

Performing Arts in Ancient Java: Historical and Archaeological Studies

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to investigate the development of performing arts through historical and archaeological evidence, including inscriptions, temple reliefs, literary texts, and performing arts artifacts. This research aims to explore the cultural significance of the performing arts in ancient Java and how the influence of Hindu-Buddhist culture transformed traditional art forms into more structured and complex ones. This focus emerges from the limited understanding of how performing arts shaped and reinforced social solidarity in Javanese society. This research employs historical methodology with a qualitative descriptive approach. This method includes four main stages: (1) Heuristics collection data from written sources (inscriptions, kakawin, and historical texts) and unwritten sources (artifacts and temple reliefs); (2) Criticism to evaluate the authenticity and credibility of sources through external and internal criticism; (3) Interpretation to analyze the meaning and relationship between historical data; and (4) Historiography to compile a coherent historical story. The results show that the performing arts in ancient Java, such as *wayang* and gamelan, developed rapidly through the adaptation of Hindu-Buddhist values. *Wayang*, which was originally a medium for ancestral worship, transformed into a means of entertainment and a medium for delivering Indian epics such as the Mahabharata and Ramayana. Reliefs on temples such as Borobudur and Prambanan illustrate the integral role of dance and music as an important part of the social and religious life of ancient Javanese society. In addition, the art of comedy has also developed as entertainment that conveys moral messages and enlivens the social atmosphere.

Kata Kunci:

Seni Pertunjukan; Jawa Kuno; *Wayang*; Tarian; Musik.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis perkembangan seni pertunjukan melalui bukti-bukti sejarah dan arkeologi, termasuk prasasti, relief candi, teks-teks sastra, dan artefak-artefak seni pertunjukan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami signifikansi budaya dari seni pertunjukan di Jawa kuno dan bagaimana pengaruh budaya Hindu-Buddha mengubah bentuk-bentuk seni tradisional menjadi lebih terstruktur dan kompleks. Hal ini terjadi lantaran masih kurangnya pemahaman tentang bagaimana seni tersebut membentuk dan memperkuat solidaritas sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi sejarah dengan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Metode ini meliputi empat tahap utama: (1) Heuristik untuk pengumpulan data dari sumber-sumber tertulis (prasasti, kakawin, dan teks-teks sejarah) dan sumber-sumber tidak tertulis (artefak dan relief candi); (2) Kritik untuk mengevaluasi keaslian dan kredibilitas sumber-sumber melalui kritik ekstern dan intern; (3) Interpretasi untuk menganalisa makna dan hubungan antar data-data sejarah; dan (4) Historiografi untuk menyusun suatu kisah sejarah yang runtut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa seni pertunjukan di Jawa kuno, seperti *wayang* dan gamelan, berkembang pesat melalui adaptasi nilai-nilai Hindu-Buddha. *Wayang*, yang awalnya merupakan media ritual pemujaan leluhur, bertransformasi menjadi sarana hiburan dan media penyampaian epos India seperti Mahabharata dan Ramayana. Relief-relief pada candi-candi seperti Borobudur dan Prambanan membuktikan keberadaan seni tari dan musik sebagai bagian penting dalam kehidupan sosial dan keagamaan masyarakat Jawa kuno. Selain itu seni komedi juga telah berkembang sebagai hiburan yang menyampaikan pesan moral dan menghidupkan suasana sosial.

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INTRODUCTION

Performing arts are a form of artistic expression that has long been an integral part of human life around the world. With roots dating back to prehistoric times, The performing arts have served as a medium of emotional expression, both for the performers who bring them to life and for the audiences who experienced them (Oliver, 2010). In Indonesia, performing arts are deeply rooted in ritual traditions, and have also evolved as community entertainment. Performing arts play an essential role in the cultural and social fabric of society, especially in the context of royalty and religious ceremonies (Reid, 2014).

In Java, performing arts reflect a historical trajectory, ranging from the Hindu-Buddhist era to the Islamic period. Traditions such as *wayang*, dance, drama and music illustrate centuries of cultural transformation and adaptation of religious values. For example, the *wayang* tradition demonstrates the performing arts' ability to harmonise religious teachings, such as Islam, while still maintaining its cultural roots (Sungaidi, 2016). Similarly, in the ancient Javanese era, performing arts not only functioned as a means of entertainment, but also as a ritual instrument in society (Sujarno et al., 2003). The ancient Javanese era, especially during the kingdoms of Ancient Mataram, Kadiri and Majapahit, was a period when performing arts flourished. Various art forms such as *wayang*, ritual dance, gamelan, and folk theatre reflected the spiritual, political, and aesthetic values of the time. Reliefs on temples such as the dance reliefs at Prambanan Temple (Purwanto, 2018) provide visual evidence of the importance of performing arts in the daily lives of ancient Javanese people. Within the context, performing arts in ancient Java not only functioned as a means of entertainment, but also as a symbolic tool to express power, as proposed by Clifford Geertz (Geertz, 1973). This study aims to identify and analyse the development of performing arts in ancient Java during the Hindu-Buddhist period, revealing the cultural significance of performing arts in the context of ancient Javanese kingdoms and society. This research aims to encourage more in-depth studies of performing arts across the archipelago and serve as an inspiration for preserving the rich cultural heritage of ancient Java.

