

The Transformation of *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* in the Anoman Envoy Episode of the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit Performance

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Abstract: This study examines the transformation of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, focusing on the Anoman Envoy episode as performed in the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit tradition. The research explores how a classical narrative text is adapted into a performative medium through the shift from literary narration to an audiovisual shadow puppet performance. This transformation involves the reconfiguration of narrative structure, characterization, and the articulation of cultural values within the conventions of Wayang Kulit. Employing a descriptive-analytic method, the study compares the textual structure of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* with its performative realization in the *Alengka Brasta* performance. The findings reveal that narrative clipping and selective adaptation conducted by the *dalang* play a central role in shaping the performance, enabling the condensation of the text while preserving its core meanings. This study demonstrates the flexibility and adaptability of classical literature in maintaining its relevance in the contemporary context through the living tradition of Wayang Kulit performance.

Keywords: *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, Anoman Envoy, Wayang Kulit, *Alengka Brasta*, textual transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Kakawin is a term used to designate classical literary works composed in Old Javanese (Kawi), characterized by strict metrical patterns derived from Sanskrit prosody and enriched with aesthetic, philosophical, and ethical dimensions. As one of the most significant works within this tradition, the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* occupies a central position in Old Javanese literature, not only as a literary masterpiece but also as a foundational cultural text that has continuously shaped religious, artistic, and performative expressions in Java and Bali. Although derived from the Indian *Rāmāyaṇa* tradition, the Old Javanese *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* is not merely a translation, but a creative reconfiguration that reflects local cosmology, ethical values, and socio-cultural contexts (Zoetmulder, 1974; Robson, 2008).

The enduring popularity of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* is evident in its sustained presence within Balinese cultural life, particularly through performing arts such as Wayang Kulit, dance drama, and ritual performances. In Bali, classical literary texts are not confined to manuscript traditions but are continuously revitalized through performance, allowing them to function as living texts (*teks hidup*). Wayang Kulit, in particular, serves as a crucial medium through which literary narratives are transmitted, interpreted, and recontextualized for contemporary audiences (Bandem, 2013). This dynamic interaction between text and performance demonstrates that classical literature remains relevant not because it is preserved unchanged, but because it is continuously transformed.

Among the various episodes of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, the Anoman Envoy episode holds a pivotal narrative and symbolic role. Drawn primarily from sargah VII to XI, this episode narrates Anoman's mission as the envoy of Rāma to locate Dewi Sītā in Alengka and to deliver Rāma's message to her. This episode functions as a narrative turning point, as it marks the transition from separation and uncertainty toward open confrontation between Rāma and Rāwaṇa. More importantly, the Anoman Envoy episode encapsulates core moral values such as loyalty, devotion (*bhakti*), courage, and resistance against injustice, making it a favored segment for adaptation in performative traditions (Creese, 2016).

In the context of Balinese Wayang Kulit, the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* has developed into a performative *pakem*, a relatively fixed narrative framework that guides *dalang* in structuring performances. While the complete *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* consists of twenty-six sargah, Wayang Kulit performances necessarily involve processes of selection, condensation, and reinterpretation due to temporal, aesthetic, and performative constraints. As a result, only certain episodes—such as the Anoman Envoy episode—are

frequently staged, while others remain primarily within textual traditions. This selective adaptation underscores the importance of examining how narrative transformation operates within Wayang Kulit performances.

The adaptation of literary texts into performative media can be understood as a form of textual transformation. Damono (2018) defines transformation as a process of altering a “vehicle,” whereby a narrative originally expressed through one medium is rearticulated through another. In this sense, the shift from the written *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* to a Wayang Kulit performance constitutes a transformation of medium, narrative structure, and semiotic system. Written literary narration, which relies on poetic language and textual imagination, is reconfigured into an audiovisual performance that integrates dialogue, movement, music, voice modulation, and visual symbolism. This process inevitably reshapes narrative emphasis, characterization, and thematic articulation.

This study focuses specifically on the transformation of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* in the Anoman Envoy episode as realized in the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit performance, staged at the 2023 Balinese Art Festival (*Pesta Kesenian Bali*). Performed by the dalang Ida Bagus Putu Tilem Singarsa, *Alengka Brasta* represents a contemporary interpretive rendering of a classical narrative. The performance draws upon sargah VII to XI of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, yet it does not present these cantos in their entirety. Instead, the dalang employs narrative clipping, selective emphasis, and performative innovation to produce a coherent and engaging performance suited to a modern festival context.

