

RELIGION AND CULTURE BASED ARTS SUSTAINABILITY MODEL IN THE “AMONG” SYSTEM: EMPIRICAL STUDY IN BUTUH, THE WAYANG HAMLET

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ABSTRACT

It is scarce to find a village where most of its citizens are engaged in traditional wayang crafts, especially if the most residents are Muslims. Moreover, the number of puppets needed to fulfill shadow puppet shows is limited throughout the world. However, the fact shows that Butuh Hamlet has a majority of residents who work as wayang artisans and still exist today, a model for the continuation of traditional arts in facing tough challenges and is an example of the sustainability of traditional arts in facing tough challenges, both externally and internally. This sustainability can be seen in the number of residents who still pursuing the crafting profession, which craft are still the main source of income for residents. Butuh Hamlet has received the title of *Kampung Berseri* (a beautiful and clean village). Apart from that, they also continue to work on strengthening the wayang craft with the *Among* System: caring for, fostering, and sharpening each other in developing the wayang craft. The sustainability of wayang as a means of livelihood and a medium for preaching (da'wah) has made the lives of artisans better.

Keywords: religion; culture; *Among* system; da'wah; wayang

ABSTRAK

Sangat jarang ditemukan desa yang mayoritas warganya menekuni kerajinan tradisional wayang, terlebih jika warganya mayoritas muslim. Apalagi kebutuhan wayang untuk memenuhi pertunjukan wayang kulit jumlahnya pun terbatas. Namun kenyataan menunjukkan bahwa Dukuh Butuh memiliki warga yang mayoritas berprofesi sebagai perajin wayang dan tetap eksis sampai sekarang, sebuah model keberlangsungan seni tradisional dalam menghadapi tantangan berat baik secara eksternal maupun internal. Keberlangsungan tersebut tampak pada banyaknya warga yang masih menekuni profesi perajin, kerajinan masih menjadi sumber penghasilan utama warga, dan Dukuh Butuh yang memperoleh predikat Kampung Berseri. Selain itu, mereka terus berupaya menggiatkan kerajinan wayang dengan Sistem Among: saling asih, asuh, dan asah dalam mengembangkan kerajinan wayang. Keberlanjutan wayang sebagai mata pencaharian dan media dakwah telah membuat kehidupan para perajin menjadi lebih baik.

Kata kunci: agama; budaya, system among; dakwah; wayang

1. Introduction

Butuh is the name of a hamlet located in the Sidowarno Village area, which is included in the Wonosari Subdistrict, Klaten Regency, Central Java Province. Sidowarno Village has a fairly large area, which includes 11 hamlets, are Kwogo Wetan, Ngunut, Sidowarno, Ngawen, Morangan, Butuh, Gayam, Tempel/Sidomulyo, Ngudrek, Sidorejo, and Kulon. Residents of the Wonosari subdistrict are Muslim (60,665), Protestant (448), Catholic (1,114), Hindu (39), and Buddhist (1) (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2022). Even though the majority are Muslims, they work on making shadow puppets.

As a suburban area, Butuh Hamlet is closer to the second largest city in Central Java, Surakarta, than to the administrative center of Sukoharjo Regency itself. The border between Surakarta and Sukoharjo has many industries and factories. In fact, through industrialization, prosperity will be created for the community (Rinardi, 2021), but it will also impact other aspects of life, especially traditional arts. Proximity to Surakarta and Sukoharjo seems to provide both opportunities and challenges for the Butuh Hamlet puppet craft.

Apart from being on the outskirts, Butuh is also located on a remote land, because the area is surrounded by the Bengawan Solo river. There are only two bridges for access in and out of the hamlet. In the past, the Bengawan Solo river which surrounds it, had an active water flow, but then it was shortened so that the flow became shorter. However, the former river still surrounds Butuh Hamlet. Thus, the hamlet is like an island in the middle of a river.