Despite their vital role in the social, religious, and political life of ancient Javanese society, the performing arts of that era remain understudied. Limited empirical data, incomplete interpretations of ancient artifacts and texts, and a lack of multidisciplinary approaches in past research have created a gap in understanding these art forms. As a result, it remains challenging to fully reconstruct the form, function, and meaning of ancient Javanese performing arts in a holistic way. This study therefore seeks to answer how the performing arts in ancient Java developed during the Old Javanese era? What were the main performing art forms that developed during the Old Javanese era?

The performing arts of ancient Java have long captured the interest of researchers, with several notable studies exploring their significance. (Zoetmulder, 1974), in *Kalangwan: a survey of old Javanese Literature*, highlights the close connection between performing arts, religious rituals, and local mythology. (Anderson, 1965), in *Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese*, discusses how the epics of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were adapted to the Javanese context through *wayang*. Meanwhile, (Kunst, 1937), in *Music in Java: Its History, its Function and its Techniques*, examines the evolution of *gamelan* as a key element in rituals and entertainment, particularly its role in creating emotional atmospheres. These studies underscore the intricate aesthetic, social, and political dimensions of ancient Javanese performing arts. However, further research is still needed to deepen our understanding of their form, function, and evolution over time.

Emile Durkheim's functionalist theory of religion, as outlined in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Durkheim, 2001), offers a valuable perspective for analyzing this research. Durkheim argued that religion plays a crucial role in reinforcing collective consciousness and integrating individuals into society. Within this framework, performing arts can be seen as an extension of religious rituals, serving to strengthen social bonds. In the context of ancient Javanese traditions, performing arts like *wayang kulit* and *gamelan* were not merely forms of entertainment. They also acted as a medium for celebrating shared values and preserving social harmony, aligning closely with Durkheim's principles of functionalism.

This study addresses the existing gap by applying Durkheim's framework to explore how performing arts in ancient Java in particular served to foster and strengthen social solidarity, particularly through religious rituals and community activities. While previous research has largely concentrated on the aesthetic and historical aspects of these arts, it has often neglected their social dimension as emphasized by Durkheim. Furthermore, there has been limited exploration of how performing arts contributed to shaping the collective identity of ancient Javanese society in the context of functionalism. Although ancient Javanese performing arts played a significant role in the social and religious life of the community, there is little understanding of how they shaped and strengthened social solidarity. Previous studies were mostly based on aesthetic and historical aspects without delving deeper into the social role played by performing arts in building collective identity. Therefore, this study seeks to answer fundamental questions related to the relationship between performing arts and the social structure of ancient Javanese society. Based on the objectives and literature review, this study formulates the following main research questions: (1) Why were performing arts so developed during the Old Javanese era? (2) Why did certain forms of performance art become dominant in the development of performance art in the Old Javanese era?

METHOD

This research employs the historical method to analyse how the development of performing arts in the Old Javanese era was based on historical and archaeological evidence (Sulemana et al., 2024). Referring to Kuntowijoyo's classification, the historical method involves four stages: heuristics, criticism, interpretation and historiography (Kuntowijoyo, 2013). This approach further enriched by Emile Durkheim's functionalist framework which examines society as a unified system.

1. Heuristic

The first stage, heuristics, focused on collecting primary sources such as inscriptions, temple reliefs, history books, and classical Javanese literature such as *Negarakertagama* and *Kitab Pararaton* that had been translated by Dutch scholars. Digital archives such as Delpher.nl, KITLV.nl, and Oopen.org, as well as physical libraries such as the Batu Api library in the city of Sumedang (West Java Province, Indonesia), were used to collect relevant materials. Within Durkheim's framework, these sources were analysed not only as historical records but also as evidence of past records of the collective solidarity of Javanese society. For example, the reliefs in Prambanan Temple are not just ornaments or displays, but also a reflection of the past life of the community that built bonds of solidarity.

2. Source Criticism

The second stage is source criticism to verify the authenticity of the sources and internal criticism to evaluate the credibility of the content (Sadeghi & Mirzapou, 2020). Based on a functionalist perspective, internal criticism delves deeper into the narratives in these sources to understand how art, rituals and performances function to strengthen social solidarity in society. For example, the art of *wayang* is intended to strengthen bonds between communities.

3. Interpretation

While the third stage is Interpretation. This stage aims to analyse historical data to identify the meaning, relevance and relationship between the facts found (moved for clarity). The results of the interpretation are then compiled in the form of a coherent historical narrative, to provide a complete picture of the development of performing arts in Java. The collected data was analysed using a qualitative analysis method with a thematic approach. This process involved identifying key themes from the historical data, such as patterns of performing arts development, the process of cultural adaptation, and its symbolic role. Data triangulation, which is comparing various primary and secondary sources to

ensure the validity of the findings. With this methodology, the research is expected to provide an in-depth and structured insight into the performing arts in ancient Java in its social, cultural and political context.

