International Journal of Society Reviews (INJOSER) https://injoqast.net/index.php/INJOSER
Vol. 4 No. 3 (2026), pages: 78~90 e-ISSN: 3030-802X

SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATIONS IN RUWATAN PUPPETRY: A CASE STUDY OF KI MUHYAD ADI CARITA PREPARATORY INCANTATIONS

Muhammad Aulia Yusron
Bandung Institute of Arts and Cultures
Corespondensi author email: aul.yusron@gmail.com

Harits Aliansyah Pratama
Mayameru

Claire Ridha Budiana
Mayameru

Febrian Kamal Rosyadi
Mayameru

Muhammad Rafi
Mayameru

Abstract

This study explores the dynamics of discursive and presentational symbols within the context of the preparatory incantation recited during a Wayang Kulit Ruwat (Purifying Shadow Puppetry) ritual, as performed by Ki Muhyad Adi Carita. In the modern society, incantation within puppetry are frequently misunderstood due to their archaic language and their association with mystical or esoteric practices. Employing a qualitative ethnographic approach within a single-case study design, data were gathered through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Three specific mantras were analyzed using indicators established prior to the analysis. The results indicate that these mantras encompass both a discursive layer (the implicit meanings within the text) and a presentational layer (the manner of recitation, accompanying objects, and the context of the ritual actions). However, the boundaries between these two layers are not rigid; spiritual expression manifests presentationally within the text itself and extends across the entire preparatory process, reaching beyond the confines of the performance stage. The verses within these mantras do not merely transmit meaning; they serve as a bridge connecting the profane and the sacred within the ritual.

Keywords: discursive symbols, presentational symbols, incantation, ruwatan, puppetry.

INTRODUCTION

The art of *pedalangan* (puppetry) is an intangible cultural heritage, complex in its history, meanings, symbols, and philosophical values. Nowadays, *pedalangan* and/or *pewayangan* (puppetry) also transforms into a melting pot where Javanese traditions,

Islamic teachings, and global influences converge (Sumarsam, 2018). One of the many variations of javanese traditional puppetry is Wayang Ruwat (purification by puppetry), which serves not as entertainment, but as a ritual meant to purify one's soul through a strictly specified performance of puppetry. This spesific type of *pewayangan* typically performed as a mean to safe individuals identified as *sukerta*, those whose birth circumstances are considered "flawed", or has conducted wrongdoings, which believed to be potentially calamitous if left unaddressed, according to the perspective of Javanese spiritual tradition. In Wayang Ruwatan rituals, The *dalang* (puppeteer) presents a series of *wayang* (puppet) characters who, within their lores, have undergone and believed to be able to perform a *ruwatan* (purification ritual). The dalang would then cite a series of incantations believed to have the power to safe those individuals from the threat of Bathara Kala; these incantations contain moral messages open to interpretation (Budhi et al., 2023).

In Javanese society, a *mantra* (incantation) is viewed as an oral utterance believed to possess magical power, employed within the context of a ritual (Hartanto, 2022). In the tradition of *pedalangan*, *mantras* have been recited even from the moment a dalang has decided to perform a puppetry; they serve various purposes, such as offering prayers to the divine beings, providing personal protection, and neutralizing disturbances prior to, during, and after the performance has been done. As described in the formulation which could also be found within the study of the *lontar* (palm-leaf manuscript) called *Dharma Pewayangan* from Bali (Dwitayasa, 2020), its application to Javanese *dalang* must also be approached with caution. In the performance cathegorized as *Ruwatan Murwakala*, the magical efficacy of the *dalang* is cultivated through the recitation of *mantra* and the concept of *kempel* (Efendi & Deswijaya, 2020, as cited in Budhi et al., 2023), which further explain that a *mantra* is not merely a sequence of words; it is an utterance whose meaning is derived both from its textual content and from the manner, timing, and context of its recitation.

Despite this centrality, the incantations of puppetry are frequently misunderstood in modern society. Their archaic language and their association with mystical practice lead them either to be dismissed as unintelligible formulas or, conversely, to be treated as texts that can be fully recovered once they are translated. Both views overlook the fact that a *dalang* does not merely say a *mantra*: he recites it at a particular moment, in a particular manner, with particular objects at hand. Translating the words alone also risks fixing a single reading on an utterance whose meaning is, in practice, enacted anew with each recitation. The problem is sharpest for preparatory incantations, which are recited before the performance begins, while the *dalang* dresses, takes up his *keris*, and approaches the stage, and which, as far as our review shows, receive less attention than the rites of the performance itself. What is at stake is therefore not only how to translate such texts, but how to explain in

analytically defensible terms how a text and its enactment together carry meaning, and how the practitioner's own account bears on that explanation.

