

## The tale of 'Semar Mbangun Kahyangan': symbolic message in Javanese society

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**Abstract** The *Cembengan* ceremony is a *Slametan* tradition commonly practised by sugar factories before the milling season. This ritual is a prayer for high productivity and excellent safety performance in the workplace during the milling process. *Wayang* is then played as the highlight of the event with *Semar Mbangun Kahyangan* as one of the usually performed stories. This study seeks to answer this question: What are the traditional safety concepts staged in the *Slametan* tradition in the workplace? This study used a content analysis approach to identify, analyse, and categorise the recording data of a wayang performance with the story of *Semar Mbangun Kahyangan* performed by Ki Dalang Hadi Soegito. This study has found that besides human destiny had been written by God, the meaning of Safety can be pursued through a multidimensional harmony, known as *manunggaling kawula-Gusti* (vertical harmony), *silaturahmi* (horizontal harmony), the harmony among five knights of Pandawa as a symbol of the physical harmony of five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) and psychological-spiritual harmony. The second finding is that a safety attitude is fostered in line with human development, which is symbolised in *Wayang*'s storyline, first, on the *Pathet Enem* (infancy to adolescent) safety attitude generated by right-wrong consideration. Second, a safety attitude is an ethical decision within *Pathet Sanga* (early to middle adulthood). Last, at *Pathet Mayura* (late adulthood), a safety attitude is a spiritual achievement.

**Keywords:** *cultural communication; slametan; sugar mill; wayang; work safety*

### INTRODUCTION

The sugar consumption trend in Indonesia has increased positively (Sinuraya et al., 2023; Tegegn & Dhont, 2023). Sugiyanto (2007) reported that the increasing sugar consumption in Indonesia is linear with the increasing number of Indonesian populations. Unfortunately, adequate domestic production does not support the growth of sugar demand. Data published by FAO in Table 1 presents that since 1980, Indonesia's population has increased by 16.7% in each decade. Meanwhile, the growth in national sugar consumption needs to be increased by 25%. Even from 2010 to 2016 the percentage increase reached 56.5%. However, the increase in national demand cannot be balanced with the supply of domestic production, which can only supply 65%. The supply deficit is finally covered by imports, which continue to increase.

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The Ministry of Industry of the Republic of Indonesia reported that 62 sugar mills are currently operated in Indonesia to reach the target for domestic production. Fifty sugar mills belong to state companies, and 12 are private companies. Meanwhile, 64.5% of those sugar factories have been operated for over 100 years with old equipment—the number of employees is more than 1,000 in each factory with a low education background.

**Table 1.** National Sugar Demand Over the Decades

Year	Number of Population (in millions person)	National Sugar Consumption (in millions ton)	Supply (in millions ton)	
			Domestic Production	Import
1980	147.4	2.00	1.25	0.75
1990	179.3	2.38	2.08	0.30
2000	206.2	2.99	1.49	1.50
2010	237.6	3.54	2.29	1.25
2016	254.9	5.70	2.64	3.06

Source: Dachliani (2006)

In the history of Indonesia, the sugar mill was the initial industry in the Netherlands Indies emerging in the 1830s. It was mainly built on Java Island under the rule of the Dutch East Indies government (R. Knight, 2002). The Jatibarang sugar mill at Banyumas was built in 1842, the Gondang Winangoen sugar mill at Klaten region was built in 1860, and the Poerwodadi sugar mill was built in 1932 at Magetan are some of the sugar mills built in earlier. The rapid establishment of sugar mills in Java resulted in the Dutch East Indies, particularly the area of Java, becoming the second largest exporter of sugar in the world after Cuba. This started in the 1880s and reached its glory days in the 1930s (R. Knight, 2002). During this period, 179 sugar factories were operating and producing three million tons annually. Unfortunately, sugarcane exports declined due to the invention of sugar beet.

Although it operated since the 18th Century, the study of safety and health in the context of sugar mills in Indonesia still needs further development. One is the study of Irwanto (2013), which found that the factors of light and noise positively correlate to employees' ( $R=0.638$ ) performance at Gempolkrep Sugar Mill in Mojokerto. This study also described that the light level is below standard with 199 of 200 Lux, while the noise level exceeds 80 dB as the maximum standard. It reached 101 dB for 12 hours of work per day. Regarding health, the study by Lestari (1999) on the level of dust pollution in Madukismo Sugar Mill Yogyakarta showed that the Boiler Room has the highest level of dust pollution with 14,6 mg/m<sup>3</sup>. It might affect the high number of employees in that section who suffer from Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI), i.e., 16 out of 23 employees. Whereas Widiastuti (2004), in her evaluation of occupational Safety and health management in Djatiroto Sugar Mill Lumajang, used 12 elements in the occupational Safety and health management system and classified it into five functions, such planning, organising, implementation, controlling, and evaluation. The result showed that all its safety and health management functions could improve. Organising and evaluation are the two worst functions, with scores of 10 percent and 0 percent out of 100 percent. These poor conditions might have led to 52 accident cases at the Djatiroto Lumajang sugar mill in 2002-2003.

Besides performing the system of occupational safety and health as an obligation to fit with the local wisdom, the ritual of *Cembengan* or *Cembrengan* is also executed in most sugar mills in Java as a tradition initiated to attain safety and health during the production process. It took place even before Indonesia was constituted as a country. In her study, Wulandari (2009) had found that *Cembengan* is considered as a form of *Slametan* tradition and root of the belief and religion system among Javanese people. *Slametan* or *Slamet* is originally Javanese language that means safe, secure, trouble-free, peaceful, healthy, prosperous and full of blessings. The word *Slamet*, etymologically, originates from the Arabic word *Salamah* and characterises the word 'Islam' itself. *The company previously conducted a slametan tradition in the sugar mill to pray for safety and good production outcomes. Then, it grew into a folk festival among the community around the sugar mill. It indicated that religion has highly influenced the sugar mill industry, either in the form of ritual or artefacts (Hakim et al., 2023; Husein, 2023; Nilan & Wibawanto, 2023; Sodiqin & Umroh, 2023).*

