

## The Evolution of Tegal's Wayang Cepak: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Transformations

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### ABSTRACT

Wayang Cepak Tegal is a traditional performing art that has strong historical roots in Tegal City, Central Java, Indonesia. Over time, Wayang Cepak Tegal has undergone significant changes. Wayang Cepak Tegal experienced changes in form due to the influence of changes in human culture caused by technological advances that encourage contemporary transformation in the Tegal Cepak puppet show, these changes can be seen especially in terms of changes in characters, dimensions of form and duration of the show as well as the use of technology in the Tegal Cepak puppet show. Based on this, the research was conducted to examine the changes in Tegal Cepak puppetry from a historical perspective and see the contemporary transformation that occurred in the Tegal Cepak puppetry performance art, limited to changes in characterization, dimensions of form and duration of the Tegal Cepak puppetry performance. The research methods used included literature study, observation and interviews with the puppeteers of Wayang Cepak Tegal. The results of the study found that Tegal Cepak puppet experienced changes in characterization, shape dimensions, especially in proportion, the size changed from large to smaller and the duration of the performance was shorter. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide scientific contributions about changes in Tegal Cepak puppet, can also be a reference for academics and practitioners, and as a preservation effort through documentation of Tegal Cepak puppet as an important part of the cultural heritage of Tegal City in particular and Indonesia in general.

**Keywords:** Evolution, Traditional Performing Arts, Contemporary Transformation, Wayang Cepak Tegal

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesian traditional performing arts, including Wayang Cepak Tegal, have invaluable historical, cultural and artistic values. Wayang Cepak Tegal is one of the unique performing art forms originating from Tegal, Central Java. Wayang Cepak Tegal has become an integral part of the local community's life, not only as entertainment, but also as a symbol of their cultural identity. However, in a modern era filled with social change, technology, and

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globalization, traditional performing arts such as Wayang Cepak Tegal face serious challenges in maintaining their sustainability.

Although Tegal's Wayang Cepak has high cultural value, research specifically exploring the changes and role of this performing art is limited. The following are some studies with research objects related to puppets found. The first study entitled "Comparative Study of Wayang Golek Purwa Typical of Kuningan and Sumedang West Java" used semiotic analysis, a 2010 study by Ijah Hadijah. This research revealed the process of changing the visual code in the wayang golek purwa typical of Sumedang. The second study was entitled "Semiotic Study of Tegal Wayang Cepak Text: Dissecting the Linguistic Characteristics of Tegal Wayang Cepak Text" by Nining Sumarni. This study discusses the linguistic characteristics and structure of Tegal wayang cepak text, and how it affects the way puppeteers bring puppet characters to life in performance. The research only refers to the changes in the language and text structure of Wayang Cepak Tegal. Based on previous research, there has been no research that discusses changes in terms of the dimensions of the puppet size and changes in the duration of the performance. Based on this, the urgency of the research is that technological advances affect changes in Tegal Wayang Cepak both in terms of characterization, dimensions of the size of the form and the duration of the performance.

Regarding changes in characterization, the dimensions of the puppet form and the duration of the performance, the role of a puppeteer is also very important in influencing changes in Tegal Cepak Puppetry through the way it is performed. The use of ideas, especially through visuals, affects the changes in the performance of Wayang Cepak Tegal. As the next generation, the puppeteers are required to keep up with the times. Various things need to be done so that Wayang Cepak Tegal can keep up with technological developments and cultural changes, so that puppet shows can survive, so that contemporary transformations occur in Tegal Wayang Cepak performances, especially in terms of the use of technology and adaptation to these changes that affect the duration of performance time. The purpose of the study was to examine the changes in Wayang Cepak Tegal from a historical perspective and see the contemporary transformation that occurred in the performing arts, this was done through identifying various changes in characterization, dimensions of form, and the duration of the Tegal Wayang Cepak performance time.

## METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with data collection through interviews, observation, and literature to obtain in-depth and supportive data in understanding changes in form, and the duration of performance time due to changes in technology and contemporary culture. The cepak tegal puppets studied were the 1940, 1960 and 1970 puppets and the 2023 puppets. The

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puppets were identified for changes in the dimensions or size of their shapes, and changes in the duration of their performance time.

Data obtained from literature such as historical documents, and other relevant sources to support data analysis and interpretation. Data obtained from interviews are used to extract information from the sources, namely the puppeteers and community leaders, to explore information about the history, development, cultural values related to wayang cepak tegal. data obtained through observation is used to directly observe the process of performing wayang cepak tegal.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Changes in Characterization of Tegal Cepak Puppet

Wayang Cepak Tegal is a traditional performing art form rich in cultural and historical values and identified as an integral part of the life of the people of Tegal, Central Java. It has become a symbol of local cultural identity and heritage valued by the local community. Wayang Cepak Tegal offers stories that are rich with moral and ethical messages that become the foundation of Tegal people's lives.