The role of the dalang is central in this transformation process. As both interpreter and creator, the dalang mediates between the authority of the classical text and the expectations of contemporary audiences. Through narrative clipping, the dalang condenses complex poetic passages into performable scenes while retaining key moral and symbolic elements. This practice illustrates that transformation does not imply simplification alone, but rather a creative negotiation between preservation and innovation (Hutcheon, 2013).

From an educational and cultural perspective, the transformation of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* into Wayang Kulit performance plays a vital role in knowledge transmission. As fewer members of the younger generation possess the ability to read or comprehend Old Javanese texts directly, performance becomes an accessible medium through which classical narratives and values are conveyed. Wayang Kulit thus functions not only as entertainment, but also as a pedagogical and cultural mechanism that sustains literary heritage within changing social contexts (Sedyawati, 2012).

Despite the significance of such transformations, scholarly attention has often focused either on the textual analysis of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* or on Wayang Kulit as an independent performative tradition. Studies that specifically examine the transformation of particular kakawin episodes into concrete Wayang Kulit performances remain limited. This research seeks to fill this gap by analyzing how the Anoman Envoy episode is transformed from a literary text into the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit performance, with particular attention to narrative structure, adaptation strategies, and cultural meanings.

By examining this transformation, the study aims to demonstrate that the adaptability of classical literature is not a sign of textual instability, but rather a testament to its vitality. The *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* continues to live, not only within manuscripts, but within the performative imagination of Wayang Kulit, where text and performance intersect to sustain cultural relevance in the modern era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a descriptive-analytic method to examine the transformation of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* in the Anoman Envoy episode as realized in the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit performance. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for this study because it enables an in-depth interpretation of cultural texts, performances, and meanings rather than numerical measurement. As Creswell (2014) states, qualitative research emphasizes understanding phenomena through detailed description and interpretation of data within their natural context. The descriptive-analytic technique is applied to identify, describe, and analyze narrative structures, character representation, and adaptation strategies that emerge in the process of transforming a written literary text into a performative medium.

The primary data of this research consist of the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit performance presented at the 2023 *Pesta Kesenian Bali* and streamed through the official YouTube channel of the Badung Regency Government. This audiovisual recording serves as the main source for analyzing performative elements such as plot arrangement, dialogue, characterization, and narrative clipping conducted by the *dalang*. Secondary data are obtained through library research, particularly the textual analysis of sargah VII to XI of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, which constitute the literary source of the Anoman Envoy episode. The analysis is conducted by

comparing the narrative structure of the written text with its performative realization, focusing on processes of selection, condensation, and reinterpretation. This comparative approach allows the study to identify how textual transformation occurs across media, supporting Damono's (2018) concept of *alih wahana*, which defines transformation as the transfer of a narrative from one medium to another through adaptive strategies shaped by cultural and performative contexts.

DISCUSSION

Transformation of Narrative Structure from Kakawin to Wayang Kulit Performance

The Anoman Envoy episode in the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, primarily contained in sargah VII–XI, presents a complex and expansive narrative structure characteristic of Old Javanese kakawin literature. The text unfolds through a slow and layered progression of events, marked by poetic elaboration, cosmological symbolism, and moral contemplation. The narrative does not merely recount actions but constructs meaning through detailed descriptions of landscapes, emotional states, supernatural encounters, and ethical dilemmas. Anoman's mission as Rāma's envoy is portrayed as both a physical journey and a spiritual trial, emphasizing endurance, devotion, and discernment as core virtues (Zoetmulder, 1974).

In the literary version, the narrative rhythm is shaped by extended episodes that appear peripheral to the main plot but are essential to the kakawin aesthetic. Encounters such as those with Swayemprabha and Sampāti function not only as narrative obstacles but also as symbolic tests of loyalty and perseverance. The journey of Anoman and the monkey troops is narrated with careful attention to space and temporality, allowing the audience—originally a courtly and literate audience—to engage in contemplative reading rather than immediate dramatic consumption. This structural expansiveness reflects the kakawin's function as both literary art and moral instruction (Robson, 2008).