According to the golden age of the sugar industry in Indonesia in the 1930s, there were more than 200 sugar mills. Most or 198 were located on the island of Java, especially Central Java, East Java and Yogyakarta. While outside Java there are only 12 sugar mills (R. Knight,

2002). *The Cembengan* ceremony is a tradition that is performed before the sugar mill carries out its production process. *The Slametan ceremony ended with a Wayang Kulit performance* as the highlight of the event. *Semar Mbangun Kahyangan*, *Petruk Dadi Ratu*, *Gareng Dadi Ratu*, and *Sri Mulih Pendawa* are common wayang stories played in the Cembengan tradition. These stories are classified as *Carangan* stories that were created through the creativity of Javanese poets and are different from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. *Carangan* stories are mostly produced by the assimilation process of Hinduism-Buddhism ritual with the values and culture of Islam. By Sunan Kalijaga, one of prominent Islamic missionaries in the island of Java in the 14th century, the *Carangan* stories then performed for the purpose of *dakwah* or preaching of Islam, and to educate the moral and philosophy of life to the society. In his study of comparative religion, Ismaya (2010) presented that *Wayang* experienced the process of acculturation in culture and religion, especially between Hinduism and Islam. In his study, Imron (2016) had found the effectiveness of shadow puppetry to disseminate the teachings of Islam and to elaborate the transformation of moral values of Islam. In 2003, UNESCO recognised *Wayang* as an Intangible Cultural Heritage and included it in the representative list in 2008 (UNESCO, 2008).

One of common story in *Cembengan* is *Semar Mbangun Kahyangan* or *Semar Builds Paradise* which told about *Semar* who intended to build a heaven for the virtue knights of *Pandawa*. For those purpose, *Semar* then invited the *Pandavas* to visit his place by bringing the three Amarta Kingdom heirlooms: the *Kalimasada* Scripture, the *Kalawelang* Spear, and the *Tunggul Naga* Royal Umbrella. Building a heaven symbolises an effort to elevate the soul of *Pandawa* to avoid the danger. Whereas the three royal heritages represent three virtues which required. *Kalimasada* holy book which has an acronym as *kalimah Sada* defined as symbol of *Syahadat* or confession of faith Ismaya (2010). Whereas, *Kalawelang* Spear has a symbol of the sharpness of hearts and senses, and *Tunggul Naga* royal umbrella is a symbol of the *Pandawa's* obligation to protect everyone.

On the Javanese puppet catalogue written by Susilo (2004), *Semar is defined* as a God who incarnated to be a human and assigned as *Panakawan*, together with his three children: *Gareng*, *Petruk* and *Bagong*. *Pana* means understanding, guarding and guiding, and *kawan* means friend or friendship. Thus, the main duty of *Panakawan* is to look after and guide the *Pandawa*, particularly *Arjuna* and his descendants. Randyo (2009) stated that the existence of *Panakawan* as humorous figures in shadow puppet performance can be optimised to build a rapport with the audience within a shadow puppet performance.

According to Khalil (2008), *Slametan is a religious ritual originally performed by indigenous cultures and later strongly influenced by Hinduism*. Suryaningsih (2012) mentioned that *Slametan* manifests the religiosity of the Javanese people, who believe that the welfare of life can only be achieved through a balance between: the internal-external world, and material - immaterial world. In the journey of Islamic preaching, *Slametan* has been adopted as part of Muslim rituals in Indonesia, especially by *Nahdlatul Ulama*. *Slametan* can also be done as a form of religious expression, both personal and community. At a personal level, *Slametan* rituals express feelings of joy, happiness, and even healing from feelings of distress and depression. While at the community level, *Slametan* aims to establish *silaturahmi* or friendship between community members (Supriyanto, 2023).

*Wayang* or shadow puppet as a form of Javanese culture has a lot of symbols and utilise to communicate many noble values, such as religious teaching (Sulistyo, 2023), Ecological Values (Arifah et al, 2024), humanity (Apriansah & Mulyana, 2024), values of education (Taiman et al., 2023), Social learning and identity, and leadership. Three symbols in *wayang* that are used as a reference in this paper are the plot or storyline within *wayang* performance, character of the figure, and the content of story. In addition to being a puppet performance structure, philosophically the plot also symbolises the stages of human life (Murtiyoso in Indriyanto et al., 2018; Wikandaru et al., 2018). The first phase is *Pathet Enem*. It is rooted in the word *Jinem* which means peaceful or restful and represents human life from birth to adolescence. The scene at *Pathet Enem* contains a lot of dialogue between figures, fewer battle scenes, and accompanied by a calm music rhythm. The second phase is called by *Pathet Sanga* which is characterised by a scene when a knight with his *Panakawan* comes to visit a priest to gain knowledge and wisdom. The next scene is the knight goes to battle against the three giants who are blocking his journey and win it. It symbolises the man who succeeds in controlling his lust. The final phase is *Pathet Mayura* which depicts the end of human life. The ultimate scene is a great war that was finally

won by the knight. It symbolises the man who has completed his life because he successfully achieved the purpose of his life (Fernando et al., 2024; Margaretha et al., 2024).

Widayat (2004) then criticised that the performance of shadow puppets seems monotonous and creates a distance with its audience. Monotonous criticism addressed to its storyline that has not changed until today. Meanwhile, the criticism toward the distance is emphasised on the royal intrigue as the centre of story and from the spiritual mystical side is less relevant to the belief system developed in society. The content of the story is considered far from the reality of people's lives also. Further, Widayat also recommended its solution, which is to find a story which fits with the realities of people's life particularly in the aspect of the structure of characterisation, plot and setting related to atmosphere. One of which is the optimisation of the existence of *Panakawan* figures, due to their existence being neutral and flexible. The *Panakawan* has the freedom to appear in various contexts of conversation, both in relation to the theme of the story or the performances within the storyline, as well as talking about things related to the story or beyond the context of the story. In the relationship with the audience, *Panakawan* has a freedom to talk in every social context that is relevant in society, whether related to the story or not at all. Thus, this is the privilege of the *Panakawan* because it can bridge the distance between the context of the shadow puppet world with the social context in society (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Figure of *Semar* is symbolised as the incarnation of God. His holy name is *Bethara Ismaya* who is the older brother of *Bethara Guru* or God *Guru* who is the king of Gods. Javanese society then viewed the figure of *Semar* as the form of *manunggaling kawula-gusti* (harmony among God and human) to create the balance and harmony in the world (Susilo, 2004, p. 155).

