

## **Transformation of democratic values in lakon Petruk Dadi Ratu: A cultural and political perspective**

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed to analyze the transformation of democratic values reflected in the play Petruk Dadi Ratu from a cultural and political perspective. The story tells the story of a minor character, Petruk, who suddenly becomes a leader, reflecting socio-political dynamics that are relevant to the context of democracy in Indonesia. The symbolism in this play has criticized the abuse of power, corruption, and leadership without competence. A qualitative approach with content analysis method was used to interpret the symbolic meaning and democratic values in the play. The results show that Petruk Dadi Ratu contains messages about the importance of integrity, justice, equality, and people's participation in the government system. In addition to being a medium of entertainment, this play has an educational function, builds social awareness, and becomes a reflection on the condition of Indonesian politics, especially related to the challenges of oligarchy and moral crisis in leadership. Thus, Petruk Dadi Ratu contributes to preserving local culture while supporting the formation of democratic awareness based on traditional values.

### **Keywords:**

Petruk Dadi Ratu, democratic, cultural symbolism, political education, wayang.

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## INTRODUCTION

Democracy is a system of government that emphasizes the principles of equality, freedom, and community participation in political decision-making. However, the implementation of democracy in Indonesia still confronts various challenges, such as corruption, power manipulation, and low public political awareness (Hadiz, 2017). In this situation, traditional cultures such as wayang have great potential to be a medium for political education and the dissemination of democratic values.

Lakon Petruk Dadi Ratu is one of the stories in wayang that is full of symbolic meaning. The story depicts an ordinary character, Petruk, who becomes a leader but experiences moral dilemmas and abuse of power. The symbolism in this play not only reflects criticism of authoritarian leadership, but also reflects the importance of democratic values such as justice, transparency, and siding with the people (Purwadi, 2016). In addition, the play also depicts the transformation of a commoner, Petruk, into a king through unexpected events. Deep philosophies such as *jalmo tan kiniro*-meaning 'man is unpredictable'- are at the heart of the story, emphasizing that changes in one's social status can happen suddenly, but must be balanced with moral responsibility and wisdom (Sedyawati, 2019). Thus, Petruk Dadi Ratu can be used as a reflection of the political and social dynamics in Indonesia.

In a cultural perspective, wayang not only functioned as entertainment, but also as a tool of moral and political education capable of building people's social awareness (Rahardjo, 2018). The connection between cultural symbolism and democratic values provides an opportunity to understand how local traditions can strengthen social relations against the challenges of modernity.

This research aimed to analyze the transformation of democratic values reflected in the play Petruk Dadi Ratu through cultural and political perspectives. This interdisciplinary approach is expected to contribute to the preservation of traditional culture while encouraging the formation of democratic awareness based on local values. Thus, this play can serve as a medium of reflection on Indonesia's current political conditions and as a guideline for harmonious social relations (Sedyawati, 2019).

## METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with the content analysis method. This method was chosen to examine the symbolism of democracy in the play Petruk Dadi Ratu more indepth, especially from a cultural and political perspective. This research is classified as analytical descriptive research. Description is given to explain the cultural and political context in the play, while analysis is done to interpret the transformation of democratic values contained within (Moleong, 2017).

In reference to the purpose of this research, the primary data of this research are the results of interviews and observations made by the author of the puppet play 'Petruk Dadi Ratu'. Meanwhile, the secondary data used is data obtained through articles, websites and relevant publications. The data collection technique in this research uses interviews and documentation studies by looking at recordings of the play 'Petruk Dadi Ratu'. Interviews were conducted with key informants, including wayang observers and puppeteers from Kayun and Laras Nuswantoro studio in Pati Regency. In addition, participatory observation of the wayang performance 'Petruk Dadi Ratu' was also conducted.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The play Petruk Dadi Ratu tells the story of Petruk, a *punakawan* who suddenly becomes a king in the Mulwarengka Kingdom with the title Prabu Belgedhuwel Beh. The title is an acronym for 'sugih mblegedhu rakyate dhedhel dhuwel kabeh,' which means the king is rich, but the

people are suffering and dressed in rags. This story is not found in the epos of Mahabharata or the original Ramayana, but is a local creation that is full of social and political criticism of the power structure and dynamics of Javanese society (Maarif NU Central Java, 2020).