Figure 1 Wayang Cepak Tegal with the Character of the President of the Republic of Indonesia

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/wayanggolektumaritiss/photos/pb.100064035570702.-2207520000/7915224891884598/?type=3> Accessed on November 21, 2023

Changes in Wayang Cepak Tegal over time have revealed changes in the characters, forms, performance techniques and stories used in Wayang Cepak Tegal performances from 1940, 1960 and 1970. The presence of local cultural influences, such as Central Javanese culture, as well as external influences such as Chinese and Arabic culture, has influenced changes in this performing art. In the face of technological developments and cultural changes, Wayang

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Cepak Tegal also experienced adaptations and innovations to remain attractive to today's society. It can be found in several Wayang Cepak performances that often feature characters that are out of the puppetry system such as political figures, domestic and foreign artists and even cartoon characters or regional figures. The selection of these characters is intended to strengthen the story that will be displayed. One of the famous puppeteers in Tegal, Ki Enthus Sosmono, in every puppet show always presents a play or tells a different story.



Figure 2. Ki Enthus Susmono with one of the community and his Wayang Cepak Tegal character

Source: <https://jateng.tribunnews.com/2018/05/14/inilah-profil-dan-karya-karya-bupati-tegal-petahana-sekaligus-dalang-kondang-ki-enthus-susmono>



Figure 2 Ki Enthus Susmono with Luphit (left) and Slenteng (right)

Source: <https://twitter.com/abnugrohoo/status/996026595583250432> Accessed on Juli 01, 2023

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Ki Enthus Susmono uses a variety of plays that fall into four categories: lakon pakem, lakon carangan, lakon composition, and lakon esai in his performances. The story in lakon Pakem is entirely derived from wayang literature, while only the outline is derived from wayang literature in lakon carangan. Although the complete composed plays are loose, the composed plays are not based on wayang stories but utilize appropriate locations in the wayang library so that the stories can incorporate new characters and be adapted to them. In his book "Types of Wayang: its origin, philosophy and future", Sri Mulyono (1982) says that wayang is more than just an art. It also has values such as education and information, science, and the importance of symbolic nature and conscience. In his book, it is mentioned that the characterization of wayang characters is a reflection of the individual.

## Changes in the Shape of Tegal Wayang Cepak

Wayang Cepak Tegal is not only a form of performing art, but also has an important role in shaping the cultural identity of the Tegal community. In this regard, Kuncoro (2020) stated that the characters of Lupit and Slenteng puppets made by Ki Enthus Susmono had represented the diversity of society in the city and regency of Tegal, it could be seen from the visualization that had been depicted in the puppets and the symbols presented as well. Wayang Cepak Tegal performances became an effective medium in conveying cultural values, traditions, and history to the younger generation. Wayang Cepak Tegal also became an integral part of traditional ceremonies, religious celebrations and other cultural commemorations in Tegal. In this context, it became a symbol of pride and social cohesion for the local community.

In the data analysis, it was found that Wayang Cepak Tegal experienced changes in form and time duration. The influence of local and outside cultures can be seen in the changes of this performance art. For example, the adoption of Chinese and Arabic cultural elements in the Tegal Wayang Cepak performance. However, despite the changes, the distinctiveness and identity of Wayang Cepak Tegal is still maintained.

In its development, wayang cepak tegal has undergone several changes based on the period of time that has passed, especially the wayang cepak (gagrak) tegal created by Ki Enthus Susmono. One of the changes that occurred was in the form, especially the size dimension of the tegal cepak puppet initiated by Ki Enthus Susmono. According to the narrative of Ki Haryo Enthus Susmono, the son of Enthus Susmono, the cepak tegal puppets have undergone at least two changes in form, in this case the change in the size of the puppets from what used to be small to larger, from the standard size of 60 cm in height, to around 80 cm in size. This is due to the puppet show which previously used small size puppets because the audience was still close to the puppeteer, then the cepak puppet show turned out to get more and more audiences and enthusiasts who made the audience watch from a distance so that Ki Enthus had the idea to change the size of the cepak tegal puppets to be bigger.





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Figure 3 Jamaludin figure of Wayang Cepak Tegal from the center in the 1940s, the right in the 60s and the left in the 70s

Source: Private Documentation Accessed on June 05, 2023

But the problem arises when the altered puppets become heavier than the previous puppets. The solution to this problem is the advancement of technology where puppet shows can be broadcast live via camera to a screen with the help of projections.


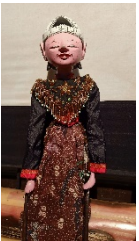
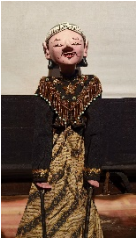
The shape changes in Tegal Cepak puppets were analyzed to obtain changes in the size of the puppets. The puppets were analyzed based on the period of the year they were used, namely puppets from 1940, 1960 and 1970. The results of the analysis can be seen in Table 1.