The figure of *Punakawan* is not found in the origin stories of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Figures of *punawakan* itself were created to represent the values of Islam. Herlyana (2013) in her study about *wayang* and the doctrine of Islamic values explained the representation of each name of *Panakawan* related to the values of Islam, particularly the name of *Semar*. From the standpoint of etymology, the name of *Semar* originated from the Arabic word of *Ismar* which means a peg and symbolism as a strengthening for the faltering. This is considered relevant with hadits: *Al Islaamu ismaruddun-yaa*, which means Islam becomes the amplifier for the safety of the world. Another study by Fikri (2016) had found that *Panakawan* characters has a relation with Islamic ethnic values which referred to the thought of Sunan Kalijaga as one of Islamic teaching missionaries in Java. The first is the character of *Semar*, who symbolises the value of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, or humans who create goodness. Second, *Gareng* was considered as the reflection of *Silaturahim* or the value of good friendship. Third, *Petruk* who reflected the values of *Tauhid* or man who leaves everything but God. And the last figure of *Panakawan* is *Bagong* as the reflection of *al-iman bi yaumul akhir* or the value of the everlasting life.

Rasmussen (1997) proposed four critical components within a story, these are the following; the point of message that want to be communicated to the targeted audiences, pressing articulation to the that point, role clarification, and chronologically structure (Dessart & Standaert, 2023; Jarrah et al., 2024; Kemp et al., 2023; Weststrate et al., 2024). One common story in *Cembengan* is *Semar Mbangun Kahyangan* or *Semar Builds A Heaven* which is said to be about *Semar* who intended to build a heaven for the virtue knights of *Pandawa*. For that purpose, *Semar* then invites the *Pandawa* to come and asks them to bring also the three royal heritages of *Amarta* Kingdom, such as *Kalimasada* Holybook, *Kalawelang* Spear, and *Tunggul Naga* Royal Umbrella. By building these heavens, it symbolises the elevating soul of *Pandawa* in order to avoid the danger. Whereas the three royal heritages represented three virtues which required to elevate the *Pandawa* soul. *Kalimasada* holybook defined as symbol of *Syahadat* or confession of faith (Feener, 2023; Lee, 2024; Shin et al., 2024; van den Boogert, 2023) , *Kalawelang* Spear as a symbol of sharpness of the hearts and senses. The *Tunggul Naga* royal umbrella is a symbol of the obligation of *Pendawa* to constantly protect everyone.

Thus, the main objective of this study is to answer the main research question, specifically, what are the safety concepts staged in the *Slametan* tradition in the workplace? The output that can be recommended is to utilize puppet shows in a more structured way to further increase awareness of safety at sugar mills.

## METHODOLOGY

In this qualitative study, the thematic analysis of folklore is used as primary data (MARTA et al., n.d.; Marta et al., 2021; Ratnasari et al., 2021). The aim is to determine the subjective meaning of labour safety to the belief system in a community group. The research data is based on one of the wayang stories in the 'slametan' ritual, which is told as a core value of the tradition passed down from generation to generation and the Javanese cultural belief system. Wayang is a form of cultural tradition whose stories are based on the Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata and were developed centuries ago on the island of Java. In fact, a new version of the wayang story was created by the nobles, aided by the presence of Javanese puppeteers. This new story is called *Cerita Carangan* or *Kembangan* and reflects the original reality of people's lives (Widayat, 2004). The Javanese people possess their own characteristics, both in terms of speech acts and the different arts and cultures that are performed (Kurniawati & Marta, 2021). The audience is expected to reflect on themselves and develop critical consciousness especially through the performance of wayang, which can awaken the community to awaken the collective spirit (Sukirno, 2009). Documentation studies were used in this research through an eight-hour audio recording device with the Javanese Kawi dialect (Cleland et al., 2023; Putra et al., 2014; Sivakumar et al., 2023) to show the wayang performance with the *Semar Mbangun Kahyangan* play. This performance particularly shows the expertise of *Ki Dalang Hadi Soegito*.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### ***Jitab Sara* as a symbol of purpose and reason of human life**

The meaning of life and the reasons for the struggle for life are symbolised in *Jitab Sara* as cultural elements inherent in the image of humans (Ernawati & Marta, 2020). The life of Javanese society that appears in *Jitab Sara* consists of three concepts. The concept of *Sangkan Paraning Urip* and *Wahyu Ningrat* is the first one emphasised in *Jitab Sara*, which means that man has a main goal in perfecting the world. *Jitab Sara* also includes the *Cakra Manggilingan* concept that describes the destiny of human life, that God has written the destiny of man, although he is faced with the evolution of life from birth to death. The third concept of *Jitab Sara*, which relates to the life of Javanese society, is the *Pangruwate Diya* concept, which describes the human endeavour to perfect the world by eliminating anger.

