research (Siswantoro, 2010). Techniques of collecting data were documentation and content analysis of document. Data validity test was carried out using theory and source triangulations. Lubis (2018) suggested that triangulation is a technique of validating data by utilizing something else. In addition, technique of analyzing data used was Miles and Huberman's interactive model of analysis. This technique is divided into four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles & Huberman, 2014). Those stages are applied in this research as reference and procedure in analyzing data.

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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Dramatic Structure of Shadow Puppet with the story of *Anoman Obong* by Ki Purbo Asmoro

Dramatic structure of story studied in this research includes character and characterization, plot, setting, theme, and moral teaching. The following result is the outcome of the act of analysis on the story studied, video of *Anoman Obong* by Ki Purbo Asmoro, the dialogs of which have been transcribed into text.

1. Character and Characterization

Character and characterization is one of important elements playing a role in a drama's story. Nuryanto (2017) suggested that character is individual being the actor of story, while characterization is the representation of a character's inner traits in the story. There are sixteen characters acting in *Anoman Obong* story by Ki Purbo Asmoro. The role and characterization of characters can be seen in a story. Waluyo (2008) divided character in drama into three: protagonist, antagonist, and tritagonist. Protagonist is the main character designated and spotlighted continuously, antagonist is the one becoming the opponent and resisting the protagonist, and tritagonist is the supporting character that is additional in nature in a performance.

Protagonist in this story includes Rama Wijaya, Lesmana, Sinta, and Anoman. Rama Wijaya has gentle and compassionate characterizations (*Anoman Obong*, minute 5:41). Lesmana is Rama Wijaya's little brother having soft and cool characterization (*Anoman Obong*, minute: 13:08). Rama Wijaya's wife, Sinta, has loyal, gentle, and compassionate characterizations (*Anoman Obong*, minute 6:05 & 15:39). Furthermore, Anoman – a figure in the form of monkey – has gallant and courageous and always responsible characterizations (*Anoman Obong,* minute 28:25). The characterization of protagonist is in line Harminto (2023) suggesting that Rama, Sinta, and Lesmana have soft and gentle characterization, while Anoman has gallant and courageous characterization.

Antagonist in *Anoman Obong* story involves two evil and sly characters named Rahwana and his servant, Kala Marica. Rahwana or also called Dasamuka has rude, cruel, savage, and ruthless characterization (*Anoman Obong*, minute 2:50). Meanwhile, Kala Marica, Rahwana's subordinate, has cowardly, sly, and full of deceit (Anoman Obong, minute 12:38). The King of Alengka, as suggested by Hartati (2019), has savage and cruel characterization.

Tritagonist becoming supporting character in this story consists of Jatayu, Panakawan, Sugriwa, Prajurit Alengka, and Indrajit. Jatayu, taking the form of *Garuda* (a specific mythical creature) and a friend of Rama Wijaya's father, Prabu Dasarata, has kind character, spirit of sacrifice, and courage to defend truth even at the cost of his own life (*Anoman Obong*, minute 17:10). Sugriwa, Anoman's uncle, has courage character and spirit of sacrifice for the sake of truth (Anoman Obong, minute 27:38). Trijata, Rahwana's niece, has flirtatious and teasing characterization (*Anoman Obong*, minute 33:36). She was Sinta's companion in Alengka when she was kidhnapped by Ravana. There are two Alengka soldiers shown in the story having rude and hot-tempered characterization, while Indrajit (Ravana's son) have obedient and not-talkative characterization (*Anoman Obong*, minute 35:30). This is in line with Harminto (2023) suggesting that supporting characters in Rama's side have noble

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character while those in Alengka (Ravana)'s side have evil characterization, excluding Wibisana and Kumbakarna.