Existing scholarship offers several entry points into this problem. Hartanto approaches the language of Javanese *mantra* through its structure and function in society (Hartanto, 2022), and Dwitayasa examines the incantations recorded in the Balinese *Dharma Pewayangan* as a textual source for puppeteers (Dwitayasa, 2020). Studies of *Ruwatan Murwakala* shift attention to the ritual: Efendi and Deswijaya explain how *kempel* helps establish the magical power of the *dalang ruwat* through recitation (Efendi & Deswijaya, 2020, as cited in Budhi et al., 2023), while Budhi et al. read the symbolism of the ritual as a vehicle of moral education (Budhi et al., 2023). Together these works show that *mantra* are structured, functional, efficacious, and morally meaningful. They tend, however, to locate meaning either in the text or in the ritual as a whole, which leaves the relation between the two, and the practitioner's own account of that relation, comparatively unexplored.

Ki Muhyad Adi Carita, a senior *dalang* from Magelang, sees the links between the recitation of *mantra* to the keenly observed natural signs in his daily life as an efforts to also seek the blessings of the divine, and give respect and ask for help to everything around him, which he consider them all as living beings, that could possibly help him to safeguard the performance from unpredictable disturbances. This study examines strictly the preparatory incantations he recited, which incorporate a distinct language, cadence, and set of ritual actions, form which, poses two questions: (1) how can discursive and presentational elements within Ki Muhyad's *Wayang Ruwatan* preparatory incantations be dynamically identified; and (2) at what point does the boundary between the two become blurred? The conceptual pairing of "discursive symbols" and "presentational symbols" originates from the philosophy of symbolism developed by Susanne Langer (1942; 2006), which then subsequently adapted to a framework for the study of art communication in Indonesia (Jaeni et al., 2025) and has been utilized to analyze ritual arts in Cirebon (Trihandono Putra, 2019).

Between this body of work and the framework outlined above lies a gap. To the best of our search, the studies of *mantra* reviewed here do not draw on the discursive–presentational distinction, while the applications of that distinction to ritual arts have not addressed a puppeteer's preparatory incantations at the level of the utterance itself. Nor have they treated the practitioner's explanations as the data that decide where a text ends and its performance begins. Without such data, the claim that a *mantra* is more than its words remains an assertion rather than something demonstrated. Filling this gap matters beyond theory. When an intangible heritage practice is documented only through the transcription of its words, the layers of meaning carried by voice, breath, objects, and setting are lost, and with them the grounds on which the practice is understood by those who perform it.

Accordingly, this study has three objectives: first, to identify the discursive and presentational elements of the three preparatory incantations recited by Ki Muhyad Adi Carita, using indicators defined before the analysis; second, to examine, through the informant's own explanations, the points at which the two kinds of symbols cannot be separated; and third, to consider what this case shows about the usefulness and limits of Langer's distinction for reading *mantra* in puppetry. The study contributes a documented reading of a little-studied group of incantations and a procedure that keeps the informant's explanations distinct from the researchers' interpretations. The sections that follow set out the method, analyze the three incantations, and conclude with recommendations for further research.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with an ethnographic approach within a single-case study design, featuring Ki Muhyad Adi Carita as the primary informant. The ethnographic approach was selected due to its focus on the meanings and functions of *mantras* within the Javanese cultural and spiritual context embraced by Ki Muhyad. The findings of this study are not intended for generalization. Data were collected using three techniques. First, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted to explore the meanings, origins, functions, and recitation methods of the mantras—including Ki Muhyad's understanding of their symbolic significance and their role in pacing the performance. These interviews spanned 9 sessions, coinciding with the preparations for a *Wayang Ruwatan* ritual conducted at his *padepokan*, Padepokan Kajar Sono, in 2025. Second, participant observation was carried out regarding the recitation, performative expressions, and ritual context during three *Wayang Ruwatan* performances preparatories held between April and July 2025. Third, documentation—consisting of audio and video recordings of the interviews and performances, and field notes—was utilized for comparative analysis.