*"Lajeng isinipun Jitab Sara ora ana liya pambukane kejaba mujudake sangkan paraning urip kita, wiwit kita ana ing sak jeroning guwa garba, nduwe yuswa eka candra nganti sak engga nawa Chandra. Iku ana mangsude dhewe-dhewe. Lan sak wuse kita bisa mangerti padhang hawa, bisa gandheng kelawan isine seserapan ngelmu Sastra Jindra Wahyu Ningrat pangruwat ing dewa, mapan iku di agem marang kabeh para manungsa. Sastra sengarahe tulis, Jindra iku mubeng, manungsa uripe kaya dene ngubengi jagad. Bisa digambarake cakra manggilingan. Nanging uripe manungsa*

*tunggu marang tulis ingkeng wus cinantum ana ing jroning Jitab Sara, lan mengko yen tekan titi mangsane ora kena semaya kudu manut marang dhawuhe dewa. Mangsude, Sastra Jindra. Wahyu iku urip, ningrat jagad. Uripe manungsa dumunung ana ing jagad, ngetam ki ening pamikire bisa mangerti marang sangkan paraning uriye, sampurnaning dumadi. Mula nganggo srana pangruwate diya. Pangruwat ikupanglebur, diya iku buta. Yen bisa uriye manungsa kudu bisa nglebur marang lakune angkara murka. Aja sok seneng nguja marang hargane kamurkan.” (Sang Pada Wenang)*

[“The book of Sara reflects the manifestation of one's reason and purpose in life, from conception through nine months. At birth, we can experience the light and air of the world, and we can bond with the divine virtue of *Sastra Jindra Wahyu Ningrat*. *Sastra* literally means writing and *Jindra* simply refers to spinning. Instead of being like a spinning wheel, human life has its destiny already written in *Sara's Bible*. Later, when the time of death finally comes, human beings do not resist and must comply with the gods' orders. That is the meaning of *Sastra Jindra*. Meanwhile, *Wahyu* means life, and *Ningrat* is the universe. As human life takes place in the world, it is necessary to focus on finding the meaning and purpose of life, especially to create a perfect world. Human beings in their lives should be able to defeat evil. Moreover, do not be in favour of evil.”-(Sang Pada Wenang)].

Javanese culture is often inseparable from the concept of *sangkan paraning dumadi* as the core of Javanese philosophy. Laksono (2009) states that Javanese shadow puppets reflect the reality of life, while in Javanese thought itself, *sangkan paraning dumadi* is an idiom that describes the meaning of the origin and purpose of life. Javanese also use the idiom *sangkan paraning dumadi* to refer to the true knowledge and the absolute in life (Sugiharto, 2008). In his analysis of the content of *Surat Centhini*, Wibawa (2013) found that *sangkan paraning dumadi* is the soul of Javanese philosophy for the perfect living.

### **The Royal Heritages as symbol of Cipta, Rasa and Karsa**

An essential element of the second layer that strengthens Jitab Sara are the three heirlooms of the Amarta Royal, including: (1) the Scriptures of Jamus Kalimasada, (2) the Kala Welang Spear and (3) the Tunggul Naga Royal Umbrella. These three heirlooms are symbols of the human way of life, which consists of sharpness of mind or the fruit of intelligent thought, as well as the consequences of responsibility in the form of protecting fellow human beings. The presence of Petruk, one of Semar's sons, is intended to emphasise the importance of Semar's invitation to the Pandavas, even if he is rejected at the end.

*“Nanging nyatanipun Kyaine Semar ngendika ngaten: Petruk, bendaramu aturana rawuh mreng kabeh. Lan supaya ngasta pusaka Ngamarta wujud telu. Siji, pusaka Jamus Kalimasada. Loro, Tombak Kalawelang. Telu, Payung Tunggul Naga. Dene isine, Jamus Kalimasada kuwi ngetokake bendaramu lima kuwi pancen sijining priyayi sing jujur, netepi marang watak-wataking Jamus Kalimasada, piwulange Jamus Kalimasada marang para manungsa. Tombak Kala Welang kuwi minangka kanggo tuladha landhepe para bendaramu. Payung tunggul naga kuwi pasemone gandheng bendaramu kuwi priyagung dadiya pangayomane para kawula.” (Petruk)*

[“Semar told me this: *Petruk*, kindly ask your master, *Pandava*, to escort you here. Tell them also to carry the three heirlooms of the *Amarta* Kingdom: *Jamus Kalimasada* as a symbol of honesty and *Pandava's* alignment with the right side, *The Kala Welang Spear* as a symbol of the sharpness and toughness of the *Pandavas*, and *The Tunggul Naga Royal Umbrella* as a reminder for the *Pandavas* to continuously serve their people.”-(Petruk)]

The three royal heritages of Amarta are identified as symbols of *wiji spirituil Jawa* or Javanese spiritual seeds, namely *cipta*, *rasa* and *karsa*. The first and foremost is *Jamus Kalimasada* which by some studies mentioned that it was created by Wali Songo, especially by Sunan Kalijaga, as a part of Islamic teachings. *Kalimasada* itself is an acronym of *Kalimah Syahadat* (shahada sentence) which is the first of five pillars in Islam (Anisah, 2008; Sultoni, 2016). As a spiritual seed, *Jamus Kalimasada* can be interpreted as human awareness of the presence of God as the lord of the universe. It is known as the concept of *cipta* or creation. Secondly, the

*Kala Welang* Spear symbolises sharpness in thinking and can be interpreted as a *sense* or human understanding of the world. In contrast to *rasa njaba* (external senses), the concept of *rasa* within *Tunggul Naga* Spear is more emphasis on *rasa njero* (internal senses). Sulastuti (2012) defined *rasa njero* are all things concerned with sensory impression and intellectual acuity. Finally, the royal umbrella of *Tunggul Naga* which stands as a symbol of the obligation to provide protection and safety for others. This can be analogous to *karsa*, which means awareness of civilization among fellow humans. Harti & Widyastuti (2011) argued that that three awareness underlie the Javanese philosophy of life which then creates Javanese culture and civilisation.

### **Pandawa as a symbol of harmony of five senses**

Figure 2. presents the main fragment in the story of *Semar Mbangun Kahyangan* when *Sang Pada Wenang* (God the Almighty) who reigned within *Semar's* body (right figure) explains about the meaning of his intention to build *kahyangan* (heaven) to the four warriors of Pandawa (left figures): Puntadewa, Bima, Nakula and Sadewa. Meanwhile, Arjuna who is influenced by Krisna keeps trying to fight against *Semar*. In a dialogue, *Sang Hyang Pada Wenang* clarifies the meaning of *Pandawa*, which is a symbol of the five human senses: Puntadewa as the sense of taste, Bima as the sense of smell, Arjuna as the sense of sight, Nakula as the sense of touch, and Sadewa as the sense of hearing.