4. Historiography

The final stage, historiography, focuses on the critical and systematic writing of history. Guided by Durkheim's framework, historiography reconstructs past events while highlighting how the narratives of performing arts can be understood as integral to the social structure, contributing to the solidarity and stability of society. In his groundbreaking work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), Durkheim emphasized that cultural elements, such as art and ritual, play a vital role in strengthening collective consciousness and fostering social integration.

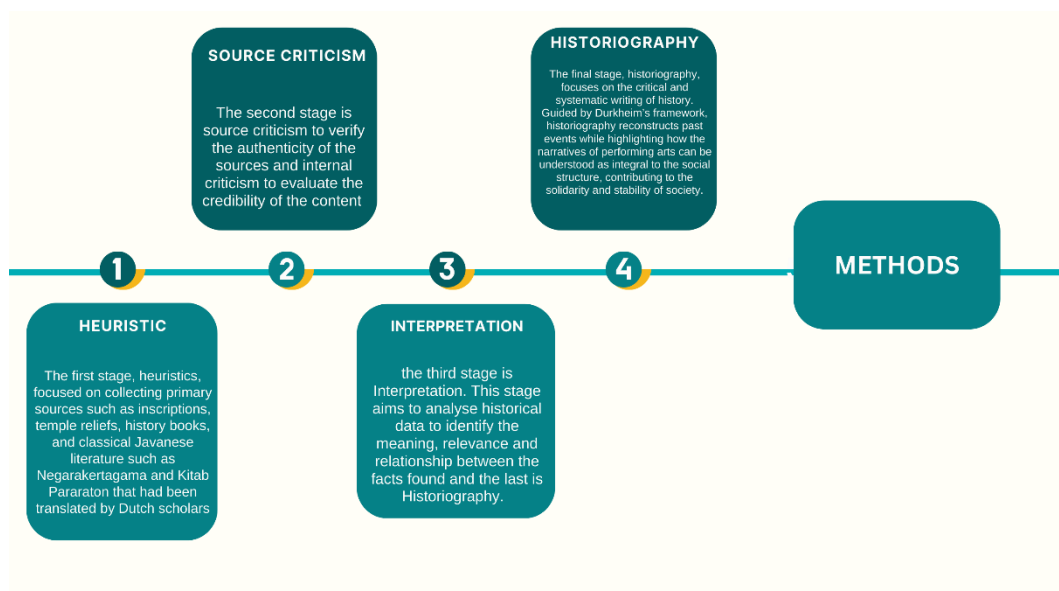


Figure 1. The diagram outlines the systematic research strategy and tactics, progressing from source collection to critical historiography, to analyze The Performing arts in Ancient Java.

RESEARCH RESULTS

During the data collection process, we collected a variety of data related to historical and archaeological evidence related to Performing Arts in Ancient Java. These data narrowed down to focus exclusively on the Performing Arts in Ancient Java. This information is then organised based on a historical timeline, this exploration highlights the Performing Arts in the Ancient Javanese era which covers the Ancient Mataram (Medang) period to the Majapahit Period. With primary sources (see figure 2), such as reliefs related to performing arts at Borobudur, Prambanan, etc., Old Javanese historical and literary books such as *Negarakertagama* and *Pararaton* that have been transliterated by Dutch scholars, These research offer a rich perspective on the presence and evolution of performing arts in ancient Java.

