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Resiliensi and Mediatization Wayang Kulit in the Lakon Banjaran Cakil Performance by Ki Purbo Asmoro on YouTube

Eko Prasetyo
Doctoral Student, Cultural Studies Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences
Universitas Sebelas Maret (UNS)
Surakarta, Indonesia
Corresponding author: ekoprast0684@gmail.com

Warto
Department of History, Faculty of Cultural Sciences
Universitas Sebelas Maret (UNS)
Surakarta, Indonesia

Bani Sudardi
Department of Indonesian Literature – Cultural Studies, Faculty of Cultural Sciences
Universitas Sebelas Maret (UNS)
Surakarta, Indonesia

Titis Srimuda Pitana
Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering
Universitas Sebelas Maret (UNS)
Surakarta, Indonesia

***Abstract*—The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted cultural practices in Indonesians and accelerated digitalization across various sectors. Traditional artists are forced to seek alternative platforms to survive and continue their work. This study examines the practice of wayang kulit performances by Ki Purbo Asmoro in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period as an effort to accommodate online audiences in response to post-pandemic socio-cultural changes. The object of analysis in this research is the performance of "Pakeliran Padat Lakon Banjaran Cakil" by Ki Purbo Asmoro, which was live streaming for four hours on May 14, 2020, via Purbo Asmoro's official YouTube channel. This article analyzes the Lakon Banjaran Cakil, which features marginalized figures as the center of the narrative, as well as the involvement of online audiences, using a Cultural Studies approach supported by the theories of Resilience and Mediatization. This article argues that Purbo Asmoro's creativity in virtual wayang performances can rearticulate cultural sustainability in response to major changes in the modern era. The research findings demonstrate that traditional Indonesian arts can survive and transform in the digital age, provided they are supported by creative adaptation and the use of media technology.**

***Keywords*—Wayang Kulit; Banjaran Cakil; resilience; mediatization; YouTube**

I. INTRODUCTION

Wayang kulit purwa is one of the traditional Javanese performing arts that has survived into the modern era. Its existence is believed to have been present long before the influence of Indian culture entered the archipelago [1], [2]. A wayang performance is built on three main pillars: the dalang (puppet master) and supporting crew, the artistic work of puppetry, and the audience or patron [3]. These three pillars form a cultural ecosystem in which the dalang functions not only as the organizer but also as the creator and communicator of cultural values.

For centuries, wayang has served as a vehicle for conveying the values of Javanese life, such as the philosophy of memayu hayuning bawana (maintaining the harmony of the world). Its functions are not limited to entertainment, but also include education, religious teaching, and even political legitimation [3], [4]. The international recognition of wayang was reinforced when UNESCO declared it a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2003 [5]. Nevertheless, like other traditional arts, wayang has faced significant challenges brought by modernization and globalization [6].

Anthony Giddens [7] describes late modernity as a "juggernaut," a massive force moving rapidly, difficult to control, yet still steerable. The acceleration of information and communication technology has shifted public tastes, placing traditional arts in competition with popular entertainment such as television, music, and digital media [8]. Historically, wayang has shown remarkable adaptability. For instance, in the 1990s, the emergence of wayang hura-hura represented an effort to compete with modern entertainment while maintaining traditional elements [9].

These challenges culminated during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021). Social restrictions halted nearly all live performances, leaving dalang without audiences and economic resources [10], [11]. In response to the crisis, several artists turned to digital platforms as alternative stages. One prominent figure in this transition was Ki Purbo Asmoro, who, since March 2020, consistently presented his performances through his official YouTube channel, "Purbo Asmoro Official" [12].

Such online performances marked a milestone in the virtualization of wayang. The live streaming of Wayangan Tunggal not only reflected cultural resilience during the pandemic but also offered a new strategy for adaptation. This phenomenon later inspired other dalang, particularly in the Surakarta region, to undertake similar experiments. Virtualization provided new opportunities: global audiences, permanent documentation, and real-time interaction through comments and live chat. On the other hand, it also created problems, such as the loss of the social atmosphere typical of live performances and the shifting modes of audience engagement. This corresponds with Jati's findings [25], who emphasizes that digital transformation can strengthen the sustainability of cultural communities by creating new forms of online interaction.