**Figure 2.** *Sang Pada Wenang* gives enlightenment to the Pandawa  
(Source: www.youtube.com)

*"Ing kono sejatine mengku mangsud, jalaran ulun tumeka ing mercapada kanthi sesamunan nganggo srana manukswa marang hanggane Ismaya iki nampa pangandikane pepundhen ulun Eyang Nurcahyo, supaya ulun maringake minangka pearthokane urip kita sak kadang. Wujude Jitab Sara Ngelmu Sejati. Ingkang kono nganggo dhedhasar pathokane njupuk sipate Pandhawa, mula ingkang kudu kuwat nampani ya putu ulun, Pandhawa. Jalaran ulun percaya urip kita iku winengku dening pancadriya. Ya ateges limang perkara kaya dene gegambarane puntadewa sak kadang. Ing kana mapane ana Karna, Netra, Grana, Lesan, lan Paningal, ingkang sak joga dumunung ana ing pengelenge rasa. Lha, ingkeng mapan ana ing paraning rasa digambarake kaya dene Puntadewa. Ingkeng ana Panetra digambarake kaya dene Arjuna ingkang dumunung ana ing ganda. Ya ateges ana ing puncaking gunung Tursena digambarake adhi kita, Bratasena. Ingkeng mapan ana ing lesan, ing kana manembah marang Sang Palenggahan iku digambarake adhimu Nakula. Ingkeng dumunung ana ing karna, pamungkase Pandawa, adhimu, Sadewa. Awit ing kana nduweni kewajiban bisa mangerti lan midhangetake marang mobah mosiking dewa. Kosok baline pancadriya ingkeng wus ulun dhawuhake kuwi mau yen nganti gothang siji, iku nggambarake yen ilang kekuwatane lan suda kekuwatane. Kaya dene adage kita sak kadang, lamun to ora ana siji yoga, suda kekuwatane."* (*Sang Pada Wenang*)

[*"All of this carries a point. By coming into the world through the body of Semar, I bring messages and blessings to all of you in the form of the guide to life that appears in Sara's Bible,*

*namely the* virtue of true knowledge. This is based on the nature of the Pandavas. Therefore, it is the Pandavas who should receive it properly. I believe that life is sustained by the five senses, which have the same meaning as the five characters possessed by the Pandavas, namely sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch, which also merge with the dimensions of feeling and compassion. Puntadeva is the symbol of the sense of taste. The symbol of the sense of sight is Arjuna. Bima symbolises the sense of smell. Nakula is the sense of touch. At the same time, Sadewa has a sense of hearing because he has the obligation to understand and listen to the will of the gods. Well, if the five senses that I explained earlier are lost, it will reduce or even lose its overall strength. Likewise today, if Arjuna is missing, then your power is reduced.”-(Sang Hyang Pada Wenang)]

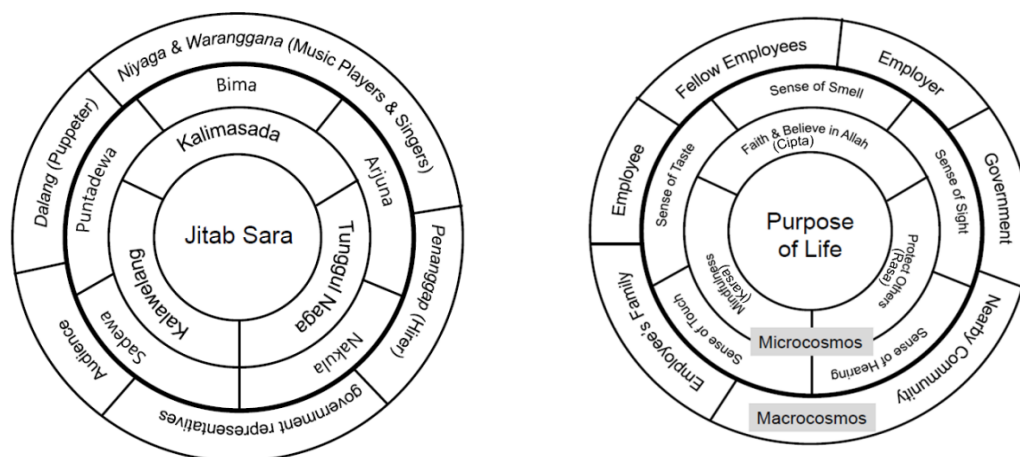
Sugiharto (2008) argued that the concept of *rasa* has a multilayer meaning, such as taste, feeling and sense. de Grave (2000), an anthropologist from France, put the five senses as part of the *Jagad Alit* or *Jagad Cilik* which are displayed symbolically in the five warriors of Pandawa. In Javanese culture, there are various meanings of the five human senses. The first is a valuable source of knowledge as written in *Serat Centhini*, a written document providing a philosophy of life for the Javanese people (Wibawa, 2013). The second, in her study on the concept of sense in Javanese culture, Sulastuti (2012) presents that the five senses are the main instrument for humans to perceive their life experiences and it is defined as *Rasa Njaba* or external sense. In his study on Javanese culture, Stange (1984) distinguished the concept of the five senses and *rasa*. The five senses are defined as the tool with which information is received from the outer world, *alam lahiriyah*, while *rasa* is the tool through which humans apprehend inner realities, that is *alam batiniyah*. Therefore, the philosophy of Java considers the senses as the outer layer of the human dimension that bridges the interaction between humans and the outside world through its ability to capture the stimulus (G. R. Knight, 2023; Mizuno et al., 2023; Wardani, 2023; White, 2023).