In contrast, the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit performance presents a markedly transformed narrative structure. While it retains the core storyline of Anoman's mission to Alengka, the performance reorganizes, condenses, and selectively omits narrative elements to suit the conventions and constraints of performative media. This transformation exemplifies what Damono (2018) conceptualizes as *alih wahana*, a process in which a narrative shifts from one medium to another, resulting in inevitable changes in structure, emphasis, and meaning. In Wayang Kulit, narrative coherence must be achieved within limited performance time, while simultaneously accommodating visual symbolism, musical accompaniment, and audience engagement.

One of the most prominent transformations is the process of narrative clipping. In the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, the journey of Anoman and his companions is narrated in detail, with extensive descriptions of natural environments, physical exhaustion, and internal deliberation. In the *Alengka Brasta* performance, these elements are significantly abbreviated or removed altogether. The dalang selects only those scenes that directly contribute to dramatic progression, such as the encounter with Swayemprabha, the decisive intervention of Sampāti, and Anoman's resolution to continue alone toward Alengka. This selective condensation reflects the performative necessity of maintaining narrative momentum and audience attention without sacrificing the core ethical message of the story.

Furthermore, the transformation of narrative structure is evident in the shift of focalization. In the kakawin text, the narrative frequently emphasizes collective movement and shared struggle among Anoman and the monkey troops. Their joint efforts and failures underscore the communal dimension of dharma and loyalty to Rāma. In the Wayang Kulit performance, however, the narrative increasingly centers Anoman as a singular heroic figure. After the Sampāti episode, the performance quickly foregrounds Anoman's solitary flight to Alengka, minimizing the presence of other characters. This shift aligns with the visual and dramaturgical logic of Wayang Kulit, which benefits from a clearly identifiable protagonist to guide the audience through symbolic action and dialogue (Brandon, 1993).

Another significant structural transformation concerns the handling of spatial transitions. In the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, spatial movement is narrated sequentially and descriptively, with attention to the gradual passage from forests and caves to the shores facing Alengka. These transitions reinforce the sense of distance, danger, and uncertainty that define Anoman's mission. In the *Alengka Brasta* performance, spatial transitions are abrupt and symbolic rather than literal. Once the Sampāti episode is resolved, the performance rapidly shifts to the setting of Alengka, bypassing intermediary journeys. This narrative leap reflects the performative priority of immediacy and dramatic impact over spatial realism (Bandem, 2013).

The transformation is also evident in the treatment of the narrative climax. In the kakawin, Anoman's encounter with Dewi Sita, his destruction of the Angsoka Garden, and his subsequent capture by Meganada are embedded within poetic elaboration and moral reflection. The text emphasizes Anoman's self-restraint, strategic intelligence, and adherence to dharma, particularly in his decision

to allow himself to be bound by the *Nāgapāśa* arrow. These qualities are conveyed through introspective narration and metaphorical language, inviting readers to contemplate the ethical dimensions of Anoman's actions (Zoetmulder, 1974).

In the Wayang Kulit performance, these same episodes are restructured through dialogue, gesture, and visual symbolism. Moral reflection is no longer articulated through internal narration but through performative action and verbal exchange. Anoman's strategic surrender is communicated through his calm demeanor and controlled speech, allowing the audience to grasp his wisdom without reliance on textual explanation. This shift demonstrates how performative media translate abstract literary values into embodied and observable forms.

The final episode, in which Anoman is burned and subsequently sets Alengka ablaze, further illustrates the transformation of narrative structure. In the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, this episode is framed within cosmic symbolism and divine justice, emphasizing the inevitability of Rāma's victory and the restoration of moral order. In the *Alengka Brasta* performance, the burning of Alengka becomes a dramatic spectacle that serves as the narrative and visual climax. Fire functions not only as a symbolic element but also as a performative device that reinforces emotional intensity and audience engagement. This emphasis on spectacle reflects the aesthetic priorities of Wayang Kulit as a living performance tradition (Keeler, 2017).

Overall, the transformation of narrative structure from *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* sargah VII–XI into the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit performance reveals a deliberate strategy of selection, condensation, and reorganization. Rather than attempting to reproduce the literary text in its entirety, the performance reinterprets the narrative in accordance with performative conventions and audience expectations. As Hutcheon (2013) argues, adaptation is not a secondary or derivative act but a creative process that enables narratives to survive and resonate across different media and historical contexts. In this sense, the narrative transformation evident in *Alengka Brasta* demonstrates the vitality of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* as a living tradition—one that continues to be reshaped through performance without losing its core narrative and ethical identity.