Previous studies on wayang have addressed its historical [1], [13], social [14], [15], spiritual [16], [17], and aesthetic aspects [18], [19]. More recent works highlight the creativity of Purbo Asmoro [8] as well as the aesthetics of virtual wayang during the pandemic [20]. However, specific studies focusing on the cultural resilience of wayang in the context of digital mediatization, particularly on YouTube, remain limited.

This article attempts to fill that gap by analyzing the performance of Banjaran Cakil by Ki Purbo Asmoro, which positions the marginal figure Cakil as the central character. Using the theoretical framework of cultural resilience [21], [22] and mediatization [23], [24], this study aims to answer three main questions: how wayang performances transform in the digital context, how online audience engagement is constructed, and what the implications are for the sustainability of traditional arts in the digital age.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Wayang Kulit and Digital Transformation

Since 2003, wayang kulit has been recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage [5]. As a traditional performing art, it embodies entertainment, educational, spiritual, and even social-legitimating functions [6]. However, globalization and the changing tastes of audiences, especially younger generations, have created new challenges for its sustainability [3]–[5]. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the migration of performing arts into digital spaces, particularly YouTube [6], [7]. Several studies emphasize that digital media serve dual functions: as a means of survival as well as a space of innovation and global visibility [8], [9]. In this context, narrative experiments such as the Banjaran Cakil performance become part of traditional strategies of adaptation through digitalization.

B. Cultural Resilience Framework

The concept of resilience, first introduced in ecological studies [10], has been adapted in cultural studies to explain how traditions survive, transform, and remain relevant under external pressures [11]. Cultural resilience emphasizes the community's ability to creatively reinterpret cultural heritage in responding to challenges while maintaining its core values [12]. In the context of wayang kulit, resilience can be understood as the capacity of dalang, musicians, and cultural practitioners to preserve traditional aesthetics while simultaneously adapting performances to contemporary media platforms [13]. Resilience in this sense does not merely mean preserving old forms, but also entails the courage to pursue creative transformation. The creation of Banjaran Cakil—a marginal character who typically appears only as an antagonist—represents this transformative capacity in resilience: from survival, to adaptation, to generating new cultural meanings. In this case, resilience is evident in Ki Purbo Asmoro's willingness to stage a non-pakem performance as a strategy to sustain the vitality of wayang before new audiences.

C. Mediatization and Performing Arts

The concept of mediatization has become one of the central frameworks in contemporary cultural studies. Hjarvard [14] explains that mediatization does not simply transmit messages through media but also reshapes social structures, communication patterns, and cultural practices. Hepp [15] emphasizes that mediatization is structural: the logic of media reshapes how people interact, produce, and consume culture. Thus, performing arts that migrate to digital spaces cannot be understood merely as documentation but rather as new cultural forms subject to the logic of media.

In the context of traditional performing arts, mediatization presents both challenges and opportunities. First, from the perspective of production, the presence of cameras, audio equipment, and online platforms changes how performances are presented. The duration, originally spanning up to eight hours, is condensed to three or four hours

in line with digital consumption patterns. The dalang, pengrawit, and pesinden adjust gestures, costumes, and even expressions to enhance visual aesthetics on screen. Second, in terms of distribution, digital platforms such as YouTube provide global reach and permanent archiving mechanisms. Performances are no longer limited to local social spaces but are available on-demand and across cultural boundaries.

Third, regarding audience reception, mediatization shifts patterns of engagement. In live performances, audiences are physically present, co-creating the social atmosphere and responding with interjections or spontaneous reactions. In online performances, interactions shift to text comments, emojis, or live chat. This produces new forms of participation that are more individual, immediate, and measurable through views, likes, and subscribers. According to Couldry and Hepp [16], these changes demonstrate that digital media not only disseminate performances but also reconstitute how society attributes meaning to art.