Meanwhile, Panakawan consists of four characters: Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong having humorous character and delighting in entertaining their master (*Anoman Obong*, minute 22:45). Particularly Semar, in addition to entertaining, is also caring and fond of giving good advices. It is as suggested by Hidajat (2025) that *Panakawan* or *Punakawan* served as *pamomong* caretakers of knights in puppetry world.

2. Plot

Plot is a sequence of events in a story arranged based on a chronological causal relationship (Setiyaningsih, 2019). The plot used in *Anoman Obong* story is a forward plot. Forward plot is a sequence of events told chronologically from start to end. It means that this story does not contain flashback at all.

The plot of drama actually has some stages. This is as suggested by Freytag (Waluyo, 2006) that the plot is divided into five stages: exposition, depicting the beginning stage where the characters are introduced along with their characterization; complication, characterized with the escalation of conflict between characters; climax, where the conflict reaches its culmination; resolution, characterized with subsiding conflict and solution found to the problem; and denouement, where conflict between character has ended.

Exposition stage in this story started with Ravana crazy of and eager to own Sinta and devising to abduct her by asking Kala Marica for help (Anoman Obong, minute 3:44). Then, complication stage demonstrates Ravana's plan gaining momentum as he successfully Rama Wijayam Sinta and Lesmana (*Anoman Obong*: minute 12:38). Climax stage is characterized with Ravana's success in abducting Sinta while disguised as an old ascetic (Anoman Obong, minute 17:00). Although Jatayu attempted to rescue Sinta, he was beaten and killed by Ravana. Resolution stage in this story is demonstrated by Anoman's willingness to be an envoy to find Sinta in Alengka (Anoman Obong, minutes 28:25). In the end stage of story, it is told that Anoman successfully did his task although he might have been caught by Ravana's son, Indrajit, and burnt in alive condition. Miraculously, Anoman instead fiercely spread the fire to scorch the earth of Alengka (Anoman Obong: minute 38:30).

3. Setting

Setting is a place where the events of a drama's story occur (Nuryanto, 2017). Meanwhile, Sumaryanto (2019) added aspects of time and circumstance into the part of setting. However, the setting in this story includes setting of place and setting of circumstance.

Setting of place in this *Anoman Obong* story is Dandaka forest, Goakiskenda, Argasoka Park, and Alengka Kingdrom. Dandaka forest is the place where Rama Wijaya, Lesmana, and Sinta encountered big problem, i.e. Ravana's evil plan and Marica's cunning. Meanwhile, Goakiskenda is used as the place for discussing how to find where Sinta was abducted by Ravana. Meanwhile, Argasoka Park is the place where Sinta was locked up by Ravana. Furthermore, Alengka become the setting of place where Anoman was set on fire and turns the tables by making the city ablaze.

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Meanwhile, the setting of circumstance in this story includes sadness, shock, joy, and tension. Deep sadness was experience by Rama Wijaya when he knew that his wife was abducted by Ravana. Prior to that, a shocking and distressing scene unfolded when Sinta accused Lesmana of desiring her for himself following Rama Wijaya's death during the hunt for golden deer. Lesmana with his patience and wisdom then took the middle path by picking up Rama Wijaya and leaving a spell amulet to guard Sinta. After the two aforementioned events concluded, the scene continued with the entrance of Panakawan.

This Panakawan scene is usually called *gara-gara*. Laughter, joke and cheerful humorous dialogs are shared by Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong. Then, a tense atmosphere was seen when Ravana insisted to force Sinta to submit to his will. The tension culminated when Sinta would commit suicide when Ravana kept forcing her. This tense atmosphere was in the end of story.

4. Theme

Theme of the storyline is an foundational idea serving as a starting point of story to be explored and presented in a storyline to be developed. Theme is an essential idea of a fictive work (Egitama, 2017). The theme raised in shadow puppet performance with *Anoman Obong* story is devotion. The theme is indicated by Sinta, Rama Wijaya, Lesmana, and Sugriwa characters.