### Changes of Duration of Tegal Wayang Cepak Performance

Tegal Wayang Cepak performance symbolizes the richness of local culture and history. In addition, Wayang Cepak Tegal functions as a medium for conveying moral values, ethics, and traditions that are valued by the Tegal community. The research participants considered Wayang Cepak Tegal as a cultural heritage that must be preserved and promoted to the younger generation. However, there are technological advances that affect cultural change, through the contemporary era, in general, traditional puppet shows last one night only, with the existence of Wayang Cepak Tegal which has changed due to adaptation to changing times, becoming a contemporary puppet show that can shorten the time according to the wishes of the audience or according to the needs of the puppeteer. The choice of type and form of performance is adjusted to the size of the stage and the character of the audience. The modified short duration is usually presented to young audiences, urban students, students in schools, campuses, art centers, and events such as holidays and celebrations, these changes are adjusted to the segmentation of today's society (see Table 2).

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**Table 1. Changes in the form of Tegal Cepak Puppet and its impact**

Period	Changes	The Cause	Visual
1940	The beginning of wayang cepak is a small puppet with a size of 60 cm high and 15 cm wide	The audience who is still close to the puppeteer	
1960	The shape is made bigger with a height of 80 cm and a width of 20 cm.	An increasingly large audience and enthusiasts who make the audience willing to watch from a distance	
1970	A shape in between the two previous shapes with a height of 65-70 cm and a width of 15 cm.	In this earlier form, puppetry became increasingly strenuous for puppeteers and technological advances meant that puppet shows could be broadcast live via camera onto a screen with the help of projection.	

Ki Enthus Susmono who was born on June 21, 1966 in Tegal is one of the puppeteers who is well known in public puppet shows. His work in the world of puppetry has been recognized both locally and abroad. He pioneered the existence of wayang santri, which is a more economical wayang in terms of characters, performances, time duration and stories. The average puppet supporting community is under 40 years old. And they are generally fond of contemporary wayang performances or classic with developments. They are also able to appreciate various styles. As a result, the duration of wayang performances, which used to last all night and were considered tedious, has been shortened to make them more appealing to today's young audiences. With a little modern touch, the impression of uninteresting puppets played all night becomes interesting. With all the changes in Tegal wayang golek cepak is actually very easy to insert stories or Islamic preaching or other themes, because in each scene in the wayang cepak performance is easy to be decapitated, usually in addition to Islamic preaching sometimes Tegal wayang cepak performances are inserted with musical performances such as campur sari, comedy

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monologues and even contemporary songs, this proves that Tegal Wayang Cepak has a significant role in shaping and strengthening the cultural identity of the Tegal community.

**Table 2: Changes in the duration of Tegal Cepak Puppet Show and its impact**

Period	Duration	Description	Impact
1940 - 1970	All night (from 7pm to 4am)	Wayang cepak tegal performances in the past usually lasted for 1-2 nights, starting from the afternoon until the morning. This is because wayang cepak tegal performances in the past were a means of entertainment and education for the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The content of the show is more in-depth and comprehensive.</li><li>- The artistic aspects are more complex and rich.</li><li>- Performances are more meaningful and heartfelt.</li></ul>
Now (2023)	3-4 hours (from 7pm to 12pm)	The duration of wayang cepak tegal performances today generally lasts for 3-4 hours, starting from the afternoon until the evening. This is because today's wayang cepak tegal performances are more often used as a means of promotion and tourism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The content of the show is shorter and more concise.</li><li>- Artistic aspects are simpler and more practical.</li><li>- Performances are more accessible and enjoyable to a wider audience.</li></ul>



Figure 4 Performance of Wayang Santri by Ki Haryo Enthus Susmono

Source: <https://jateng.inews.id/berita/wayang-santri-jadi-tontonan-dan-tuntunan/2>

Accessed on Juli 13, 2023



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## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion that has been carried out, the following research results are obtained:

Wayang Cepak Tegal experienced changes in characterization, there were additional characters taken from today's life, such as presidents, celebrities and other figures. this was done to make the storytelling more interesting and relevant to contemporary culture today. Wayang Cepak Tegal underwent changes in form from 1940, 1960 and 1970s, especially in the size dimension, from 60 cm to 80 cm. The change was caused by the increase in audiences at that time so that the puppeteers increased the size to be larger to remain visible to the audience. Wayang Cepak Tegal changed the duration of the performance from one full night to three to four hours. This is so that people with teenage age can still see the Tegal Cepak puppet show.

These changes are a sign that Wayang Cepak Tegal has a significant role in shaping and strengthening the cultural identity of Tegal society today. Today's Wayang Cepak Tegal is a symbol of the changing times, a cultural treasure that conveys moral values, ethics, and traditions that are still valued by the Tegal community. The preservation of Wayang Cepak Tegal faces challenges, including changes in the interest of the younger generation, shifts in cultural values, the influence of modern media, so that these changes are preservation strategies that need to be developed to maintain the sustainability of Wayang Cepak Tegal performance art. It is hoped that the results of this research can provide a scientific contribution to the field of design and its impact on traditional arts and local culture of Indonesia.

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