In the case of wayang kulit, mediatization is evident in the emergence of pakeliran padat, which has gained renewed relevance in the digital era. This condensed format, pioneered by Surakarta dalang since the 1980s (including Soetarno, Sarwanto, and Sunardi), was originally intended as an adaptation to time constraints and modern audience preferences. Today, through YouTube, such condensing is reinforced by media logic: dalang are expected to deliver dramatic and symbolic essence within shorter durations to align with digital viewing habits. Thus, mediatization influences not only the technical aspects but also redefines the aesthetics, narrative, and social functions of wayang kulit in the digital age.

III. METHOD

This study is situated within the framework of Cultural Studies, employing a qualitative approach oriented toward the interpretation of meanings, practices, and cultural representations in specific social contexts. Cultural Studies perceives culture not as a static inheritance but as a dynamic arena that continuously transforms under the influence of power, technology, and social change. Therefore, the method of this research is not intended to generate quantitative generalizations but rather to uncover how a tradition—in this case, wayang kulit purwa—develops strategies of sustainability through mediated practices in digital spaces.

A. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study design. The primary object is the online performance of Pakeliran Padat with the play Banjaran Cakil by Ki Purbo Asmoro, streamed on the YouTube channel “Purbo Asmoro Official” on May 14, 2020. A case study design was chosen as it allows in-depth understanding of how wayang adapts within the digital ecosystem, particularly during the pandemic. The focus of the research lies in two aspects: (1) the narrative and aesthetic strategies of Ki Purbo Asmoro in elevating the marginal figure Cakil to the center of the story, and (2) the implications of mediatization for the cultural

B. Sources and Types of Data

The main data consist of documentation of the online performance Banjaran Cakil by Ki Purbo Asmoro, broadcast on his official YouTube channel on May 14, 2020. This performance was chosen because it represents the practice of wayang adaptation in the post-pandemic context and serves as a concrete example of cultural resilience strategies in the digital domain. In addition to this primary data, the study also draws upon secondary sources, including:

- Academic literature on wayang kulit, traditional performing arts, pakeliran padat, and socio-cultural dynamics.
- Theoretical works on cultural resilience and mediatization as analytical frameworks.
- Articles, news reports, and online resources addressing the impact of the pandemic on performing arts in Indonesia.

C. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was carried out using several techniques. First, digital observation of the YouTube performance, including analysis of the plot, the representation of Cakil from beginning to end, elements of puppetry (garap pedalangan), artistic arrangements, and forms of online audience interaction such as comments and live chat. Second, documentary research through exploration of media archives, publications, and records relevant to the dynamics of wayang performances during the pandemic. Third, literature review to reinforce the theoretical and historical context, situating the studied phenomenon within a broader academic framework.

D. Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed interpretively, emphasizing the relationship between text (wayang performance as a cultural practice) and context (the pandemic situation and the logic of digital media). The analysis proceeded in three stages:

- Description: outlining details of the performance, including the narrative structure of Banjaran Cakil, the pakeliran padat format, and aesthetic aspects such as the costumes of the dalang and musicians.

- Interpretation: analyzing the representation of Cakil as a marginal figure granted central stage, and the cultural meanings of this transformation.
- Theoretical dialogue: connecting empirical findings with resilience theory [2], [21] and mediatization theory [14], [15] to explain strategies of sustaining traditional arts within digital spaces.

E. Validity and Researcher Reflexivity

In qualitative research based on Cultural Studies, validity is not measured by statistical numbers but by analytical rigor, argumentative consistency, and openness to diverse interpretations. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources (performance video, academic literature, and supporting documents), as well as researcher reflexivity in positioning oneself as both a member of the Javanese cultural community and an academic observer. This reflexive stance is crucial, as the researcher cannot be entirely "neutral" but is always involved in the production of meaning.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Description of the Performance

The performance "Wayangan Tunggal Ki Purbo Asmoro – Banjaran Cakil" was broadcast live on the YouTube channel Purbo Asmoro Official on May 14, 2020. It presented several significant innovations. The banjaran play was chosen to give a complete narrative to the character of Cakil—who usually appears only briefly as a short antagonist—so that he obtained a full representation from birth to death. This is a form of rearticulation of traditional narratives that gives the stage to marginal figures.