The geographical condition of the hamlet physically shows limited access. However, it is precise with these limitations that it creates enthusiasm. Geographical factors greatly influence community life, for example, there is attachment, community members with the land or village where they were born (Susilawati, 2012), kinship or close relations between residents, which has an impact on the growth of a high spirit of harmony and solidity. Rural residents who live in agriculture tend to be homogeneous, in terms of livelihoods, religion, customs, socio-culture, and so on

(Husein, 2021). This was found in Butuh Hamlet. The geographical factor of Butuh Hamlet has brought its people to have the same livelihood, the majority as wayang artisans.

Its existence close to Solo, the second largest city in Central Java, is a challenging task for the artisans of Butuh in continuing the continuity of their wayang craft. Especially with the development of technology and social media, which are very close to the world of children, including the children of Butuh Hamlet, who live in the modern era. However, artisans need to have firm practice (methods or strategies) in seeking the survival of wayang crafts. This research is intended to discover their creativity in maintaining their artistic life to then be formulated into a model for developing traditional arts.

2. Framework

2.1. Butuh, The Surakarta City Art Support

In the relationship between Butuh Hamlet and the nearby city of Surakarta, the life of the Butuh community can be categorized as *peisan* farmers, namely farmers who live in contact with city centers, and markets, and are part of the city's culture (Susilawati, 2012). The agrarian ethos of the Butuh people has been practiced for generations. The agrarian ethos, in its creativity, has dimensions of mentifact, sociofact, and artifact (Djatiprambudi, 2021). The wayang crafts produced by the artisans of Butuh as artifacts are a manifestation of their creativity.

The residents of Butuh Hamlet as farmers and village artisans, are also engaged in wayang crafts to support the arts in the city of Solo, a city of Javanese culture from time to time. The city of Solo has various nicknames such as Spirit of Java, City of Culture (*Kota Budaya*), City of Tourism (*Kota Pariwisata*), and City of Artists (*Kota Seniman*) (Primasasti, n.d.), so the arts thrive and develop well.

Wayang kulit purwa (purwa shadow puppet) is one of the arts identical to the city of Solo. Many famous puppeteers come from Solo, such as Anom Suroto, Manteb Soedharsono, Purbo Asmoro, Dwijokangko, Warseno Slenk, and Bayu Aji. Moreover,

a puppetry department was founded in 1964 at ASKI/STSI/ISI Surakarta. In addition, there is also puppeteer education at the high school level. A large number of famous puppeteers and puppeteer educational institutions has an impact on the high demand for shadow puppets for performances. Every time there is a wayang performance, there must be street vendors selling leather puppets. Wayang kulit is a craft product, made to get attention, demand, or consumption that can fulfill market desires or needs.

The production of shadow puppets in Butuh Hamlet has been going on for a long time. It is said that the earliest artisans in this village were puppet crafters who served at the Surakarta Palace during the reign of Paku Buwono X. Eventually, this hamlet grew and developed into a small home industry that focused on producing shadow puppets. The puppets they produce are known for their good quality according to the needs of puppeteers, as said by the puppeteer Ki Cahyo Kuntadi (2022) that the *tatahan* and *kapangan* (body) are flexible according to the rules in puppetry, the skin is firm and of good quality. Artisans in Butuh Hamlet produce fine and good inlays (Purbo Asmoro, 2022), and soft *tatah* (craft) *sunggingan* (paint) (Ki Susilo Thengkleng, 2022). Even now, the artisans of Butuh are regular for famous puppeteers in Solo and its surroundings, lecturers, and students of puppetry at ISI Surakarta.

Around 40 residents of Butuh Hamlet work as wayang artisans, both the older and younger generations. One of the wayang artisans and the head of the artisan group, Mamik Raharjo, said, "Each artisan already has a market, a puppeteer from out of town, or a school for puppeteers, come here if you are looking for wayang (Aida, 2018)." The artisans already know the taste of the puppeteer's order, both the *tatahan* and the *sunggingan* (Ki Susilo Thengkleng 2022). "Since I went to SMKI until now, I continue to inlay wayang to Mas Tugimin in Butuh Hamlet," said the puppeteer Ki Cahyo Kuntadi (2022). Butuh Hamlet has also become the village center for the wayang industry in Klaten Regency.