The scope is limited to preparatory mantras—specifically, three mantras recited from the moment Ki Muhyad began dressing for the performance until the *gunungan* (a specialized, mountain-shaped puppet) is first lifted and then removed from its stand, signaling the beginning of the *Ruwatan* ritual. This limitation serves to define the study's focus while also acting as a catalyst for further research by the author or other scholars. The analysis was conducted in four stages: transcription and translation; identification of text units, intended entities, and speech acts (discursive indicators); cross-referencing with field notes and recordings to identify presentative indicators; and the attribution of each interpretation to its source—whether derived from the informant's explanations or the researcher's own interpretations (with the later being subject to confirmation by the informant).

Furthermore, Langer (1942) distinguishes between discursive symbols—whose meanings are structured sequentially from units that can be broken down and

paraphrased, such as language—and presentational symbols—whose meanings are grasped holistically, all at once, and cannot be decomposed into discrete units. In the study of performing arts in Indonesia, this distinction has been applied with varying operationalizations. Trihandono Putra (2019), for instance, interprets the sequential stages within the *Sintren* ritual as discursive layers. This study employs a narrower definition, centered on the text of the *mantra*, utilizing the indicators presented in Table 1, which were formulated prior to the analysis.

Table 1. Indicators of Analysis

Dimensions	Indicators	Data Sources
Discursive	(a) textual units that can be paraphrased; (b) entities being addressed or referred to; (c) identifiable speech acts (requests, refusals, compliments)	Transcripts, translations, informant explanations
Presentational	(a) parameters of delivery (tone, tempo, stress, repetition); (b) accompanying objects and actions (*keris, stagen*, makeup, attire); (c) time and setting of the performance; (d) textual elements that cannot be paraphrased (exclamations, set formulas)	Audio-video recordings, field notes of partisipatory observation, interviews

Source: Author's Archives

The interpretation of the *mantra* texts in this study is inherently interpretive. Consequently, the analysis relies on a "thick description" of the context (Geertz, 1973) and treats translations as products of interpretation that remain open to revision (Sumaryono, 1993). Since *mantra* are performed within a ritual framework—and given that rituals and performances can be understood as existing along a single continuum (Turner, 1982)—the context of the ritual practice is treated as data rather than mere background. This framework has inherent limitations that must be acknowledged from the outset. The verbal–nonverbal dichotomy is, by its very formulation, comprehensive; therefore, a single case study cannot "prove" or refute it. The contribution offered here is descriptive: it demonstrates how the framework functions in a specific instance and identifies where it reaches its limits.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The three incantations are discussed below in table 2, tables 3, and table 4—referred to as M1, M2, and M3 based on the timing of their recitation: M1 was cited when he applied his makeup and done his attire before departing for the venue; M2 was cited when Ki Muhyad tucks the sacred *keris* into his *stagen* (waist sash); M3 was cited when he first steps onto the stage and takes his position behind the screen and puppet stand;

Table 2. M1 Transcription and Translations

Mantra	Transcription	Translation
M1	*Hong Sang Hyang Suksma Purba Jatining Tunggal. Sang Hyang Nurcahyo urubing damar mrabawani sabuwana. Teka kadep teka lerep, teka welas, teko asih, wong saturab padha ndedulu marang badan sariraku.*	*Hong*, Sang Hyang Suksma Purba—the primordial essence that serves as the core of unity. Sang Hyang Nurcahyo—the radiant light that illuminates the entire world. May devotion and tranquility arrive; may compassion and affection arrive; may all who behold me look upon my very being

Source: Author's Archives

The text mentions two titles—Sang Hyang Suksma Purba and Sang Hyang Nurcahyo—and invokes love, while also expressing a desire for others to look upon both the *dalang*'s physical appearance and presence aura. The glosses "The Primordial Origin" and "The Great Illuminator" are interpretations whose sources remain unspecified. In the original manuscript, this mantra is interpreted as a plea for these entitled powers to "become one" (*menunggal*) with the *dalang*. The term itself does not appear explicitly in the text; though this reading has been confirmed by the explanation provided by Ki Muhyad in later interviews.