Transformation of Characterization and Cultural Values

The transformation of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* into the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit performance does not only involve structural condensation but also entails a significant reconfiguration of characterization and cultural values. In the literary text, Anoman is portrayed as a multifaceted figure whose heroism is articulated through devotion (*bhakti*), discernment (*viveka*), and restraint (*dama*). His actions are framed within moral reflection and spiritual purpose, emphasizing that physical strength alone is insufficient without ethical self-control. This characterization aligns with the kakawin tradition, which integrates narrative action with didactic intent, presenting idealized models of conduct for elite audiences (Zoetmulder, 1974).

In sargah VII–XI of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, Anoman's character is gradually developed through introspective narration and symbolic encounters. His hesitation, deliberation, and obedience to Rāma's command reveal a hero whose strength is tempered by humility. Even acts of destruction—such as the devastation of the Angsoka Garden—are framed as calculated and purposeful rather than impulsive. The kakawin thus constructs Anoman as a morally reflective agent, embodying dharma through disciplined action and conscious restraint (Robson, 2008).

In contrast, the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit performance foregrounds a more assertive and visually dynamic characterization of Anoman. While his loyalty to Rāma remains central, moral introspection is no longer conveyed through internal narration but through dialogue, gesture, and symbolic action. The dalang emphasizes Anoman's courage, agility, and rhetorical sharpness, qualities that resonate strongly within the performative context of Wayang Kulit. This shift reflects the necessity of translating abstract ethical qualities into observable behavior that can be immediately grasped by a heterogeneous audience (Keeler, 2017).

One of the most notable transformations concerns the representation of restraint. In the kakawin, Anoman's decision to allow himself to be captured by Meganada is framed as a strategic and ethical choice, narrated through reflective passages that highlight his awareness of cosmic order and divine will. In the performance, this restraint is dramatized through controlled speech and calm physical posture, contrasting sharply with the aggressive movements of the antagonists. Although the internal reasoning behind his decision is not verbally elaborated, the visual cues provided by the dalang effectively communicate Anoman's wisdom and composure.

The transformation also affects the portrayal of antagonistic characters, particularly Rāwaṇa and Meganada. In the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāwaṇa is depicted as a complex figure whose arrogance is intertwined with intelligence and royal authority. His interactions with Anoman are marked by rhetorical tension and moral contrast. In the *Alengka Brasta* performance, however, Rāwaṇa's characterization tends to be simplified, emphasizing his hubris and tyranny over psychological nuance. This simplification

serves a performative function, reinforcing clear moral binaries that facilitate audience engagement and ethical interpretation (Brandon, 1993).

Cultural values embedded in the narrative also undergo transformation. The kakawin reflects a courtly worldview shaped by Hindu-Buddhist cosmology, where hierarchy, ritual propriety, and spiritual discipline are paramount. Values such as loyalty to one's lord, adherence to cosmic order, and self-mastery are articulated through poetic metaphor and philosophical allusion. In the Wayang Kulit performance, these values are recontextualized within a more populist framework. Loyalty and courage are emphasized through dramatic confrontation, while ethical reflection is condensed into proverbial dialogue and symbolic action. This shift allows the narrative to remain relevant within a broader social context without abandoning its moral core (Bandem & deBoer, 2005).

The characterization of Anoman in the performance also reflects local cultural sensibilities. In Balinese Wayang Kulit, Anoman often embodies both heroic and humorous qualities, serving as a bridge between the sacred and the accessible. Although the *Alengka Brasta* episode maintains a serious tone, moments of verbal wit and expressive movement introduce elements of performative liveliness absent from the kakawin text. This hybrid characterization illustrates how classical figures are continually reinterpreted to align with contemporary audience expectations and performative aesthetics (Hobart, 2000).

From an adaptation perspective, these transformations should not be understood as a loss of literary depth but as a process of cultural translation. Hutcheon (2013) emphasizes that adaptation involves reinterpretation and recreation rather than replication. In the case of *Alengka Brasta*, the transformation of characterization enables the ethical ideals of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* to be communicated through embodied performance. The shift from introspective narration to visible action reflects the epistemological difference between reading and viewing, between textual contemplation and performative immediacy.