The play reminded us that changes in social status must be balanced with moral responsibility and wisdom. The philosophy of 'jalmo tan kiniro,' meaning man is unpredictable, emphasizes that anyone can be a leader, but without morality and competence, the powers will bring destruction. The story of the play Petruk Dadi Ratu is relevant to Indonesia's political conditions, where democracy opens opportunities for anyone to become a leader, but also confronts challenges such as corruption, oligarchy, and leadership without competence. In a modern context, this play is an important reflection for the life of the nation.

### **Symbolism in the Play of Petruk Dadi Ratu**

The play Petruk Dadi Ratu (Petruk Dadi Ratu, 2023), begins with a conflict that leads to the battle between Bambang Priambodo and Dewi Mustokoweni. Bambang Priambodo and Dewi Mustokoweni are fighting over the powerful Kalimosodo talisman. Petruk, a Punakawan Pandawa son of Semar Badranaya, receives the talisman and is assigned to guard it from being taken by others. However, Petruk actually practised this Kalimosodo talisman which made him an extraordinarily strong and mighty man. Subsequently, Petruk became arrogant because of his magic. Petruk took over the kingdoms that were close to him and appointed himself as Prabu Belgedhuwelbeh with pride and arrogance. No one could defeat Petruk's magic. After realizing this, Sri Krishna from the Pandawa side, asked Semar and Gareng for help to conquer the strong and arrogant Petruk. In the end, Prabu Belgedhuwelbeh was defeated by the power of Semar Badranaya and Nala Gareng. His magic is gone and he returns to being the real Petruk. Then Petruk realizes that his main goal is to save the Kalimosodo Talisman heirloom, not as a king. The heirloom was then returned to the appropriate king (Setiawan & Ramonita, 2023).

Petruk, also known as the symbol of the little people who suddenly gained power through the power of the Jamus Kalimasada heirloom. As a king with the title Prabu Kantong Bolong, he represented a radical social and political transition.

Based on an interview with Pak Wiwin Nusantara, a traditional puppeters, Petruk is an embodiment of the people's right to lead, but also a critique of the abuse of power by those who lack competence. The philosophy of jalmo tan kiniro in this play emphasized that unexpected changes in one's social status are inevitable, but how the individual acts determine the final outcome.

The symbolism in this story also reflects the duality of power: on the one hand, Petruk succeeds in bringing about change through his courage and humour; but on the other hand, he shows that power without integrity can destroy the social order.

### **Democratic Values in Play**

Mangkunegara (2019) explained that in the era of kingdoms that adhered to the dynastic system, the bloodline became the main requirement for holding public positions. Leadership can only be held by individuals who come from certain families. Similarly, Achwandi (2013) stated that the Petrukgate case showed a violation of the law and the political system of the kingdom. The leadership criteria in the traditional political system, which considers the king as the representative of the divine power and the only party authorized to regulate the lives of the people, has been violated.

However, Petruk, who declares himself king, opposes this view. This is considered contrary to his position in the social structure, which is only considered as wong cilik or commoners. Amar (2023) even concluded that the story of Petruk Dadi Ratu has a symbolic meaning, which asserts that a kawula alit is not worthy of being a leader, despite having leadership abilities.

Based on interviews, the play emphasizes democratic principles such as equality, justice, and participation. The ideal government depicted is one that listens to the aspirations of the people, provides social justice, and avoids unilateral decisions. This is in line with Pancasila democracy, where deliberation and consensus are the main foundations.