### **Elements of safety within social symbol dimension**

The three elements above are attached to the dimensions that exist in humans, namely physical, psychological and spiritual, which in Javanese philosophy is known as *jagad cilik* or personal dimension (Song & Tao, 2022). The last element, referred to as the *jagad gedhe* or social dimension, is the set of actors and participants in the *wayang* performance. First component is the audiences who are composed of communities around the factory, employer, employees, and the government. The other components are the performers, such as *Dalang* or Puppet player, *Sindhèn* or the singer, and *Wiyaga* or music player. This social environment is a symbol of *Silaturahmi* or friendship or social interaction that link each other and create mutual empowerment.

The outermost layer of *wayang* performance is referred to as macrocosmic and consists of several important elements of *slametan* in the society that is in the form of social responsibility for the preservation of customs and also acts as glue for shared identity, including the maintenance of social norms in the local community (Gibson, 2023; Miranda et al., 2023). Various elements with philosophical meaning in the *wayang* performance, which tell of friendship relationships, are meant to create a connection and harmony with materials, including inanimate objects and humans and other living beings. There is a *Kelir* symbol (canvas) that shows the vastness of the universe, the *Debog* symbol (banana tree) that reflects the shape of the earth on which humans stand, then the *Blencong* symbol (light lamp) that symbolises the sun that acts as a supporter of all life actors, and the *Gamelan* symbol (musical instrument) that reflects the harmony between events in human daily life (Herlyana, 2013). Moreover, the figure of the *dalang* is positioned as a ‘god’, which shows the great power that comes with the role of luck in the Javanese identity (Marta & Rieuwpassa, 2018), which is called ‘*slamet*’ to give life on earth (Mulder, 1983). Even the term ‘*dalang*’ contains the abbreviation of the word ‘*ngudhal piwulang*’, which is interpreted as someone who is considered an expert and gives lessons based on their experience and knowledge (Herlyana, 2013). This reflection of meaning is in line with the symbol of *gamelan*, which is not limited to the function of musical instruments but emanates from several *pengrawit* (musicians), including the role of *pesindhèn* (female singing) and the presence of the *penggerong* (male singing) figure, which is represented as harmony through a series of events from different shades of life. The pattern of life that shows sadness, joy, courage or even fear, the presence of tranquillity and various other human expressions (Sunardi et al., 2017).

The *Cembengan* tradition is carried out specifically for the presentation of *Slametan* in the workplace (sugar factory), which can be divided into several types of backgrounds. The first one is among the managers and promoters with the intention of keeping *Slametan* in the company managed by the position. The second is focused on the employees whose main goal is to realise the purpose of the *Slametan* tradition. The third group is the community, consisting of the leaders of the community, the families of the employees and the community living around the company. The *wayang* performance is expected to provide the audience with both insights into knowledge and charity. The expertise of the *dalang* combines both in a direct or explicit way with clear and simple language shown both implicitly and implied, which is visible through signs that are assumed to enter the contemplation of the audience at the site (Mukti, 2006).



**Figure 3.** Symbols and meaning of safety from individual dimensions or *jagad njero* on the story of *Semar Mbangun Kahyangan*  
 Source: Author (2024)

Figure 2 likewise provides the explanation of the linked symbols between individual or micro dimension (*jagad cilik*) and social or macro dimension (*jagad gedhe*) of humans. Nurgiyantoro (2011) argued that *wayang* or shadow puppet as a mythology, beside that it contained the social values and norms as a behavioural guidance of a society, it also led to the emergence of effective and efficient communication among members of those societies. In the social context, *wayang* has been proven in hundreds of years attending and accompanying the Javanese society to face their life, such as war, catastrophes, victory, prosperity, etc. Sukirno (2009) argued that the existence of *wayang* might be adjusted with the context of reality within a society. In this article, the high number of occupational injury and illness within sugar mills in Java Island is placed as a social issue that should be noticed by the members of its society, namely the employer, employee, family of the employee, government, nearby community, etc.

### **Pathet Enem symbolises the attitude of safety in childhood to adolescence**

In *Wayang*, the growth of human life from childhood to adolescence is symbolised through fragments in the *Pathet Enem* chapter. In this development scene, a human can distinguish between good and evil. However, humans are unable to control their lusts. Good and evil are opposing choices for humans. The *Pathet Enem* chapter in the story of *Semar Mbangun Kahyangan* is unique compared to other stories because the figure of the punawakan has been shown since the story's beginning. One of them is a fragment of *Semar* sending *Petruk* to meet the *Pandawa* knights to invite the five *Pandawa*, including the three heirlooms of the *Amarta* Kingdom.

Unfortunately, *Semar*'s request was not approved by the others. One of them was Krishna, the advisor of the *Pandavas*, who firmly rejected *Semar*'s request. First, *Petruk*, as the messenger, needed help explaining what kind of paradise *Semar* would create. Second, *Semar*'s intention to create paradise was believed to disturb the authority of the gods, which would also

trouble the harmony of the relationship between the gods and humans. Therefore, *Krishna*, as an advisor, tried hard to prevent the *Pandavas* from obeying *Semar's* request. Moreover, with his power, *Krishna* then asked for help from the gods in the *Surayala* heaven where the gods lived. Of the five *Pandava* knights, only *Arjuna* obeyed *Krishna's* prohibition, while the other four obeyed *Semar's* request. From among the gods, even *Dewa Guru*, the leader of the gods, was also influenced by *Krishna's* words. As a result, *Dewa Guru* ordered *Krishna* and *Arjuna* to kill *Semar* if he still refused to abandon his intention to create a paradise for the *Pandavas*.