From the perspective of discursive symbols, this mantra illustrates how the *dalang*'s mandatory connection to the spiritual dimension is expressed through its linguistic structure. This is manifested in expressions that acknowledge the power of universal elements—referred to by specific titles as a gesture of respect. In the phrase "*Teka kadep teka lerep, teka welas, teko asih, wong saturab padha ndedulu marang badan sariraku*", Ki Muhyad expresses his aspiration for these powers to imbue him

with a radiant presence, making him a figure worthy of being gazed upon by the masses. While in the perspective of presentational symbols, according to records, the mantra is recited in a low, subdued tone with deep, contemplative focus while the *dalang* applies makeup and dons his attire before the performance. This manner of citement, with the low tone was interpreted as an expression of humility, and an awareness that one possesses no power without the assistance of others. This interpretation has been confirmed by Ki Muhyad.

Table 3. M2 Transcription and Translations

Mantra	Transcription	Translation
M2	*Om awignan astu sing lelembut pedhanyangan sira kang kekiter kang semara bumi, bujang babo bebuyutan. Hyang Gusti rewang-rewangana aku, katekana sasedyaku, katurutna sakarepku. Marang aku teka demen, teka asih, asih saking kersane Gusti, kawulo Gusti, kawulo Gusti, kawulo Gusti.*	*Om,* I hope there are no obstacles and what is hoped will be success. O God, and the ancestral spirits roaming this earth, help me, make my intentions come true, follow my will. Come to me with compassion and love, the love of God's will. God within, God within, God within.

Source: Author's Archives

Discursively, the text can be broken down into three speech acts: the evasion of obstacles and a plea for success; a request for assistance from the Divine (Hyang Gusti) and the ancestors present at the ritual site to ensure the *dalang*'s (puppeteer's) intentions and will are fulfilled; and a prayer that the *dalang* be granted favor, contingent upon the Divine will. The translation "God within" serves as an interpretation—further clarified by Ki Muhyad—functioning as a reminder that the Divine, whose aid is sought, already and always resides within each of us. By keeping this in mind, one is encouraged to remain mindful and to act in accordance with the Divine will; for the *dalang*'s own intentions are, in essence, the will of the Divine residing within them. Furthermore, the expression "God within" serves both as a declaration and a request for permission from the Divine—authorizing the *dalang* to act as the "God" who animates the *wayang* (puppets) throughout a performance, especially in the context of a *ruwatan* ritual.

In terms of presentational symbols—based on observational notes—emphatic stress is placed on the phrases *awignam astu, rewang-rewangana, demen*, and *asih*. This stress falls upon terms that, through discursive analysis, emerge as the core of the

supplication (seeking protection, assistance, and affection). The performative context—specifically the act of tucking a *keris* into his *stagen*—serves as a distinct presentational indicator. According to Ki Muhyad, the *keris* as a weapon also functions as a sign of an individual's social role. A *keris* smith (*empu*) is typically capable of tailoring the materials and forging techniques of a blade to suit its future bearer. Consequently, this mantra is recited in conjunction with the handling of a *keris*, which crafted specifically for a *dalang,* acts as a symbolic medium for expressing the *dalang's* awareness of his own identity and his responsibility upon this world.

Table 4. M3 Transcription and Translations

Mantra	Transcription	Translation
M3	*Sang Nagabumi sirahing bumi ya hu dhayang ing kene, rewang-rewangana aku. Aja pati-pati padha bubar sing padha bubar sing padha nonton yen durung wis nggonku dhalang..*	*O, guardians of the earth—hear me, o, the spirits present here—please assist me. Do not be in such a rush to depart; remain and watch until I, the puppeteer, have fulfilled my task.*