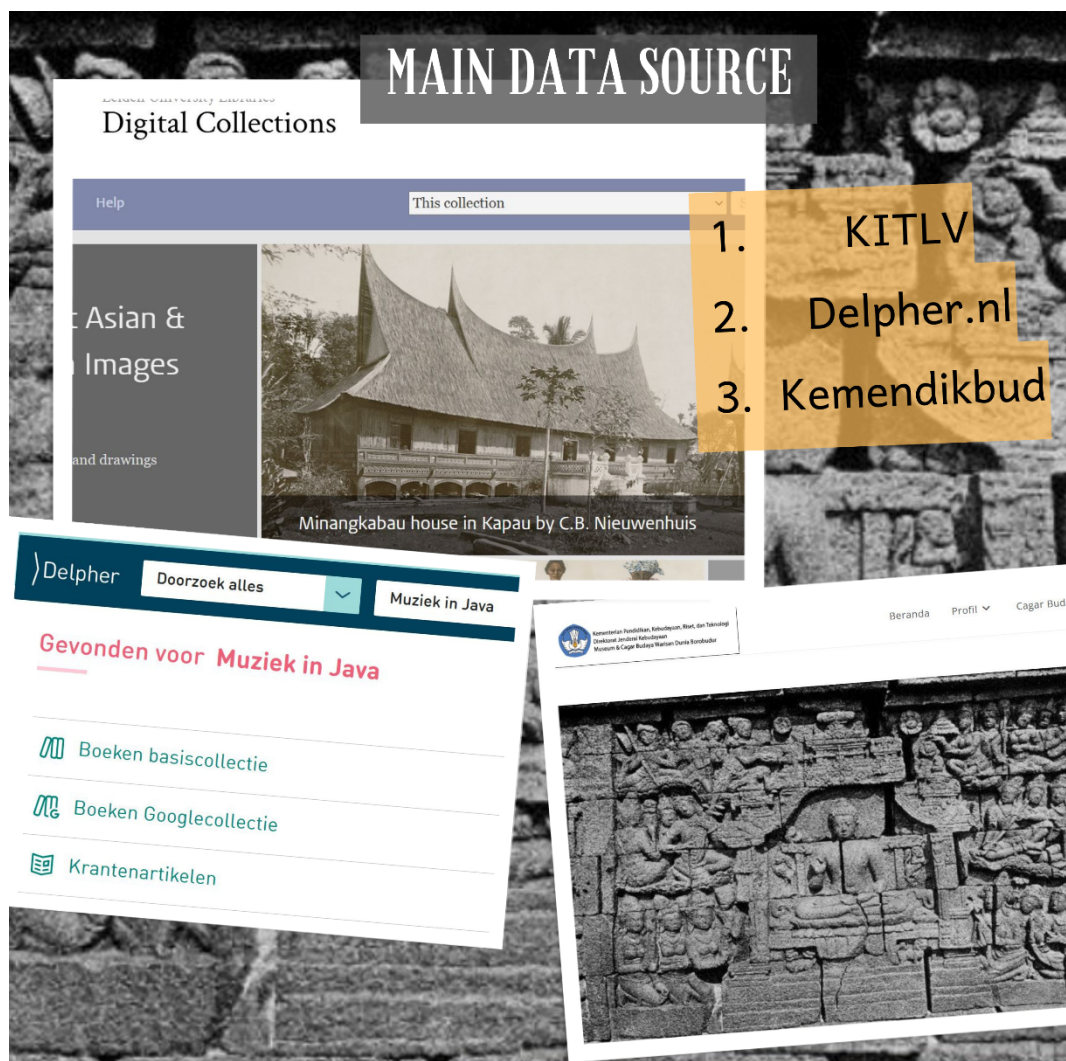


Figure 2. Data Collection Process
(Sources: KITLV, Delpher.nl & Kemendikbud)

This study explores the Performing Arts in the Ancient Javanese Era based on historical and archaeological evidence with a focus on *wayang*, dance, music and comedy during the Ancient Javanese era specifically the Mataram, Kadiri and Majapahit eras. The timeline (see Figure 3) is organised around four main phases that are closely related to politics in Java: the Old Mataram era, the Kadiri era, the Majapahit era and the Islamic era.

To construct this timeline, a detailed categorization process was used by analyzing a wide variety of data that had been collected. These data were carefully filtered according to thematic and chronological categories. Therefore, this categorization resulted in four key types of performing arts in the Old Javanese era, which will be discussed in more depth in the next section. These are *Wayang*, Dance, Music and Comedy.