In addition, the visual aspect of the performance was distinct from conventional pakeliran. The dalang, musicians, and pesinden wore costumes resembling giants (raksasa), an aesthetic exploration rarely found in traditional puppetry. This innovation was intended to strengthen the visual appeal for digital audiences. The duration of the performance was also condensed to around four hours, in line with online viewing patterns, while still successfully delivering a complete narrative.

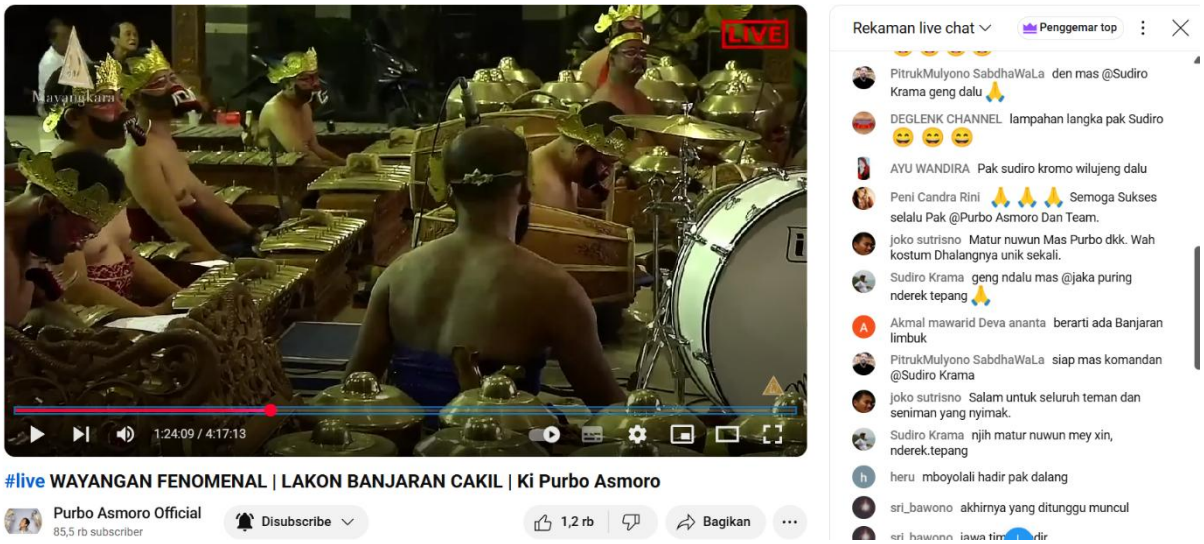


Fig. 1. All crew in Cakil and giant costumes.

Screenshot from Banjaran Cakil performance, Purbo Asmoro Official, May 14, 2020.

The play begins with the anxiety of a young knight who loses his spirit due to natural disasters in four directions. From his body emerges a shadow figure advising humans to remain spirited in protecting one another. The story then moves to Lemah Miring, the residence of the giant Gendramaya and his wife Gandrik Kali. Through a miraculous event involving the golden-haired dog Asu Kikik, Gandrik Kali gives birth to a fanged giant baby named Gendir Penjalin, later known as Cakil. A priest named Wrahaskara prophesies that he will become a famous figure and educates him into adulthood



Fig. 2. Yaksi Gandrik Kali giving birth to Cakil.

Screenshot from *Banjaran Cakil* performance, *Purbo Asmoro Official*, May 14, 2020.

After undergoing spiritual training, Gendir Penjalin grows into a powerful giant leader. He is also depicted with human qualities, such as when he falls in love with Endang Cakini, the daughter of a giant priest. To marry her, he meditates until he receives a sacred dagger (*keris*) with thirteen curves from Bathara Kala. This event marks Cakil's transformation from a marginal antagonist into a central figure with a complete life: born, educated, empowered, in love, and married.