Sinta's devotion is indicated when she faithfully accompanied her husband into exile in Dandaka Forest (Anoman Obong: minute 05:30). Furthermore, her devotion is truly proven when she firmly rejected Ravana's temptations and enticements. Even, Sinta threatened to commit suicide should Ravana dare to touch her (Anoman Obong: minute 32:30). Meanwhile, Rama Wijaya's devotion is demonstrated by his persistent endeavor to find Sinta after his abduction by Ravana, whereas Lesmana's devotion is proven by is unwavering support for his older brother, Rama Wijaya, regardless of the circumstances. Further evidence showing that the theme of this story is devotion (loyalty) is found in Sugriwa's declaration to Rama Wijaya that he was prepared to die to ensure Sinta's return (Anoman Obong: 27:38); Sugriwa made this pledge out of a sense of indebtedness to Rama Wijaya for the help he had received in the past.

5. Moral Teaching

Egitama (2017) suggested that moral teaching is the author's message to spectators. Moral teaching will be more understandable when the story is performed. Nuryanto (2017) also added that moral teaching can be interpreted differently by spectators. Several moral teachings contained in the performance of shadow puppet with the story of *Anoman Obong* by Ki Purbo Asmoro are (1) never disturb someone's household life, (2) keep alert to everything in life, (3) Be dare to admit mistake, (4) do not like to blame others, and (5) be dare to sacrifice sincerely for the sake of goodness.

B. The Relationship between Elements of Dramatic Structure of Shadow Puppet in the story of Anoman Obong by Ki Purbo Asmoro

Shadow puppet with *Anoman Obong* story by Ki Purbo Asmoro shows close interconnection between elements of dramatic structure. The theme of devotion raised is supported by character and characterization. This theme presents Rama

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Wijaya and Sinta as protagonists maintaining their devotion to each other when Ravana as antagonist commit crime, abducting and carrying of Sinta. With her devotion to his husband, Sinta always rejected Ravana's temptation firmly.

Close relation is also demonstrated by the elements of characterization and moral teaching in the story. Rama Wijaya and Lesmana's continuous endeavor to get Sinta again resulted in various positive action, advice, and motivation coming from Semar, Sugriwa, and Anoman. This enables the author to convey the moral teachings through various actions taken by the characters in the story.

The theme presented also influenced the element of setting in the story. The theme makes the setting in the story varied. It includes sadness, joy, tension, and shock. This indicates that theme and setting presented in the story are interconnected. Basically, theme is indeed an element exerting significant effect on other elements. Therefore, theme can be found out after the readers understand fully other elements in the story.

Discussion about the interconnection of dramatic structure elements in the story of *Anoman Obong* aforementioned is in line with Aziez and Hasim (2012) stating that readers can understand the theme of a story when they have completely understood elements such as setting, characterization, moral teaching, plot, and so on. Close interconnection between elements in the story of *Anoman Obong* enables spectators and readers to delve into, understand, interpret, and fully appreciate the story.

C. Philosophical meaning contained in the Performance of Shadow Puppet with the Story of Anoman Obong by Ki Purbo Asmoro

Philosophical meaning in the story of *Anoman Obong* is obtained through analysis on the dialogs between its characters. Yulianti dan Marhaeni (2021) suggested that *ginem* in puppetry language is part of *catur* (modes of expression) element. Therefore, *ginem* can also be used to elaborate life teaching and advice. This statement is confirmed by Soetarno (2011) stating that shadow puppet performance provides significant meaning in life. Departing from those arguments, the philosophical meaning contained in *Anoman Obong* story is elaborated as follows.

1. Rama Wijaya's Self-Introspection

Philosophically, this meaning represents a figure of human who is always daring to introspect himself. It means that he prioritizes self-assessment over judging others. Rama Wijaya was aware of it and apologized to Sinta, acknowledging that he had made mistake by taking his wife to the jungle (Anoman Obong, minute 5:41). Associated with the context of daily social life, Rama Wijaya's action teaches human to see and evaluate himself before seeing and evaluating others. This is in line with Dewi, at al., (2026) stating that self-introspection teaches the importance of not thinking that we are most right and most capable, but how to grow self-introspection and humility in daily life.