2.2. Inheritance of the Wayang Tradition as a Media of Da'wah

The activity of drawing humans and animals in the form of wayang is not a problem for the residents of Butuh, who are predominantly Muslim. “Most of the artisans and residents and villagers are Muslim,” said Sunardi Baron. Even though for some Muslims drawing living creatures is unlawful, the people of Butuh believe that shadow puppetry is inherited by the *waliullah*, as Sunardi Baron (2022) said about wayang kulit, that "Wayang is a means of introducing the spread of Islam (da'wah media) in the royal environment in the era of the preaching by the *wali* (Islamic legal guardian)".

The people of Butuh have a close heart and belief in the traditions handed down by the *waliullah*. “Sunan Kalijaga was the originator (initiator) for wayang, which came from cowhide and was made with oblique images (Sunardi Baron, 2022).” In fact, they considered Sunan Kalijaga to be the true puppeteer. This determination makes the artisans need to pursue wayang production as their livelihood without a doubt. Trust in religious figures and their teachings is deeply rooted in society. Their presence serves as a light for the community in determining their life goals and steps in pursuing them.

The artistic and spiritual expressions of the people of Butuh are reflected in the proximity of the Safa`at Mosque and Joglo *Omah Wayang* (Puppets House), which are located opposite each other at a crossroads in the middle of the village. Safa`at Mosque is the center for worship activities and Joglo *Omah Wayang* is a center for puppet craft activities for Butuh Hamlet residents. Divinely-oriented worship activities and worldly-oriented activities merged in the harmony of Javanese life, especially in Butuh Hamlet.

2.3. Imaging of the Wayang Tourism Village

Butuh Hamlet artisans are engaged in wayang crafts for decades have served many customers, both puppeteers, collectors, lecturers, students, and the general public. From generation to generation, they have pursued the profession as wayang artisans with great diligence and modesty. *Menyungging* (painting) wayang requires

extraordinary perseverance because it gently perforates the skin and colors it with layers typical of wayang songs. The wayang crafts are also of good quality and are liked by the puppeteers. More and more people know Butuh as a wayang-producing village, so they come to buy and learn wayang. Finally, Butuh became known as the Wayang Tourism Village (Riatmoko 2022; Prasetya 2021; Prakoso 2021). This sustainability and consistency shapes the image of Butuh Hamlet as a Wayang Tourism Village.

Whether individual or group activities, if carried out continuously and consistently, will produce quality products. Likewise, excellent service and the best attitude provided will gain trust and generate a reputation from the public. This is in line with the opinion of Jose M. Pina (2004) that the aspects that form an image are reputation, credibility, service quality, counseling quality, and suitability (Yuningsih, 2017). Local wisdom in terms of customs, culture, or traditions is a potential that can be developed to improve welfare and strengthen community identity.

When viewed from the explanation of the reality above, Butuh Hamlet is aligned with the understanding according to People Core Tourism (PIR), a tourist village is a rural area that offers an overall atmosphere that reflects the authenticity of the countryside both from socio-economic life, socio-culture, customs, daily life, has a typical village architecture and spatial structure, or unique and interesting economic activities and has the potential to develop various tourism components (Priasukmana & Mulyadin, 2001). Constructive efforts to realize this tourist village have been made by the Butuh artisans community called the Joint Business Group (KUBE) "Bima" chaired by Mamik Raharjo.

"Open Trip Wayang Tourism Village" is a mainstay in creating a tourist village with unique and interesting packages, which will invite visitors to get to know wayang more closely (Prasetya, 2021). Visitors can learn about the process of making wayang, by seeing the process of processing buffalo skin, from scraping the fur until the skin is ready to be carved. This was followed by an introduction to traditional children's toys, namely *egrang* (stamps) and *congklak*, which visitors can play with. After

reminiscing about old-school games, visitors were treated to herbal medicine and traditional food, one of which was the delicious klepon cake with liquid Javanese sugar inside. Next, visitors will be invited to see the process of making puppets and their coloring in the artisan`s house so they know how puppets are made. Finally, visitors are invited to learn archery (*jemparingan*). The archery range is usually open every Saturday and Sunday. This wayang tour open trip combines crafts and culinary delights as well as traditional games, which are in line with the government's formulation that the development of creative villages intersects with several fields at once, fashion, crafts, and culinary (Panduan Pengembangan Desa Kreatif, 2021).