Mr Sahlan, a cultural expert, explained that Petruk's philosophy breaks the stagnant system. His leadership is a critique of political practices that are centred on the power elite, making it relevant to the Indonesian context, where oligarchs often dominate political decisions. In this perspective, the play reminds us that true democracy must be rooted in the aspirations of the people, not just the concerns of a few

### **Relevance to Indonesian Political Conditions**

The story of Petruk Dadi Ratu has a strong relevance to the current state of Indonesian politics. Petruk's play criticized leaders who are more concerned with personal interests than the interests of the people. Political phenomena such as money politics, nepotism, and lack of transparency often undermine democracy in Indonesia (Hadiz, 2017).

In the story of Petruk Dadi Ratu, Petruk, who represents a group of commoners or subordinates, is depicted as failing to play a role as part of a privileged class in the social structure. Many people interpret this story as a symbol of the incompetence of a leader or someone who is unfit to occupy a leadership position. Some authors even describe the destruction that occurred during Petruk's reign as king.

According to Widarmanto (2020), Petruk was originally a punakawan who liked to give advice, voice protests, argue, and lead mass movements. However, after gaining power, he turned into a figure who only thought about personal interests. He focuses on accumulating wealth and engaging in massive corruption, while his people are trapped in poverty. The state officials and the king lived in wealth, while the people remained poor and miserable.

Jalmo tan kiniro also teaches that anyone can be a leader, but without morality and competence, power will bring destruction. This is seen in the story of Petruk, who although initially successful in improving the royal order, is eventually seduced by power and ignores the values of wisdom. This reflects the challenges facing modern democracies, where leadership that is not based on integrity and capability often ends in failure (Rahardjo, 2018).

The dominance of oligarchy is also highlighted in this play. Small people like Petruk have the power to break the power of the elite, but such change requires guidance and moral awareness. In the Indonesian context, this shows the importance of people's participation in controlling public policy and keeping power from being concentrated in a few people but distributed fairly (Tirto.id, 2019).

### **Wayang as a Medium for Political and Social Education**

Since the colonial era, wayang has been used as a tool for political and social education. Wayang performances were used to convey revolutionary ideas and nationalism to the public. In the modern context, the play Petruk Dadi Ratu provides moral lessons about the importance of justice, integrity and responsibility in leadership.

Petruk's play teaches social values through humour and satire. The pattern of power depicted by Petruk shows that change is needed to break the stagnation of the system, but the change must be based on moral values and justice.

The play Petruk Dadi Ratu highlights the dangers of leadership without competence. Petruk, although initially bringing change, eventually shows that power without integrity can lead to instability. This is relevant to Indonesia, where some elected leaders have faced criticism for their lack of competence in running the government (Hadiz, 2017).

## CONCLUSION

The play *Petruk Dadi Ratu* has a strong relevance in reflecting political dynamics and democratic values in Indonesia. The story highlights the importance of equality, justice, integrity and community participation in leadership. The symbolism of *Petruk* as a commoner who becomes king teaches that power must be balanced with moral responsibility and wisdom. The play also criticizes the abuse of power and oligarchic domination that often undermine democracy. As a medium for political education, wayang can strengthen social awareness and encourage the preservation of democratic values based on local traditions.

The limitations of this study may lie in the use of only a specific version of the *Petruk Dadi Ratu* script or interpretation by a particular *dalang* (puppet master), which does not fully represent the broader variations of performances or interpretations. Additionally, the research focuses solely on one play (*Petruk Dadi Ratu*), without comparing it to other plays that also contain democratic values or socio-political criticism.

Suggestions for future research include the need to expand the scope of study by comparing *Petruk Dadi Ratu* with other wayang plays that also contain social criticism and democratic values, such as *Semar Mbangun Kahyangan* or *Bagong Jadi Raja*, in order to enrich the understanding of the transformation of democratic values within the context of Javanese culture. Future studies may also adopt a multidisciplinary approach by combining cultural studies, political science, and sociology to explore the relationship between the symbolism in wayang narratives and the dynamics of power and public participation in contemporary society.

The implications of this research highlight efforts toward the preservation and reinterpretation of local culture. The findings indicate that the *Petruk Dadi Ratu* play can serve as an important medium for both preserving and reinterpreting democratic values within a local cultural context. This implies that wayang performances are not merely a form of entertainment, but also function as a means of political education and social reflection for the community.

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