Source: Author's Archives

Rather than simply "enchanting the audience," this incantation is explicitly directed toward a power known as *Sang Nagabumi*—the "guardians" of the Earth—and the *dhayang*, or the ancestral spirits residing in the specific location where the ritual is taking place. According to Ki Muhyad, *Sang Nagabumi* and the *dhayang* encompass all entities—in any form—that inhabit a given territory: from those who first cleared the land, enabling a civilization to flourish, to all those who have continued to nurture it, allowing it to sustain its inhabitants generation after generation, right up to the moment the *dalang* recites the incantation. The primary speech act is a plea for assistance, followed by a request that the ritual proceed with due solemnity and remain undisturbed until the *dalang* has finished. This mantra is recited when Ki Muhyad ascends the stage and takes his seat behind the screen and the *****kayon***** (puppet prop). Closing his eyes and taking a deep breath, Ki Muhyad chants the mantra in a firm yet calm voice, his words unfolding slowly as he exhales. According to Ki Muhyad, this approach is intended to convey a clear message in a gentle manner, ensuring it is well-received without any sense of coercion.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Read through the indicators in Table 1, the three preparatory mantras prove legible as two distinct but cooperating layers of meaning. Discursively, each text names an addressee and performs an identifiable speech act: M1 addresses *Sang Hyang Suksma Purba* and *Sang Hyang Nurcahyo* and voices an aspiration to be received with compassion; M2 petitions *Hyang Gusti* and the ancestral spirits for help in fulfilling the *dalang*'s intentions; and M3 calls upon *Sang Nagabumi* and the *dhayang* to assist and to remain until the task is complete. Presentationally, each is anchored in a different bodily and material setting, namely makeup and attire, the *keris* tucked into the *stagen*, and the seat behind the screen and the *kayon*. This reading follows Langer's contrast between symbols whose meaning is built sequentially from units that can be paraphrased and symbols whose meaning is grasped as a whole,[1] a pairing that Indonesian scholarship has adapted to the study of performance.[2] The informant's explanations are what make these layers sufficiently clear rather than speculative: because each interpretation was attributed to its source and, where possible, confirmed by Ki Muhyad,[3] the analysis can separate what the texts say from what the practice means for the practitioner. Taken together, the three mantras also form a progression that moves from the self (M1, concerned with how the *dalang* appears), to the role (M2, concerned with who he is and what he is responsible for), to the place (M3, concerned with the territory in which he performs). This sequence is the authors' own analytical proposal, not an emic category.

In M1 the discursive layer is brief but dense. Two titles are followed by petitions for devotion, tranquility, compassion, and affection, and by the wish that others look upon the *dalang*'s very being, which Ki Muhyad later confirmed to mean that these powers "become one" (*menunggal*) with him, although the term never appears in the text.[4] The phrase *Jatining Tunggal* gives this reading a textual hook, but the hook becomes a reading only through the informant's exegesis, which shows that the paraphrasable content of the mantra is partly delivered by the practitioner's interpretive practice and not by the words alone. The presentational layer is equally explicit. The mantra is murmured in a low, subdued tone with deep concentration while the *dalang* applies makeup and puts on his attire, and Ki Muhyad confirmed that this manner expresses humility and the awareness that one has no power without the help of others.[5] The two layers do not simply run in parallel here. A request to be seen, if spoken assertively, would read as self-display, whereas the same words delivered quietly read as a plea to be made worthy of being seen. The delivery therefore conditions the speech act, and the speech act gives the low tone its object, so that

[1] Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942).
[2] Jaeni et al., *Komunikasi Seni: Membaca Simbol Diskursif dan Presentasional dalam Seni* (Bandung: Guriang Press, 2025).
[3] Ki Muhyad Adi Carita, interviews by Muhammad Aulia Yusron, Padepokan Kajar Sono, 2025.
[4] Ki Muhyad Adi Carita, interview by Muhammad Aulia Yusron, Padepokan Kajar Sono.
[5] Ki Muhyad Adi Carita, interview; Author, field notes.

humility is neither a separate message nor a mere accompaniment. The opening exclamation *Hong* points in the same direction: it has no referent that can be paraphrased, yet it opens the text and marks a threshold, and it belongs to a type of sacred syllable whose use in Old Javanese and Balinese traditions has been studied in relation to Tantric sources.[6]

M2 sharpens the problem, because its central formula is simultaneously a proposition and an act. Ki Muhyad explained that the phrase translated as "God within" reminds the speaker that the Divine whose help is sought already resides in every person, so that the *dalang*'s intentions are, in essence, the will of that Divine presence, and that the phrase is also a declaration and a request for permission authorizing the *dalang* to act as the "God" who animates the *wayang* during a *ruwatan*.[7] Read discursively, the line is a statement about immanence; read as speech, it resembles what J. L. Austin called a performative utterance, in which saying the words is part of doing the thing.[8] Its threefold repetition adds a presentational parameter that cannot be removed without changing the utterance, since the formula is not stated and then confirmed but enacted through recurrence, in line with Tambiah's argument that the efficacy of ritual language lies in its combination with ritual action rather than in semantic content alone.[9] The stress placed on *awignam astu*, *rewang-rewangana*, *demen*, and *asih* falls on the very terms that discursive analysis identified as the core of the petition for protection, assistance, and affection. The *keris* completes this circuit. For Ki Muhyad a *keris* is a weapon and also a sign of its bearer's social role, and an *empu* tailors the materials and forging techniques of a blade to suit the person who will carry it.[10] The blade made for a *dalang* thus materially anchors the personal will that the text asserts through *sasedyaku* and *sakarepku*. An object that has no grammar becomes discursively legible through the informant's account, and a text that is nominally verbal acquires its weight from the object at the waist.