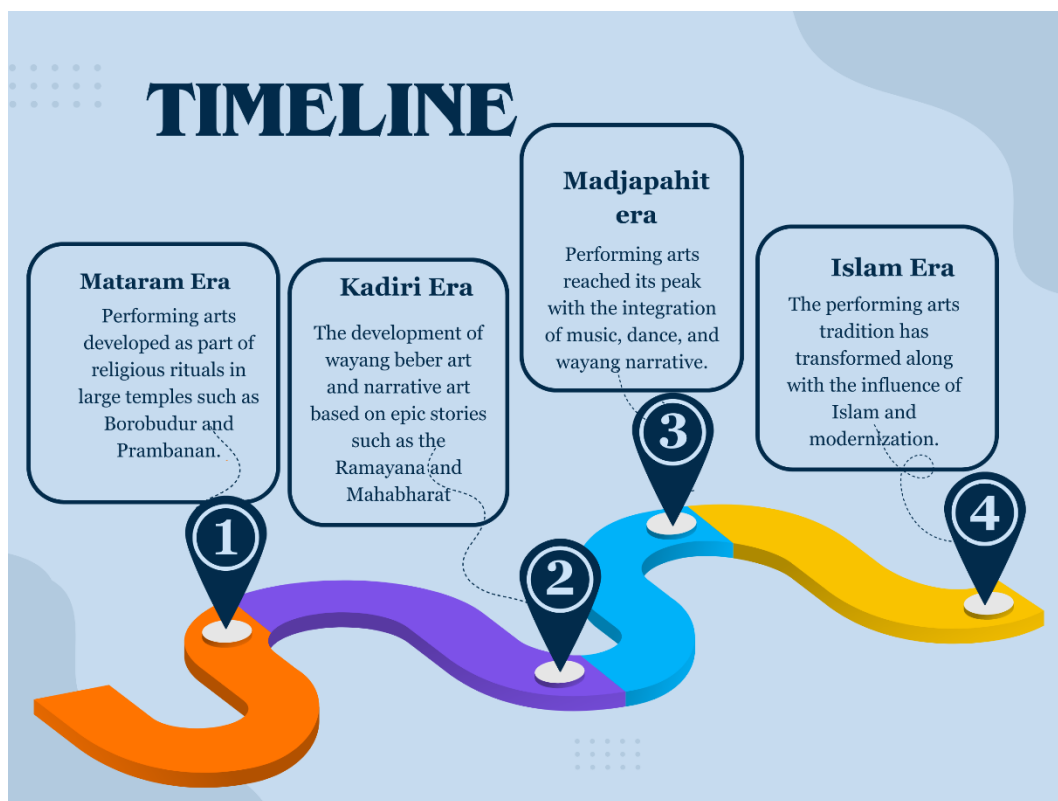


Figure 3. Data Collection Process
(Sources: KITLV, Delpher.nl & Kemendikbud)

DISCUSSION

Throughout history, performing arts have been an integral part of Javanese culture, tracing their roots back to the classical era. Evidence of these arts can be found in temple reliefs, inscriptions, and Javanese literary works, showcasing their deep cultural significance and continuity over centuries. Here, we explore some of the ancient performing arts of Java

A. *Wayang*

Wayang originally functioned as a medium of worship to the spirits of ancestors. In this context, *wayang* is not just a performance, but also part of a religious ritual that connects people to the spiritual world. At that time, *wayang* performances were closely related to religious ceremonies and were still influenced by the animism and dynamism beliefs that existed in Javanese society (Awalin, 2018). Over time, *wayang* underwent a significant evolution. In the 9th and 10th centuries, *wayang* began to be performed as a form of entertainment as well as a means of conveying moral values and religious teachings. Texts such as the Mahabharata and Ramayana began to be adapted into the Old Javanese language, creating a synthesis of local myth and Indian epic narratives (Purnomo et al., 2020).

The oldest record of *wayang* can be found in the inscription of King Balitung during the Old Mataram period around 907 AD. The inscription tells the story of a puppet show (*galigi mawayang*). This is arguably the oldest news about performing arts in Indonesia (Setiawan, 2020). Gosling in his book *De Wajang Op Java En Op Bali In Het Verleden en Het Heden* also said that the oldest news related to *wayang* was around 1000 AD. Other news related to *wayang* also appears in the Wukajana inscription which states that the puppet show at that time was '*mawayang buat hyang*' which means a puppet show for Hyang. This inscription tells the story of the status of the villages of Wukajana, Tumpang and Telu as *sima* for the monastery at Dalinan. The puppet show in the *sima* setting event presents the storyline of Bhimma Kumbara (Hariyono, 1997). Bhimma Kumbara itself is a splinter part of the Mahabharata story. In Javanese culture, Hyang is a god. The Kutu inscription, which is more extensive in its knowledge than the Balitung inscription, also tells of the equivalent of Haringgit which is said to be the same as *Awayang*.



Figures 4. *Wayang Beber* tells the story of Panji on a canvas.

Sumber: KITLV.

(https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/item/806075?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=af2cf8f51a32612e693a&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=0).

Wayang performances in Java continued and survived in the following centuries (Krom, 1926) found that in 1157 a *wayang* gender had been used, indicating that the art of *wayang* in the 12th century was still one of the most popular performances. Brandes, a Dutch researcher, hypothesised that puppetry was part of the original Javanese culture that existed before the arrival of Indian influence. Although this hypothesis requires a lot of proof based on the fact that both art forms have elements of purely Indian names that have nothing to do with India. Therefore, at first the puppet shows in the form of stories (lakon) which originally depicted the lives of the ancestors, gradually during the Hindu era shifted to the presence of Indian heroism drawn from the Mahabharata or Ramayana so that the various plays were then adopted by the Javanese so that the content of the story was in accordance with Javanese cultural values. King Jayabaya of the Kingdom of Kediri (1135-1157) is known as one of the important figures in the development of *wayang* purwa, which became the forerunner of various other types of *wayang*. He portrayed his ancestors through the art of *wayang*, indicating that *wayang* also serves as a tool to commemorate history and culture (Bagaskara et al., 2024).

Puppet shows continued to survive until the Majapahit period, in Kakawin Negarakertagama One Day Kertawardhana Hayam Wuruk is told as the father of Maharaja Majapahit as a skilled gamelan player although classified as an amateur. The playing coincided with the queen singing a song with a beautiful masked puppet (Kunst, 1949). In pupuh 66, Negarakertagama also proclaims *wayang* as a pleasure that gladdens the hearts of the people. His Majesty King Hayam Wuruk often organised these performances to entertain the people (Prapanca, 2018). the next account of *wayang* appears in Admiral Cheng Ho's travel notes written by Ma Huan. Ma Huan, one of Cheng Ho's aides who participated in the Chinese admiral's mission and voyage to Java in the 15th century, noted that the Javanese often played a picture scroll with two wooden sticks. In a loud voice, the Javanese

told a story or tale. In front of him were other Javanese watching the performance (Huan, 1970). There are various types of puppets played by the Javanese in ancient times. One of them is Bebe. The Kitab Sastro Mirudo tells us that *Wayang Beber* was made in 1283 by Condro Sengkolo, then continued by the son of Prabu Bhre Wijaya. The name comes from the way it is played, which is *diberi* (Monika, n.d.)