*"Yen pancen percaya marang pun Kakang, karepe Kaki Semar kaya mangkene iki ayo padha diaturake ana ngersani Yang Pikulun Bethara Guru. Yen panceng Sang Hyang Guru marengake kahyangan dibangun karo Kakang Semar, mengko pun Kakang lan Dhimas mbiyantu. Nangin yen pancen Pikulun ora marengake supaya tumindake wong sing luput enggal nampa pidana ingkang murwap karo keluputane Kakang Semar."* (Kresna)

("If you believe in *Semar's* request, let us tell the Lord *Guru* about *Semar's* intention. If the Lord *Guru* lets *Semar* build paradise, we will help him. However, if the Lord *Guru* does not permit it, *Semar* must be punished immediately for his wrongdoing."). (Kresna))

Despite some of the main characters resisting *Semar's* wishes, some other characters still stand by him, including some of the other gods. The foremost figure is *Sadewa*, who is the youngest of the *Pandavas*. He is intelligent, but the hierarchical culture usually hinders him from articulating his thoughts. *Sadewa* considers the word paradise a symbol with numerous interpretations and does not only refer to the kingdom of the Gods. His three brothers, *Puntadewa*, *Bima*, and *Nakula*, who are still undecided, eventually accept *Sadewa's* thoughts.

As mentioned earlier, *Pathet Enem* in *Wayang* is a symbol of human life development, from childhood until adolescence. *Pathet enem* on the story of *Semar Mbangun Kahyangan* is considered unique due to *pathet enem* within shadow puppet performance generally filled by figures of kings, knights, priests and gods within its dialogue and communicated through Javanese language at the highest and sacred levels. In the developmental stage of human life, *pathet enem* is described as the range between childhood and adolescence. At '*pathet enem*' stage, human beings are able to distinguish between good and bad but have not been able to control their lust. Two contrasting considerations can be interpreted as a situation when a human being is faced with two choices: bad or good (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Good and Bad Figures in *Pathet Enem*

	<b>Good/Right (Agreed with Semar)</b>	<b>Bad/Wrong (Against Semar)</b>
<b>Gods</b>	God Narada and Hanoman	God Guru, Bethara Kresna, and God Durga
<b>Pandawa</b>	Sadewa	Arjuna
<b>Princes</b>	Antasena	Gatotkaca, Antareja and Setyaki
<b>Mystical thing</b>	Jamus Kalimasada, Kala Welang Spear, Tunggul Naga Royal Umbrella, and Cakra	Maling Sukma and Maling Raga

Source: Author Processed (2024)

**Pathet Sanga symbolises Safety within Young-Middle adulthood**

The main scene of *Pathet Sanga* is narrated by *Sang Pada Wenang (God)*, who brings refinement and insight to the *Pandavas*. The purpose of *Semar* to create paradise is clarified one by one. This part of the dialogue can be viewed as the primary justification of the symbols and meanings of the whole story. *Pathet Sanga* symbolises maturity, wisdom, and ethical principles that influence human behaviour as it is insufficient to recognise good and evil or right and wrong. This section can be assumed to be the core exposition of the symbols and meanings in the story described in Figure 3.

*"Sak wetara kita ulun paring blabaran, tegese wis ulun paringi ular-ular, ming kari katitiha ing sak nyatane. Weling ulun kadang kita lima kudu bisa manunggal rasa. Ulun paringake metu saka jagade Kaki Semar Badrayana yap utu ulun ismaya. Nanging sak jeroning catur dasa dina kita ora kena lunga-lunga. Genturna tapa, ngengingna cipta ana ing panepane putu ulun Ismaya kang kanggo srana kekuwatan pusaka kita tetelu kang wus manjing ana*

*ing panepen, ya iku gegambarane urip kita, kajujuran kita, lantiping pamikir kita lan patutur kita dadiya pangayomane para kawula, wujud Jamus Kalimasada, Tombak Kala Welang, lan Songsong Tunggul Naga.” (Sang Pada Wenang)*

[“That is what I can explain as an introduction. This means that I have entirely delivered my message and advice. Now, it is just a matter of how you realise them. My message is that the five of you must be able to unite your thoughts and feelings. I will now allow you all to leave *Semar's* body. However, for 40 days, you must not travel and go around. Seriously meditate and stay in *Semar's* hermitage to strengthen the power of your three royal heirlooms that are already in the monastery, namely Jamus Kalimasada, Tombak Kala Welang, and the royal umbrella Tunggul Naga. All three characterise your life: Honesty, sharpness of thought and speech, and duty to protect your people.” (Sang Pada Wenang)].

*“Lah nggih niku karep kula teng ngriku niku, panjenenganipun saged mirsani mbangun kahyangan punika ateges mbangun dhumateng rasa panjenengan sak kadang. Inggang isine naming supaya nduwene kapercayan, ngilana marang daya kamurka uripe. Tegesipun ngilangi marang kamurkane lelakon.” (Semar Badrayana)*

[“Well, that's what I mean by building a heaven which means shaping the dimensions of your feelings all as one brother. The aim is to awaken the efficacy and belief that all of you are capable of eliminating evil. That is, eliminating the bad in the world.” (Semar Badrayana)].

Since knowledge about good and bad is not enough, then *Pathet Sanga* symbolises the adulthood of humans which wisdom and ethical principal influences in determining their behaviour. The limitations of understanding encourage people to get it from other sources, such as spiritual leaders, teachers, or elders. *Sang Pada Wenang* can be identified as the God who controls human life. Hence, the explanation of salvation from the ruler of life can be called the supreme wisdom, absolute and obligatory to man.

### **Pathet Mayura symbolises Safety in late adulthood**

*Pathet Mayura*, or the final act, concludes the story of *Semar Mbangun Kahyangan* with the downfall of the evil characters and the repentance of the good characters who initially declined *Semar*. Subsequently, there is reconciliation among the Pandavas, followed by the recovery of the universe's peace. As the authority of the gods, Batara Guru also acknowledges his failure and missteps. He even apologises to *Semar*. Likewise, Krishna, the Pandavas' advisor who had been firmly against *Semar*, now entreated for forgiveness and requested to be permitted to feel the paradise built by *Semar*.