M3 shows most clearly that the force of a speech act can be carried by the manner of speaking rather than by the words. Grammatically, the text contains imperatives, *rewang-rewangana aku* ("help me") and *aja pati-pati padha bubar* ("do not be in such a rush to depart"), that on paper could be read as commands directed at powerful beings. Ki Muhyad's account of his delivery shows otherwise: he closes his eyes, takes a deep breath, and speaks in a firm yet calm voice, letting the words unfold slowly with the exhale, so that a clear message is conveyed gently and is received

[6] Andrea Acri, *Dari Siwaisme Jawa ke Agama Hindu Bali: Kumpulan Tulisan Pilihan Andrea Acri* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2021); see also Judith Becker, *Gamelan Stories: Tantrism, Islam, and Aesthetics in Central Java* (Tempe: Arizona State University, Program for Southeast Asian Studies, 1993).
[7] Ki Muhyad Adi Carita, interview.
[8] J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).
[9] S. J. Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words," *Man* 3, no. 2 (1968).
[10] Ki Muhyad Adi Carita, interview.

without any sense of coercion.[11] In this instance the difference between a plea and an order is settled presentationally, through breath, tempo, and tone, even though it is the discursive layer that names the act. The addressees are likewise defined by the informant rather than by the lexicon alone. According to Ki Muhyad, *Sang Nagabumi* and the *dhayang* include all entities, in any form, that inhabit a territory, from those who first cleared the land so that a civilization could flourish to those who have nurtured it across generations up to the moment of recitation.[12] A paraphrase that reduced this address to "guardian spirits" would lose the temporal depth that makes the plea one of respect toward predecessors and not merely a request to a local power. This is what Geertz's call for thick description demands in practice: meanings are public, carried by symbols in social action, and they can be recovered only by attending to the context in which the practitioner situates them.[13]

Across the three mantras, then, the blurring of the boundary is systematic rather than incidental, and it runs in both directions. Discursive material functions presentationally when it consists of sacred exclamations (*Hong*, *Om*, *ya hu*), of the threefold repetition of *kawulo Gusti*, and of titles such as *Sang Hyang Nurcahyo* whose work is to evoke a luminous presence as much as to denote an entity. Presentational material becomes discursive when the informant converts a low tone, a breath, or a *keris* into explicit statements about humility, gentleness, and identity, so that what Langer treats as a form grasped whole is nonetheless articulated in words.[14] A third pattern is the dependence of illocutionary force on delivery, as seen in M3. These patterns suggest that, in this corpus, the two kinds of symbol are better treated as two aspects of one utterance than as separable inventories, which echoes Turner's observation that ritual symbols condense an ideological pole of norms and values with a sensory pole of feeling and desire.[15] The level of analysis also matters. Within a single mantra the discursive layer predominates, whereas across the preparatory sequence from dressing to arming to taking the stage each mantra becomes an element whose meaning accrues from its position in a larger whole, so that the process behaves presentationally, consistent with the view that ritual and performance lie along one continuum.[16] This scale effect may explain why operationalizations of Langer's pairing vary, since Trihandono Putra reads the sequential stages of *Sintren* as discursive whereas the present study locates the discursive in the paraphrasable text.[17] It also suggests a hypothesis, offered as the authors' own idea and not as a finding, that what Efendi and Deswijaya describe as *kempel* might be examined as the integration of

[11] Ki Muhyad Adi Carita, interview; Author, field notes.
[12] Ki Muhyad Adi Carita, interview.
[13] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
[14] Susanne K. Langer, *Problematika Seni*, trans. F. X. Widaryanto (Bandung: Sunan Ambu Press, 2006).
[15] Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967).
[16] Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982).
[17] A. Trihandono Putra, "Simbol Diskursif dan Presentasional Sintren," *Pantun: Jurnal Ilmiah Seni Budaya* 4, no. 2 (2019): 91–101.

word, breath, object, and place rather than as a property of the words alone.[18] Such a reading is compatible with the understanding of *mantra* as an oral utterance believed to possess magical power and used in ritual contexts,[19] and it gives the discursive–presentational framework a more precise task: to trace how, within a given utterance, meaning passes between what can be paraphrased and what can only be enacted.