Besides *Wayang Beber*, another type of puppet is *Wayang Kulit Purwa*. The 11th century may be the earliest year of its existence based on Kakawin Arjuna Wiwaha, the 59th stanza by Empu Kanwa, which tells the story of a *wayang* performance at the end of the ancient Mataram Kingdom during the time of Dharmawangsa Teguh and at the beginning of the Gaib Kingdom when Airlangga occupied the throne. *Wayang Pura* usually takes stories from the Mahabhrata and Ramayana epics with Javanese elements in it. King Jayabayang of the Kadiri Kingdom who was a direct descendant of Airlangga was the one who popularised this *wayang*. Before the Jayakarta period, *wayang* was more synonymous with religious ritual performances. Jayabayang then popularised *wayang* so that people began to like it (Kunst, 1949).

B. Dances

Di tahun In the year 905 ad the Poh inscription gives an interesting record that reveals the existence of dance. The dance artists were invited to attend the *sima*-setting ceremony and they performed in a performance at the venue. The dance mentioned in the inscription is a mask dance which is a type of traditional dance in which dancers wear masks and express various stories and characters through their body movements (Hariyono, 1997). Another news comes from the Taji inscription dated 823 of or 8 April 901 gives a description of the establishment ceremony of a *sima* featuring dance performances. A dance or *Mangigel* is held as part of the ceremony. This of course shows how important the art of dance was in the culture and rituals of that time. All the people present there including royal officials took part in this dance party in turn (Hariyono, 1997). On the reliefs in Prambanan Temple, we often see images of orchestras and bells that accompany dance performances or ceremonies. This is a very valuable historical evidence of the importance of dance in Javanese culture at that time . The dance reliefs in Borobudur are a valuable source describing the Performing Arts and music in ancient Javanese culture. The reliefs show that the image of the dancer is passionate and lively, with more dancers depicted in dynamic poses. This reflected the presence of passion and vitality in the Performing Arts of the time (Kunst, 1949). A deeper study shows that the rules of Hindu classical dance in Central Java in the 8th and 10th centuries are well known and have been applied. These rules are largely in accordance with what is found in the Indian *Natyasastra* as well as

in the Saiva temples in India. The reliefs on the temples mentioned earlier are concrete evidence of the basic compatibility of classical Indian dance techniques with the Performing Arts in Central Java during that period (Sedyawati, 1993). The classical Indian dance rules recognized in the reliefs include standing posture (sthana), basic footwork, footwork (cari), basic torso posture, and hand posture. The standing stance of the mandala, in which both limbs are bent to the sides, is very dominant in central Javanese dances and may be the basis of a deep dance stance. Of the fivefoot stances known in *Natyaśāstra*, all are found in central Javanese temple reliefs. Of the four visible limb attitudes, several variations of cari are also known and demonstrated in the Performing Arts (Sedyawati, 1993). The attitudes of the torso (sides of the torso) known in *Natyaśāstra* are also depicted in the reliefs of Central Java, including attitudes involving bending, lifting, stretching, turning, and pulling. The hand gestures described in the *Natyaśāstra* are also recognized in the reliefs of Central Java, with about thirteen of the twenty-six known single hand gestures. In addition, attention is also paid to the social context of the dances in these reliefs. Dances that follow the rules of classical Indian dance are described in relation to the nobility or people are located, while folk dances and those that do not follow the rules of classical Indian dance are associated with humiliation (Sedyawati, 1993). This understanding shows that the artists in Central Java in the period not only know the rules of dance from the manual, but also apply these principles in the practice of performing arts, with an emphasis on portrayals appropriate to the social and cultural context. *Kakawin Kertagama* is a classical Javanese literary manuscript that is very important in the history of Javanese literature set in the history of the Singasari and Majapahit Kingdoms. The script contains an interesting description of the nine-man dance. Nine people dance that begins with humor is a performing art in the form of dance and Jokes used to entertain the public at that time. This description indicates that the show was full of continuous laughter, to the point of freezing the audience's stomachs. However, *Kakawin Kertagama* also noted that the show is not only about happiness. There is a sad scene that is able to grab the tears of the audience, stir up excitement, and yearn for a deeper atmosphere. The dance of nine people in *Kakawin Kertagama* is arguably a good example of how the Performing Arts at that time were able to combine elements of entertainment, emotion, and moral messages in one performance. It reflects the important role of Performing Arts in shaping the culture and permeating the daily life of the ancient Javanese people (Prapanca, 2018).

