

# Kawi's creativity of dalang



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## The Roles of Dalang

The primary objective of this article is to examine *Kawi*'s creativity of *Dalang* (puppet master) while performing in the *wayang kulit* theatre found in Bali. One would realize that the author has overlooked at the creativity and the improvisation of the mentioned art. Consequently, it would be essentially necessary to unravel the prevailing perception about the creativity and improvisation of this art especially by examining the creativity, which is found in the puppet genre, *wayang*. From the story, "*The Origin of Kala*" dalang performs multiple roles such as a narrator, a puppeteer, priest, a shadow master, a playmaker, and an artistic director (Sunarya and Harja 44). Therefore, Dalang makes the story interesting by enhancing creativity and improvisations to ensure that he performs all the roles.

Kawi Dalang is an element of creativity in the story and it signifies the creativity (Kawi) of the puppet master (Dalang). Therefore, apart from being significant in perpetuating genre, Kawi dalang also makes the production to have distinct and unique features. As a result, the story would be interesting even when it is performed repeatedly over a given time. According to kawi dalang, a performance of the same story should be changing depending on the place, time and circumstances ( *Desa, Kala, Patra* ) (Sunarya and Harja 38). In my opinion, I support dalang's belief that such an element is not only interesting but also challenging since it would require an automatic response to the changing environmental conditions for performance. Consequently, kawi dalang refers to a term used in the traditional theatre of Balinese to signify dalang's creativity and improvisation in the theatre performance. Kawi defines two distinct elements, the name of a particular

language and an action of aesthetic creation. According to the action of aesthetic action, Kawi refers to creation, innovation, modification, or improvisation.

On the other hand, Kawi could also be defined as the old-Javanese-based language, which was developed and used traditionally by the court poets ( *Pangawi* ). The court poets are often remembered for having translated and transformed the Sanskrit version of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* into *kakawin* , the new Javanese version. *Kakawin* is the plural of *kawi* . However, one would realize that dalang do not necessarily understand the entire meaning of the entire concept that they do recite in the Sanskrit language during the performance. However, dalang can use both Kawi language and vernacular language when performing (Sunarya and Harja 57). On the other hand, one would realize that Kawi primarily refers to arts of creation and improvisations of the dalang but not necessarily utilized as a name of the language. The anciently sacred treatise ( *Darma Pawayangan* ) argues that the dalang can say anything that one would wish to say. This includes even the art of inventing a new interpretation of a new name or term. For instance, a dalang could argue that “ *Supraba* ” is an acronym of the term “ *super-beautiful-angel* ” despite the fact that she could be just one of the various known beautiful angels found in the myths.

Dalang has several and distinct functions to perform. As a priest, Dalang is responsible for the creation of a wayang performance and the holy water of the region. He uses a white screen and an oil lamp so that he could cast the shadows of wayang puppets. For example, through the story, we are introduced to a woman who had come with a glass of water in the

Sundanese area of the west Java. Even though I expected the transubstantiation of the mentioned wooden puppet into the identified character in the play as it had been happening before, we are just introduced to a murmuring of a sick child. When the story unfolds, we observe dalang seeming to be blowing on the water and the woman eventually leaves off with the glass in her hand. When dalang was asked about the incidence, he said that he had prepared the water for the child to drink and get cured. Therefore, performing the role of a priest is significant because it shows the ability of Dalang to improvise and invent a procedure of curing the child in away that looks different from the normal perspectives.

In conclusion, Dalang performs several functions in the play, “ *The Origin of Kala* .” The first function is that as an artist, dalang performs the role of a puppeteer, a narrator, and a shadow master. in the second instance, dalang is portrayed as the playmaker and an artistic director of the performance. In the third case, he acts in the context of ritualistic performance as the priest of the ritual. All these examples explicitly show that the role of dalang is significantly changing depending on the genre or circumstance. During the dance-drama ( *sendratari* ), dalang acts as the narrator, who renders all the dialogues and narration in the form of songs and spoken lines (Sunarya and Harja 48). On the other hand, during the ritualistic performance such as the *wayang lemah* , where the offerings were made to gods, dalang is tasked with the role of an artist and a priest. During the presentation in the popular shadow theatre ( *wayang peteng* ), where the white screen and an oil lamp are employed to cast the shadows of flat puppets, we observe dalang performing all the duties of the puppeteer, the narrator, shadow-master,

artistic director, priest, and a playmaker. Therefore, these examples are illustrations that dalang have various roles to perform in the story of “ *The Origin of Kala* ”. On the other hand, the various roles that essentially shapes the story in order to merit the prevailing convention of the genre (Sunarya and Harja 47). He has employed various techniques to construct the play in terms of spotting/locating, combining, and transposing. This helps the genre to acquire a plot that satisfies the dramatical and spiritual requirements thus; facilitating the discussion of the literary sources, the passages originating from the epics, motifs, and excerpting the plays. These examples are explicit explanation of creativity and improvisations of Dalang to make the story interesting and fascinating.

## Work Cited

- Sunarya, Abah, and Gamelan G. Harja. “ The Origin of Kala: A Sundanese Wayang Golek Purwa Play.” vol. 18, 1 Nov. 2001, pp. 1-58, doi. org/10. 1353/atj. 2001. 0002.