Ultimately, the transformation of characterization and cultural values in the Anoman Envoy episode demonstrates the flexibility of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* as a living tradition. By reshaping Anoman's character to suit the conventions of Wayang Kulit, the performance ensures that classical moral ideals—such as devotion, courage, and restraint—remain intelligible and meaningful within a modern performative context. Rather than diminishing the ethical complexity of the source text, this transformation allows its values to be reactivated through sound, movement, and visual symbolism, reaffirming the enduring relevance of Old Javanese literature in contemporary cultural practice.

Cultural and Performative Significance of the Transformation

The transformation of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* into the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit performance carries profound cultural and performative significance, extending beyond narrative restructuring and character modification. This transformation illustrates how classical literary texts function as dynamic cultural resources, continually reactivated through performance to address shifting social contexts, audience expectations, and modes of meaning-making. In this sense, Wayang Kulit operates not merely as an artistic adaptation but as a living interpretive tradition that sustains the relevance of Old Javanese literature.

In the kakawin tradition, literary texts were historically associated with courtly environments and educated elites, where aesthetic refinement (*kalangwan*) and philosophical contemplation were central values. Meaning was generated through poetic language, metaphor, and intertextual references that demanded sustained attention and literary competence from the audience (Creese, 2004). By contrast, Wayang Kulit is fundamentally a performative and communal medium. It addresses a broad audience through sound, movement, visual symbolism, and improvisational dialogue, allowing complex narratives to be communicated across social and educational boundaries. The transformation of the Anoman Envoy episode thus reflects a shift from elite textual culture to inclusive performative culture.

One significant cultural implication of this transformation lies in the role of the *dalang* as both performer and interpreter. In the *Alengka Brasta* performance, the *dalang* actively mediates between the kakawin source and contemporary audiences by selecting, reshaping, and emphasizing narrative elements according to performative priorities. This interpretive authority positions the *dalang* not as a passive transmitter of tradition but as a cultural agent who rearticulates inherited narratives in response to present circumstances. As Foley (1995) argues, oral-derived performances generate meaning through contextual interaction rather than textual fixity, allowing tradition to remain adaptable without losing continuity.

The performative transformation also reinforces Wayang Kulit's ritual dimension. Unlike the kakawin, which primarily functions as a literary artifact, Wayang Kulit performances—especially episodes such as *Alengka Brasta*—are often embedded within ceremonial and communal settings. The burning of *Alengka*, for example, is not merely a narrative climax but a symbolic enactment of cosmic purification. Fire, as staged in performance, embodies both destruction and renewal, resonating with broader Hindu cosmological

concepts of dissolution (*pralaya*) and restoration (*srsti*). Through visual spectacle and sonic intensity, the performance renders abstract metaphysical principles experientially accessible (Laderman, 1992).

Furthermore, the transformation highlights the performative economy of emphasis. While the kakawin elaborates philosophical and moral meanings through narration, Wayang Kulit communicates values through repetition, exaggeration, and contrast. The ferocity of Anoman, the arrogance of Rāwaṇa, and the steadfastness of Dewi Sita are amplified through vocal modulation, rhythmic cues, and stylized movement. These techniques function pedagogically, reinforcing ethical distinctions in a manner consistent with traditional performative didacticism. In this way, Wayang Kulit serves as a medium of cultural education, transmitting moral frameworks through embodied experience rather than textual exposition (Schechner, 2002).

The cultural significance of this transformation is also evident in its capacity to localize universal narratives. Although the *Rāmāyaṇa* originates from a transregional Indic tradition, its performative realization in *Alengka Brasta* reflects local aesthetics, linguistic registers, and performative conventions. Elements such as humor, vocal improvisation, and interaction with the audience allow the *dalang* to situate the narrative within familiar cultural horizons. This localization does not undermine the epic's universality; rather, it ensures its continued relevance by anchoring it in lived cultural experience (Pollock, 2006).

From a performance studies perspective, the transformation exemplifies how meaning emerges through enactment rather than representation alone. The burning of Anoman and the subsequent destruction of *Alengka* function as performative acts that do not merely depict an event but enact moral resolution before the audience. The spectacle produces what Turner (1982) describes as *social drama*, a symbolic resolution of conflict that reaffirms shared values and collective identity. In this context, Wayang Kulit becomes a site where narrative, ritual, and social reflection converge.