CONCLUSION

In the preparatory incantation (mantra) version attributed to Ki Muhyad Adi Carita, the framework of discursive and presentational symbols can be identified through clear indicators: the text of the incantation provides a discursive layer—consisting of petitions and the entities being addressed—while the act of recitation, the accompanying ritual objects, and the context of the performance constitute the presentational layer. This study identifies two factors that necessitate a refinement of the initial claims. First, the boundaries between these two layers become blurred during sacred invocations and the repetition of specific formulas. Second, the intended targets of the preparatory incantation are the entities being invoked and the *dalang* himself, rather than the audience. Further data and analysis are required to explore the impact on the audience, the classification of the language used in the incantations, and a unified interpretation of specific texts.

REFERENCES

Acri, A. (2021). *Dari Siwaisme Jawa ke Agama Hindu Bali: Kumpulan tulisan pilihan Andrea Acri*. Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia.

Becker, J. (1993). *Gamelan stories: Tantrism, Islam, and aesthetics in Central Java*. Tempe: Arizona State University, Program for Southeast Asian Studies.

Budhi, L., Subiyantoro, S., Wahida, A., & Sularso. (2023). The role of symbolism in moral education: A study of the ruwat murwakala ritual. *Gelar: Jurnal Seni Budaya, 21*(1), 11–23. https://doi.org/10.33153/glr.v21i1.5072

Dwitayasa, I. M. (2020). Mantra dalam teks Dharma Pewayangan. *Sphatika: Jurnal Teologi, 9*(1). https://doi.org/10.25078/sp.v9i1.1597

Efendi, A., & Deswijaya, R. A. (2020). The concept of kempel in mantram reciting found in ruwatan murwakala. Dalam *BASA 2019: Proceedings of the Third International Seminar on Recent Language, Literature, and Local Culture Studies* (hlm. 368). https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.20-9-2019.2296886

Endraswara, S. (2018). *Mistik Kejawen: Sinkretisme, simbolisme, dan sufisme dalam budaya spiritual Jawa*. Yogyakarta: Narasi.

[18] A. Efendi and R. A. Deswijaya, "The Concept of Kempel in Mantram Reciting Found in Ruwatan Murwakala," in *BASA 2019: Proceedings of the Third International Seminar on Recent Language, Literature, and Local Culture Studies* (2020), 368, https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.20-9-2019.2296886, cited in L. Budhi et al., "The Role of Symbolism in Moral Education: A Study of the Ruwat Murwakala Ritual," *Gelar: Jurnal Seni Budaya* 21, no. 1 (2023): 11–23, https://doi.org/10.33153/glr.v21i1.5072.

[19] Doni Dwi Hartanto, "Struktur dan Fungsi Bahasa Mantra dalam Masyarakat Jawa," *Sutasoma* 11, no. 1 (2022).

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Hartanto, D. D. (2022). Struktur dan fungsi bahasa mantra dalam masyarakat Jawa. *Sutasoma: Jurnal Sastra Jawa, 11*(1).

Jaeni, dkk. (2025). *Komunikasi seni: Membaca simbol diskursif dan presentasional dalam seni*. Bandung: Guriang Press, Pascasarjana ISBI Bandung.

Koentjaraningrat. (1994). *Kebudayaan Jawa*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka.

Langer, S. K. (1942). *Philosophy in a new key: A study in the symbolism of reason, rite, and art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Langer, S. K. (2006). *Problematika seni* (F. X. Widaryanto, Penerj.). Bandung: Sunan Ambu Press.

Poerbatjaraka, & Hadidjaja, T. (1952). *Kepustakaan Djawa*. Djakarta/Amsterdam: Djambatan.

Sumarsam. (2018). *Memaknai wayang dan gamelan: Temu silang Jawa, Islam, dan global*. Yogyakarta: Gading.

Sumaryono, E. (1993). *Hermeneutik: Sebuah metode filsafat*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.

Trihandono Putra, A. (2019). Simbol diskursif dan presentasional Sintren. *Pantun: Jurnal Ilmiah Seni Budaya, 4*(2), 91–101.

Turner, V. (1982). *From ritual to theatre: The human seriousness of play*. New York: PAJ Publications.

Zoetmulder, P. J., & Robson, S. O. (1982). *Old Javanese-English dictionary*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.