2. Lesmana's Vigilance

Human with strong vigilance is implied philosophically by Lesmana (Anoman Obong, minute 13_21). The meaning of moral teaching contained in this character's dialogs is that every human must always maintain his vigilance,

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anywhere, in any condition and any situation. This statement is in line with Prasetyo and Muchtar (2026) that the attitude of *eling lan waspada* includes, among others, always acting cautiously and remaining vigilant to social life phenomena. This is necessary given that what will occur in the future is generally unpredictable to human. Therefore, if Lesmana's vigilant action is applicable to daily life, it will be able to minimize unexpected events.

3. Semar's Advice on Intention and Endeavor

Viewed philosophically, the action taken by Semar represents something to do mandatorily by every human having desire. In the story, Semar's advice to Rama Wijaya implies sarcasm that intention without action will be in vain (Anoman Obong, minute 28:00). Therefore, every human having desire over something must take some actions to achieve it. Thereafter, he should be able to accept whatever the destiny comes to him. This is in line with Widadi, et al. (2025) that endeavor is important to take before human is submitted to what God has destined.

4. God's Contribution to Life

This meaning, viewed philosophically, indicates the aspect of religious human life. This is demonstrated by the figure of Rama Wijaya who did not want to blame Lesmana when Shinta was lost (Anoman Obong, minute 21:50). He was aware that something occurring is inseparable from God's intervention. Pawestri & Widodo (2025) revealed that God has bestowed all decrees upon His creatures. Thereby, in relation to daily life, self-consciousness of God's intervention needs to be cultivated earlier to enable us to understand that God always contributes to any event occurring.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of analysis and discussion on the performance of shadow puppet with the story of *Anoman Obong* by Ki Purbo Asmoro related to dramatic structure and philosophical meaning, some conclusions can be drawn. First, there are 16 (sixteen) characters in this story. These characters consist of protagonists, antagonists, and tritagonists. Protagonists include Rama Wijaya, Sinta, Lesmana, and Anoman. Meanwhile, antagonists include Ravana and Kala Marica. On the other hand, tritagonists or also called supporting characters include Jatayu, Panakawan, Trijata, Alengka soldiers, and Indrajit. The plot employed in this story is forward plot. The scenes were featured chronologically and continuously. The plot of this story consists of several stages: exposition, complication, climax, resolution, and denouement.

Setting employed consists of setting of place and setting of circumstance. The setting of place includes Dandaka forest, Alengka Kingdom, Goakiskenda, and Argasoka Park. Meanwhile, the setting of circumstance encompasses sadness, shock, joy, and tension. This story has devotion as its theme. This theme can be applied to daily life and of course to positive matters. Moral teachings contained in the story emphasize anything related to life. The moral teachings include, among others (1) never disturb someone's household life, (2) keep alert to everything in life, (3) Be

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dare to admit mistake, (4) do not like to blame others, and (5) be dare to sacrifice sincerely for the sake of goodness.

Second, the elements of dramatic structure contained in the performance of shadow puppet with this story of Anoman Obong presented by Ki Purbo Asmoro have close interconnection between elements. This facilitates the spectators to absorb and understand the content and line of the story.

Third, the philosophical meaning in Ki Purbo Asmoro's shadow puppet performance of Anoman Obong offers teachings and guidelines for living in the world, as illustrated by the story's characters. The philosophical meaning intended includes (1) Rama Wijaya's self-introspection, (2) Lesmana's vigilance, (3) Semar's advice on intention and endeavor, and (4) God's contribution to life. Through these philosophical meanings, it can be said that the story in each performance of shadow puppet contains many positive advices and teachings needing to be understood and applied.

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