Importantly, the transformation also ensures cultural continuity across time. By adapting kakawin narratives into performative forms, Wayang Kulit enables younger generations—who may no longer engage directly with Old Javanese texts—to encounter and internalize classical narratives. This process of intermedial transmission safeguards literary heritage while allowing it to evolve organically. Rather than fossilizing the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* as a static canonical text, performance revitalizes it as a flexible cultural repertoire responsive to contemporary sensibilities (Goody, 1987).

In sum, the cultural and performative significance of the transformation from *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* to the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit performance lies in its ability to bridge textual tradition and lived performance. Through selective adaptation, symbolic enactment, and performative mediation, the narrative is reconstituted as a shared cultural experience. This transformation underscores that the endurance of classical literature is not secured through textual preservation alone, but through its continual re-embodiment in performance. The *Alengka Brasta* episode thus stands as a compelling example of how literary heritage survives by being transformed, not replicated, within the rhythms of cultural practice.

Intermedial Transformation From Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa to the Alengka Brasta

The transformation of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* into the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit performance fundamentally involves an intermedial shift, namely the movement from a written, poetic medium to an audiovisual and performative one. This process does not merely transfer narrative content but restructures meaning through the affordances and limitations of each medium. While the kakawin relies on metrical language, imagery, and contemplative narration to convey meaning, Wayang Kulit communicates through sound, movement, shadow, rhythm, and live interpretation. As a result, transformation at the intermedial level becomes the most decisive factor shaping how the Anoman Envoy episode is experienced and understood.

In the kakawin tradition, meaning is generated primarily through language. The Old Javanese poetic form employs strict metrical patterns (*wirama*), alliteration, and elaborate metaphor to construct aesthetic pleasure (*kalangwan*) and philosophical depth. Descriptions of nature, emotional states, and cosmological order are extended and layered, encouraging slow reading and reflection (Zoetmulder, 1974). In contrast, Wayang Kulit operates within the logic of performance, where meaning must be produced instantaneously and communally. The poetic density of kakawin language cannot be preserved verbatim; instead, it is translated into vocal modulation, musical accompaniment, and symbolic action. This shift illustrates what Rajewsky (2005) describes as intermedial transposition, in which a source medium is reconfigured according to the semiotic system of a target medium.

One of the most prominent aspects of this intermedial transformation is the replacement of poetic narration with performative speech. In the *Alengka Brasta* performance, the kakawin's verses are not recited directly but reinterpreted through *suluk*, dialogue, and narrative commentary by the *dalang*. The *dalang*'s voice assumes multiple functions: narrator, character, commentator, and mediator. Through changes in pitch, tempo, and intonation, the *dalang* conveys emotional nuance and narrative emphasis that

would otherwise be articulated through poetic description in the written text. As Fischer-Lichte (2008) notes, performative meaning emerges from the bodily presence and vocal action of the performer rather than from textual representation alone.

Music plays a crucial role in mediating this transformation. In the kakawin, rhythm is embedded within the metrical structure of the verse. In Wayang Kulit, rhythm is externalized through gamelan accompaniment, particularly gender, kendang, and suling, which guide emotional pacing and scene transitions. Moments of tension, such as Anoman's capture or the burning of Alengka, are intensified through musical acceleration and dynamic variation. These auditory elements function as semiotic replacements for literary devices such as repetition and metaphor. Thus, musical cues become narrative tools that shape audience perception in ways fundamentally different from textual reading (Bandem, 2013).

Visuality constitutes another essential dimension of intermedial transformation. The kakawin evokes imagery through language, inviting readers to imagine landscapes, palaces, and supernatural beings. Wayang Kulit, by contrast, materializes these images through shadows, puppet design, and spatial arrangement. The figure of Anoman, for instance, is visually distinguished through exaggerated physical features and dynamic movement, reinforcing his heroic and liminal status. The burning of Alengka, which in the kakawin is narrated as a cosmic event imbued with moral symbolism, becomes a visual spectacle marked by rapid movement, sound effects, and dramatic lighting. This transformation exemplifies how abstract literary imagery is rendered concrete and immediate through performance.

The intermedial shift also affects narrative temporality. Literary narration allows for temporal expansion through description and reflection, whereas performance demands temporal compression. In the *Alengka Brasta* performance, long journeys and contemplative episodes are reduced to brief transitional scenes or omitted entirely. This compression is not a narrative loss but an intermedial necessity. As Hutcheon (2013) argues, adaptation across media requires rethinking how time operates within different representational systems. Wayang Kulit prioritizes climactic moments and ethical confrontation over narrative completeness, ensuring that the performance remains engaging within its temporal constraints.