*“Kaki Semar, aku nyuwun pangapura, Kaki. Aku macan saka Suralaya. Aku pinta srayane Dewa. Aku njaluk pangapura, Kaki.” (Arjuna)*

[“*Semar*, I beg your forgiveness. I'm a tiger from Suralaya who was sent by the gods of Suralaya. I beg your forgiveness, *Semar*.” (Arjuna)]

*“Aduh mati aku. Kakang Semar dukane ora kena kinaya ngapa. Yen ulun ora mbanjur mundhut senjata pitulung marang Kaki Prabu Puntadewa, iki kedrawasan. Kaki, ulun mundhut pengayoman, Kaki.” (Bathara Guru)*

[“Ouch, woe me! *Semar* became very angry. If I do not ask for help from King Puntadewa, I will be very wretched!” (Bathara Guru)]

*“Yayi Prabu Puntadewa, inggang Raka kepengin badhe manunggil inggang dados isine Jitab Sara ngelmu sejati paringipun Pikulun Pada Wenang.” (Kresna)*

[“My brother, King Puntadewa, I come to join you to learn about the virtues of the Jitab Sara given by the Almighty God!” (Kresna)]

*"Inggih langkung kasinggihan sanget, Kaka Prabu. Mangga kula dherekaken lenggah wonten ing panepen. Bilih padhe angudi dhumateng kasumerepan ingkang sampun kalebet wonten ing Jitab Sara."* (Puntadewa)

[Gladly, my brother! Please have a seat at the hermitage to understand the virtues contained in Jitab Sara." (King Puntadewa)].

The purpose of the *Slametan* tradition for the Javanese community is to beg for safety from God. Javanese believe in *Gusti Sangkan Paraning Dumadi*, which means that the world and everything in it comes from God. This belief influences the orientation of Javanese in understanding the causality of every life circumstance, including misfortune, disease, and even death. *Wayang* is the most important performance in *Slametan* (Mulder, 1983). Apart from being a spectacle, it also instructs the community on how attitudes toward life safety are admitted. Table 3 presents the development of attitudes towards life safety in line with the stages of human growth reflected in the storyline of *Semar Mbangun Kahyangan*.

**Table 3.** Safety Attitude within Human life span

Shadow Puppet's Storyline	Life Span	Safety Attitude Development
<i>Pathet Enem</i>	Prenatal Infancy Early Childhood Middle Childhood Adolescence	Safety attitude as a result of right-wrong/ good-bad consideration
<i>Pathet Sanga</i>	Young Adulthood Middle Adulthood	Safety attitude as a result of ethical decision
<i>Pathet Mayura</i>	Late Adulthood	Safety attitude as a result of spiritual achievement

Source: Author Processed (2024)

The first stage is the ability to judge good or evil, which is determined by human growth from childhood to adolescence (Kiviranta et al., 2024). Kohlberg (*in Mathes, 2021*) states that at this phase, humans need explicit rules and procedures to protect their lives and avoid danger. Secondly, developing social accountability in adulthood motivates humans to guarantee the safety of life for others, especially people who are significant to them, such as family and friends. The last phase is late adulthood, where in Javanese spiritual theology, humans exist as the manifestation of *Gusti Sangkan Paraning Dumadi* (God), the creator (Mulder, 1983). Humans in this phase should contemplate their responsibilities and purpose in life. It contains the universalism of salvation, which inspires humans to be righteous and wise in creating conclusions (Agung et al., 2024; Himawan et al., 2023; Rukiyanto et al., 2024; Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023; Smith et al., 2024).

Weber (*in Brown, 2004*) defines *oral tradition* as the most effective approach in Indonesia. Bascom (1953) publicises that storytelling, such as folktales in non-literate societies, is acceptable for communicating traditions and faiths. Another practical usefulness is the generation of social pressure to prevent deviation from prevailing group norms. Similarly, in preaching or religious da'wah in Indonesia, verbal tradition is the most adequate technique for communicating religious teachings (Ardhana & Puspitasari, 2023; Hanafi et al., 2023; Junaedi et al., 2023; Junaidi et al., 2023; Xie & Ma, 2023). *Sunan Kalijaga*, a notable Islamic preacher in Java, actively used *wayang kulit* to preach and teach the morals and philosophy of Islam.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, a picture of the inheritance process of cultural values in Indonesian society from generation to generation, characterised by oral transmission rather than writing, is increasingly emerging. One of them that the researchers found as a reflection of the reality of cultural inheritance in society is the *Semar Mbangun Kahyangan* story because several

key figures represent this reality. The position of the Pandavas shows the importance of security to society, and the figure of the *Semar* as a central figure in the story is seen by the Javanese community as a protector and guardian of other inhabitants. The presence of the *Slametan* tradition in the workplace provides a unique opportunity to promote and socialise the importance of safety in the workplace. In addition, this also strengthens the relationship between members of the organisation by reminding and protecting each other. The existence of the *Slametan* tradition, which has been a feature of Indonesian culture on the island of Java, necessitates a more comprehensive study of religious practices that are highly relevant to the importance of employee safety in the workplace.

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## ENDNOTE

### GLOSARIUM

Cembengan	:	An annual tradition that is carried out before the sugar production process executed by the sugar mill
Jamus	:	A magical letter belonged to Puntadewa (the oldest of Pandawa). Jamus Kalimasada could make its owner to do anything.
Kalimasada	:	
Ki Hadi Soegito	:	The most popular and productive shadow puppeteer from Yogyakarta Region.
Kresna	:	The king of Dwarawati Kingdom and the incarnation of Wishnu, the God of Law. He is the adviser of Pandawa who had two magical weapon, namely Cakra Baswara arrow and Wijaya Kusuma flower.
Panakawan	:	The servants of Pandawa, consist of <i>Semar</i> , Gareng, Petruk and Bagong
Pandawa	:	Characters on the Mahabarata epic, namely Puntadewa, Bima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sadewa.
Puntadewa	:	The oldest of five brothers of Pandawa and the official king of Ngamarta Kingdom.
Sadewa	:	He is the youngest brother of Pandawa and the twinning of Nakula.
<i>Semar</i>	:	He is an incarnation of God Ismaya who is the older brother of God Shiwa or God Guru. He is the leader of Panawakan and lived in Karang Kabolotan Village.