In addition to the nine people dance, one of the dances that is often performed is the warrior war dance which is described as a powerful dance with dramatic blows. It may reflect more on martial arts or war performances depicting Warrior heroism (Prapanca, 2018) *Pararaton* written in the 17th century which tells

The Story Of The Kings of Singasari and Majapahit tells the story of the battle between Kidang Wulan from Sarēngat with Jaya Lawung from Luwanu, White Tiger from Ludaya with Suraprawira from Bauumas, Lawe Ijo from Jipang with Setraprameya from Andaluhur which on the next night, this story records that Menak Jingga made mēlati and Mëndang dances for his followers (Brandes & Nicolaas Johannes Krom, 1920). This suggests that in a battle the Mēlati and Mëndang dances may have been artistic expressions used to honor the Warriors and fill the atmosphere with joy after the battle.

C. Music Arts

As an important part of the Hindu-Javanese cultural heritage, traditional musical instruments have grown and developed over the centuries. Evidence of ancient musical instruments preserved throughout time bears witness to the richness of this culture. One of the oldest evidences of the existence of Hindu-Javanese musical instruments is the relief of one of the temples in Dieng, which is thought to date back to the early 8th or late 7th century. The relief features depictions of musical instruments, including small bronze bells. Later, at Candi Sari (around 750 AD), musical instruments such as the three-stringed lute, one-stringed zither and small cymbals were added. Nagasari Temple, from the same period, also features a pair of elephant bells. The bas-relief of the Jalatunda bathing tomb shows a small bow-shaped harp with three strings. In addition to visual evidence in the form of reliefs, a large number of bronze musical instruments have also been found in Central Java, although exact dates are difficult to determine. These include bonang-ketel, saron, gender keys, bells, prayer bells, drums, gongs and other instruments. Although much central Javanese literature has been lost, some sources such as the Hindu Javanese version of the Ramayana remain and can provide insight into the musical instruments used in this period (Kunst, 1949). During the East Javanese period, especially in the context of excavations and reliefs in East Java, we can find evidence of the existence of various musical instruments that have existed for centuries, even before Hindu influences came to Java.



Figure 5. Panel 125, Karmawhibangga Relief at Borobudur Temple shows a man (King?) listening to a lute surrounded by women (concubines).

(Source: Kementrian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset dan Teknologi.

<https://kebudayaan.kemdikbud.go.id/bkborobudur/relief-musik-di-candi-borobudur/>)

Some of these instruments are the sundari, chalung, damyadamyan, guntang, taluktak and bamboo slit drums, which have very old historical roots, even before the Hindu era in Java. One of the instruments mentioned is the sundari, which is a Bamboo Aeolus. This instrument is recorded in the Arjunavivaha around 1040 Chalung, which is mentioned in the Buwahan inscription in 1181 AD. Damyadamyan, a bamboo clarinet, also records its existence around 1188 CE. Guntang, the bamboo zither, appears in Kidung Sunda shortly after 1357 CE and still exists throughout the archipelago. During the Hindu-Javanese period, music was valued by the various ruling castes. Musical functions such as chief drummer, orchestra leader, chief harpist and others are repeatedly mentioned in inscriptions, indicating the importance of music in ancient Javanese society (Kunst, 1949). The Gandasuli and Poh inscriptions provide written references to musical instruments such as curing and gamelan (padahi, regang, tuwung) used in ceremonies and religious activities. In addition, reliefs at Prambanan and Borobudur temples also depict musical activities that reflect the importance of music in daily life and religious ceremonies. This helps to understand more about music in Javanese culture at that time, as well as the types of musical instruments used (Dit. PCBM, 2017).

The description of Negarakertagama illustrates the importance of gamelan performance in the context of religious and cultural ceremonies at that time. Every month of Palguna Sri Nata the entire royal community enthusiastically celebrates a ceremony, including officials, judges, village servants and even people far from Bali. The gamelan swirls around on a stretcher amidst the crowds of people. In this celebration the gamelan is played seven times while carrying dishes facing the

puara. The ceremony includes fire offerings and the recitation of mantras by Shiva-Buddhist priest (Brandes & Nicolaas Johannes Krom, 1920; Kunst, 1949). Overall, in the Majapahit Kingdom, musical groups were known as 'vaditra' and were divided into five classes based on the type of instrument used: *Avanaddha vadya*, instruments that produce sound from the vibration of the skin membrane as it is struck. *Ghana vadya*, the sound produced by the vibration of the instrument itself. *Sushira vadya*, the sound produced by the vibration of the air as it is blown. *Tata vadya*, the sound produced by the vibration of a plucked or strummed wire.