Importantly, the intermedial transformation reconfigures audience engagement. Reading a kakawin is typically a solitary or scholarly activity, requiring linguistic competence and interpretive effort. Wayang Kulit, on the other hand, is a communal event that integrates entertainment, education, and ritual. Humor, improvisation, and direct audience address are integral to performance, allowing the dalang to respond dynamically to audience reactions. This interactive dimension cannot be replicated in textual form. The transformation thus expands the social function of the narrative, repositioning the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* as a shared cultural experience rather than a purely literary artifact (Schechner, 2002).

The role of the *dalang* is central to this intermedial process. Acting as an interpreter of the kakawin, the dalang negotiates between textual authority and performative creativity. Decisions regarding which scenes to include, how characters speak, and how moral tensions are emphasized reflect both traditional conventions and contemporary sensibilities. This aligns with Foley's (1995) view that oral-derived performances generate meaning through situational creativity rather than strict textual fidelity. The *Alengka Brasta* performance thus exemplifies how transformation across media empowers performers to become active agents in cultural transmission.

From a broader cultural perspective, the intermedial transformation ensures the continuity of classical literature in a changing media landscape. As literacy practices and linguistic competencies evolve, direct engagement with Old Javanese texts becomes increasingly limited. Performance offers an alternative pathway through which classical narratives remain intelligible and meaningful. By translating poetic language into audiovisual form, Wayang Kulit preserves not the literal wording of the kakawin but its narrative core and ethical orientation. This process underscores that cultural preservation is not synonymous with textual immutability but depends on adaptive reinterpretation (Goody, 1987).

In conclusion, the intermedial transformation from *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* to the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit performance represents a fundamental reconfiguration of narrative meaning. Through shifts in language, sound, visuality, temporality, and audience interaction, the Anoman Envoy episode is reshaped to function effectively within a performative medium. This transformation highlights the creative potential inherent in adaptation, demonstrating that classical texts endure not by resisting change but by being continually re-embodied across media. The *Alengka Brasta* performance thus stands as a compelling example of how intermediality sustains the vitality of literary tradition within lived cultural practice.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the transformation of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, particularly the Anoman Envoy episode in sargah VII–XI, into the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit performance entails a fundamental restructuring of narrative form. The expansive and poetic narrative structure of the kakawin, characterized by descriptive journeys, reflective pauses, and cosmological imagery, is selectively condensed and reorganized to meet the temporal and dramaturgical demands of performance. Through processes of narrative clipping, reordering, and symbolic substitution, the Wayang Kulit performance maintains narrative coherence while prioritizing immediacy, dramatic clarity, and performative effectiveness.

The analysis further reveals that this transformation significantly reshapes characterization and narrative focalization. In the literary text, Anoman's role is embedded within collective movement and moral reflection, whereas in the performance he emerges as a distinctly centralized heroic figure. His ethical qualities—loyalty, courage, restraint, and devotion—are communicated not through introspective narration but through dialogue, gesture, and visual action. This performative reconfiguration enables moral values embedded in the kakawin to be conveyed more directly and accessibly, reinforcing Wayang Kulit's function as both entertainment and ethical instruction.

At the intermedial level, the transformation from poetic text to audiovisual performance constitutes a profound shift in meaning-making mechanisms. The metrical language and imagery of the kakawin are translated into vocal modulation, musical accompaniment, visual symbolism, and embodied action. Through this intermedial process, abstract literary elements are rendered tangible and experiential, allowing the Anoman Envoy episode to function effectively within the semiotic system of Wayang Kulit. Rather than diminishing the literary source, this transformation reveals the creative potential of adaptation as a means of sustaining narrative vitality across media.

Finally, the cultural and performative significance of this transformation lies in its role in preserving and revitalizing classical literature within contemporary society. By re-embodiment the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* in performance, the *Alengka Brasta* Wayang Kulit show bridges textual heritage and lived cultural practice, making classical narratives accessible to audiences who may no longer engage directly with Old Javanese texts. This study affirms that the endurance of classical literature is ensured not through rigid textual preservation but through continuous reinterpretation within performative traditions. The transformation of the Anoman Envoy episode thus exemplifies how literary heritage survives as a living tradition—dynamic, adaptive, and culturally meaningful across time.

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