The Klaten Regency government already has regulations to develop the attractiveness of craft tourism, namely the Klaten Regency Regional Regulation Number 12 of 2017 concerning the Implementation of Tourism. However, until 2022 Butuh Hamlet has yet to enter the Tourism Village Network at the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, even though this hamlet has potential and has become a center for wayang crafts that other villages do not have. Furthermore, puppeteer Ki Cahyo Kuntadi (2022) suggested that the government should develop and give special attention to wayang artisan in Butuh Hamlet. Although Butuh Hamlet did not receive the title of a tourist village from the government, since 2018 this hamlet has succeeded in making achievements as *Kampung Berseri* Astra (KBA) Solo from PT Astra International (Triawati, 2018).

2.4. Predicate of *Berseri* (Beautiful and Clean) Village

The declaration of the *Berseri* Village predicate for Butuh Hamlet is the second in Central Java and the 74th in Indonesia. Until 2022, 133 Astra *Berseri* Villages have been announced throughout Indonesia (Handayani, 2022). Agah Gumelar from PT Astra International said, “Each village is appointed according to its potential and will become a tourist destination. We hope that Butuh Hamlet will be able to develop according to its potential, namely wayang (Triawati, 2018).”

The uniqueness of wayang crafts is the highlight and attraction of Butuh Hamlet which can be compared with other tourist villages. This potential and uniqueness can be utilized to solve social and economic problems (Panduan Pengembangan Desa Kreatif, 2021), especially those in Butuh Hamlet, so that wayang can improve the welfare of its residents.

According to Agah Gumelar, *Kampung Berseri* of Butuh Hamlet has four pillars: health, environment, education, and entrepreneurship. These four pillars are integrated according to their potential and characteristics (Triawati, 2018). The education pillar is implemented by providing sustainable scholarships to selected children from the Butuh community to complete their studies so that a quality generation can grow. This pillar is also carried out by craftsmen who take to local elementary school classes to teach how to make wayang. The entrepreneurship pillar is carried out through administrative (financial) system training and participation in product exhibitions and comparative studies in various cities in Central Java and Jakarta. The health pillar is carried out through Posyandu activities for toddlers and the elderly as well as cheap basic food markets to support life's necessities. These pillars truly touch the basic needs of the people of Butuh.

Mamik Raharjo felt the benefits of these pillars, that the Astra Group carried out many positive activities, such as training, coaching, assistance, and others, also for the preservation of wayang kulit (Pradipha, 2020). Wahyu Triyono, Astra Solo representative, said: "In this era of modernization, it is indeed very challenging to invite the younger generation to learn how to make wayang (Aryanto, 2019)", considering the fact that the interest of the younger generation, especially children, in preserving the art of wayang is decreasing (Ali et al., n.d.). Through the *Kampung Berseri* program, a glimmer of hope for the preservation of wayang can be realized at this puppet production center in Butuh Hamlet.

3. Methodology

This research on the activities of wayang craftsmen who are full of religious and cultural backgrounds uses a qualitative descriptive type. The object studied is the community of wayang kulit craftsmen in Dukuh, Sidowarno village, Klaten district, Central Java. The results of this study are explained descriptively in the form of sentences and supported by communicative charts.

Data were collected using observation, interview and literature study methods. Observations were made on their activities producing wayang beber and their community. Interviews were conducted with puppeteers, craftsmen, and students. Literature studies were conducted on scientific and popular writings that discuss wayang kulit crafts. Triangulation techniques were used to obtain data validity. The data that had been collected was then analyzed using Interactive Analysis, including reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions and verification. Conclusions were verified with the formulation of problems and objectives so that research findings were produced.

4. Discussion

The art activities by wayang artisans in Butuh Hamlet demonstrate the Among System learning concept initiated by Ki Hadjar Dewantara. The *Among* system is a teaching and education method based on mutual caring, sharpening, and fostering or care and dedication based on love (Sugiarta et al., 2019).