Fig. 3. Gendir Penjalin, accompanied by Togog and Bilung, encountering a knight.

Screenshot from Banjaran Cakil performance, Purbo Asmoro Official, May 14, 2020.

His glory, however, ends tragically. Gendir Penjalin becomes a robber in the forest, attempting to obstruct a knight accompanied by the *punakawan*. The fierce battle ends with his death, pierced by his own dagger. In the closing part, Hyang Wenang explains the symbolic meaning of the play: the giants personify human desires (arrogance, rejection and anger, attachment and greed, envy) that never disappear but always present challenges in life.

Thus, this play provides new representation for the marginal figure Cakil. From previously appearing only briefly as a knight's opponent, he is now given the stage with a complete life narrative, symbolizing the human struggle with desire and vitality. Purbo Asmoro presented this entire story in the form of *pakeliran padat* with a duration of around four hours—an aesthetic innovation that effectively delivered a long narrative for digital audiences.

B. Transformation of Garap and Elements of Pakeliran

The observation indicates a transformation in several elements of the pakeliran. First, in terms of narrative structure, the banjaran plot that elevates Cakil as the central figure represents innovation within the traditional repertoire. This reflects the dalang's boldness in rearticulating traditional values to make them more appealing for new audiences. Second, in terms of artistic and visual design, the use of wayang uwong costumes adds a stronger theatrical dimension for screen audiences. This change is also an adaptation to the logic of digital media, which emphasizes visual aspects. Third, in terms of duration, the reduction to three to four hours shows a strategy to adapt to online viewers' attention span without entirely abandoning traditional conventions.

These findings are consistent with previous research [10], which shows that Surakarta-style virtual pakeliran integrates elements of catur, sabet, and karawitan with digital adjustments, producing performances that are compact, adaptive, and communicative. Thus, Purbo Asmoro's innovation through the pakeliran padat format is not isolated but rooted in ASKI/ISI academic experiments since the 1980s, now finding renewed relevance in the digital domain [26].

C. Online Audience Engagement

The live chat and comment features on YouTube show direct audience engagement during the performance. Viewers expressed praise, questions, and even moral and material support (for example, through super chat). This phenomenon demonstrates a shift in interaction patterns, from direct face-to-face encounters at traditional venues to virtual communication, while still maintaining the social function of wayang as a medium of community and togetherness.

This virtual interaction pattern reveals the transformation of wayang's social function: from a medium of local social gathering to a digital community space across geographical boundaries. Viewers from various regions, even abroad, were able to participate directly. This broadens the meaning of performance, not only as an artistic event but also as a cultural practice that sustains social ties in the era of mediatization.

D. The Role of Digital Media as a Space of Resilience

The findings indicate that digital media serve dual functions. First, as a tool of survival that enabled dalang to continue performing despite the cancellation of offline shows during the pandemic. Second, as a space of innovation that encouraged the creation of new formats in terms of narrative, aesthetics, and audience interaction.

From the perspective of cultural resilience, this practice reflects the puppetry community's ability to adapt to external pressures (pandemic and digital modernity) without losing the core of traditional values. Resilience in the case of Banjaran Cakil is not only about sustaining performances in digital spaces but also about the dalang's courage to place a marginal character at the center of the narrative. This indicates that resilience does not merely preserve old forms but also creates innovative meanings that give space to previously marginalized figures. This is consistent with Nugroho et al. [10], who found that virtual pakeliran functions not only as entertainment but also as a creative medium conveying social messages, hope, and values of goodness, showing the capacity of traditional arts to remain relevant through mediatization.

From the perspective of mediatization, online performances confirm how the logic of digital media reshapes cultural practices, from temporal arrangements to modes of audience communication.

As further emphasized by Sunardi et al. [27], the aesthetics of virtual wayang during the pandemic underwent transformations in performance structure, costumes, and stage arrangements, tailored for digital cameras. This confirms that traditional performance arts can benefit from new media logics without losing their authenticity.