There are also a number of traditional Javanese musical instruments such as drums, flutes, trumpets (*sangkha*), *siter*, *celempung*, *rebab*, and ideophone instruments such as gongs, gamelan, and the like. These musical instruments have an important role in various aspects of culture and religion in ancient Majapahit and Javanese society (Aziz & Pamungkas, 2018). In addition, in more detail, musical instruments in Majapahit were known as 'Vaditra', grouped into: *Tata*: String instruments (cordophones), *Begat*: Stringed instruments, *Sushira*: Wind instruments (aerophones), *Dhola*: *Kendang* (membranophone) and *Ghana*: Beating instruments (ideophone). Musical instruments play an important role in various activities, including religious, entertainment and social activities (Aziz & Pamungkas, 2018). Temple reliefs in East Java (such as Penataran Temple) depict musical activities as part of religious rituals. In a religious context, musical instruments such as clapper, *Kenong* and *Gong* are often used in temple ceremonies. Musical instruments help convey moral teachings through stories visualised on temple reliefs (Aziz & Pamungkas, 2018). Chinese sources also provide insight into Javanese musical instruments of the period, such as copper drums, large brass gongs, coconut shell wind instruments, and drums used in musical tournaments (Brandes & Nicolaas Johannes Krom, 1920). All this evidence illustrates the richness and richness of Javanese musical culture during the period, spanning both pre-Hindu times and later Hindu influences. It is an important part of Java's rich and diverse cultural heritage.

D. Comedy

The Poh inscription of 905 is a historical inscription that provides an important insight into the comedy plays in the ancient Mataram era. In addition to discussing the *sima*-setting ceremony, the inscription also notes that artists were invited to attend the *sima*-setting ceremony as witnesses. Among these artists are comedians. Comedians themselves are people who play buffoonery a comedy performance art that often uses humor and jokes to entertain the audience . Various inscriptions from Waharu Kuti, Penggumulan, Mantyasih to Wukajana in the ancient Mataram era often mention comedians. This indicates that the

comedian was an important part of the culture of the ancient Javanese people. There are two types of jokes in this era. The first is Mabanol a performing art that emphasizes physical and visual movements. It relies on the body expressions and movements of the viewer to entertain the audience. In mabanol, the comedian or performer will use their body movements, dance, and facial expressions to produce humor and entertainment. While the second is Mamirus which emphasizes more on humorous verbal utterances. It is a type of performance art in which the comedian or performer uses words, jokes, and humorous speeches to entertain the audience. Mamirus often involves wordplay, verbal humor, and witty jokes.

The Relief of Karmawibhangga in Borobudur Temple is a clear example of how the Performing Arts, including the art of comedy, are depicted in relief art at that time. The Relief records one of the jokers called Paninganing, who was very much liked by the people of his time. It reflects the importance of entertainment and Performing Arts in the daily life of the ancient Javanese people. The alasantan inscription dating from 939 AD also provides evidence of the popularity of Performing Arts at that time (Al-Fateeh, 2020). Kakawin Kertagama tells about nine people dance that starts with a joke. The joke was full of continuous laughter, to the point of freezing the audience's stomachs. Although it does not directly mention that the scene was part of a buffoonery show. But this description reflects and is related to the comedy show how the art of this comedy show is able to create joy and happiness for the audience.

CONCLUSION

Performing arts in ancient Java played a significant/vital role in reflecting cultural values, spirituality, and social changes that occurred throughout history. Various forms of performing arts, such as *wayang*, dance, music, and comedy, developed rapidly during the Hindu-Buddhist period to the Islamic period. This art not only functioned as entertainment, but also became a medium for conveying moral teachings, religious values, and affirming political legitimacy. *Wayang*, initially used as a medium for worshiping ancestral spirits in religious rituals, evolved into a means of entertainment that combined local myths with Hindu epics such as the Mahabharata and Ramayana. This adaptation illustrates the ability of performing arts to absorb cultural and religious influences, while preserving local identity. During the reign of King Jayabaya of the Kediri Kingdom and King Hayam Wuruk in Majapahit, *wayang* developed into a tool for preserving history and culture.

Dance was also an important element in the rituals and entertainment of ancient Javanese society. Evidence of the existence of dance is reflected in the reliefs of temples such as Borobudur and Prambanan, which show that dance was

an integral part of religious and social life. Javanese dance movements that adapt classical rules such as the *Natyasastra* reflect the influence of Indian culture adapted to the local context. Traditional music, especially gamelan, is the main accompaniment in *wayang* and dance performances, and plays an important role in religious ceremonies and royal activities. Musical instruments such as gongs, drums, and zithers reflect the richness of Javanese culture while demonstrating the innovation and adaptation of musical arts throughout the ages. In addition, comedy art is also present as a means of entertainment that enlivens the social atmosphere of society. The Karmawibhanga relief at Borobudur Temple and the Kakawin Negarakertagama records show that comedy has been an important part of performing arts since the Ancient Mataram era. All of these performing arts are not only a very valuable cultural heritage, but also real evidence of the ability of ancient Javanese society to integrate external influences into local traditions without losing their cultural identity. These performing arts continue to survive and develop to this day, maintaining the continuity of cultural values and spirituality that have been passed down for centuries.

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AUTHOR DECLARATION (MANDATORY, *please use the following template*)

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