In terms of format, the application of pakeliran padat in this performance corresponds with Sarwanto's [26] idea that shortened duration does not imply loss of meaning but instead serves as a strategy to maintain wayang's relevance for modern audiences. The four-hour duration allowed the complex narrative of Banjaran Cakil to remain followable by online audiences at an effective rhythm. This proves that narrative innovation can coexist with performance efficiency.

Moreover, Prasetyo [25] highlights that cultural digitalization functions as a resilience strategy, a perspective clearly reflected in this performance. Through YouTube live streaming, Purbo Asmoro not only provided access for global audiences but also created a permanent cultural archive accessible across generations. In this regard, digital media play dual roles: as a survival space during the pandemic restrictions and as an innovation space for building new cultural ecosystems in the post-pandemic era.

E. Implications for the Sustainability of Wayang

The virtualization of wayang kulit through YouTube opens new possibilities for the sustainability of traditional arts. In the future, digital performances can function as permanently documented cultural archives as well as educational tools across generations. Nevertheless, challenges remain, particularly the loss of the social atmosphere typical of offline performances and the risk of declining traditional audience bases.

Thus, Banjaran Cakil is not only an aesthetic experiment during the pandemic but also a symbol of cultural resilience strategies: elevating marginal figures, adapting to digital logic, and simultaneously maintaining continuity of tradition amid changing times.

In terms of aesthetics, Ki Purbo Asmoro's Banjaran Cakil performance corresponds with the findings of Sunardi et al. [27] regarding the aesthetic logic of virtual performances. The use of wayang uwong costumes, visual explorations of giants and Cakil, and stage arrangements designed for the camera show that the dalang not only preserved tradition but also adapted aesthetics to be more communicative in digital spaces. This confirms that traditional performing arts can benefit from the logic of new media without losing their authenticity.

From a formal perspective, the implementation of pakeliran padat in this performance aligns with Sarwanto's [26] argument that shorter duration does not imply a loss of meaning but rather serves as a strategy for maintaining wayang's relevance to modern audiences. The four-hour narrative of Banjaran Cakil, which is complex and full of detail, could still be effectively followed by online audiences. This proves that narrative innovation can coexist with performance efficiency.

Furthermore, Prasetyo [25] emphasizes that cultural digitalization serves as a resilience strategy, a perspective clearly reflected in this performance. Through YouTube live streaming, Purbo Asmoro successfully opened access to global audiences while simultaneously providing a permanent cultural archive for intergenerational learning. In this case, digital media play dual roles: as a survival space during the pandemic restrictions and as an innovation space for building a new cultural ecosystem in the post-pandemic era.

V. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the online performance of Pakeliran Padat Banjaran Cakil by Ki Purbo Asmoro is a concrete example of how traditional arts can survive and transform in the digital era. By elevating the marginal figure Cakil as the central character, Purbo Asmoro not only introduced narrative innovation but also opened a new representational space previously marginalized within traditional conventions.

From an aesthetic perspective, the use of the pakeliran padat format, the costuming of the dalang and musicians, and the visual explorations aligned with camera logic show that the dalang is capable of adapting artistic strategies to the demands of digital platforms. This supports the notion that mediatization not only changes how performances are produced and distributed but also reshapes how audiences experience them.

The findings confirm that digital media serve dual roles: as a survival tool during the pandemic crisis and as an arena of innovation for building new cultural ecosystems. The process of virtualization also expands audience reach to a global level, documents performances as permanent cultural archives, and sustains the social function of wayang as a medium of togetherness—even in virtual form.

Thus, Banjaran Cakil can be understood as a symbol of cultural resilience strategies: elevating the marginalized, adapting to digital logic, and maintaining the continuity of tradition amid social change. This study contributes to the discourse on the sustainability of traditional arts by demonstrating that the continuity of wayang kulit depends not only on preserving old forms but also on the ability of dalang and cultural communities to carry out creative innovations compatible with the contemporary media ecosystem.

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