4.1. Asih (Caring)

If you visit the hamlet, you will find other generally rural houses with yards and plants. Visitors will only find visual markers indicating the place of wayang production in each house, except for tables and chairs on the terrace with wooden cushions on them. The modesty of people's lives is reflected in their homes. The traditional Javanese house shows the philosophy of the Javanese people, which has the characteristics of a simple life (Kusuma & Damai, 2020). The Butuh Hamlet Artisans's House is open to anyone who wants to learn how to make wayang carving (*tatah*) and painting (*sungging*) on the spot. Apart from being a place for the artisan's family, the

residents' houses also function as a studio or workshop, and even as a place for everyone to learn how to make puppets.

Learning about wayang was also introduced to local elementary and junior high school children. They are gathered at the Joglo *Omah Wayang* to be trained in carving and painting puppets every weekend in the afternoon. Training is given by instructors from among senior or skilled artisans. This was able to respond to a complaint made by an artisan, Saiman, who said now when they come home from school they play cellphones, even though elementary school is the right age for children to learn to carve because their hands are still flexible (Pradipha, 2020).

This activity can bring closer interaction between citizens of all ages and the growth of a spirit of sharing knowledge with the next generation. If the children's training is carried out continuously, it is inevitable that the process of regeneration of artisans in Butuh Hamlet will occur and wayang crafts will be sustainable, as the hope of the puppeteer Ki Cahyo Kuntadi (2022) that the regeneration of wayang artisans will continue so that Butuh Hamlet remains a place to produce quality leather puppets.

In addition to carving and painting wayang, local young people also encourage documentation and publication of content on wayang making. They learned how to create video content for promotion on social media like facebook, and instagram by inviting film and television student instructors. Their social media content also contains video tutorials on how to make wayang. Modern technology and media make wayang closer to young people so that the wayang craft continues. Millennials can use social media as popular media to preserve cultural heritage (Arifin, 2017).

This training is a manifestation of the artisan's love and concern for the children in their environment. The craftsmen see and love children as potential future generations, so they share all the knowledge and skills they have with the children. Caring is an attitude of mutual affection (Masrukhah, 2020). In this case, craftsmen have applied the method of compassion in sharing the skills they have with their potential successors.

4.2. Asah (Sharpening)

Ki Bambang Suwarno's expertise and his wayang works have amazed the artisans of Butuh. In terminology, sharpening is enlightening each other with knowledge, sharing information, and sharing knowledge (Masrukhah, 2020). In this case, the Butuh Hamlet puppet artisans are very enthusiastic about learning from outside parties. Apart from the arrival of many workshop instructors held through the *Berseri Village* program, the artisans also *ngangsu kawruh* in the form of a workshop for a puppeteer who is also a wayang expert and retired ISI Surakarta officer, Ki Bambang Suwarno, about the development of shadow puppetry and its challenges in the future. Ki Bambang Suwarno's expertise and his wayang works impressed the artisans of Butuh Hamlet.

The workshop is intended to the enthusiasm of the craftsmen to continue learning and working in the world of wayang, in addition to fostering a sense of pride in the craftsmen's profession, among the many wayang experts outside the village of Butuh. The friction between artisans and wayang experts from outside the village can sharpen the artisans' thoughts, insights, and enthusiasm. In this way, the artisans of Butuh Hamlet have applied the sharpening method in self-development and their wayang crafts.

4.3. Asuh (Fostering)

Butuh artisans are closely related to the nearest educational institution, namely Elementary School (SDN) 2 Sidowarno. Both of them have collaborated in wayang learning. Artisans are allowed to enter the classroom to teach about wayang making. Mamik Raharjo said, "The parents and guardian teachers also support this activity (Pradipha, 2020).

Local content is a curricular activity to develop competencies that are tailored to the characteristics of regional potential (Burhanuddin, 2020), the content is in the form of material based on the needs of the community around the school. It is fitting that one day SDN 2 Sidowarno will have a curriculum with local content for making

wayang because the school is located in Butuh Hamlet, which is the center for wayang crafts. School institutions are a strategic medium for incorporating wayang learning as local content into the curriculum which is implemented in a more structured and fair manner for all children. Local content is a curricular activity to develop competencies that are adapted to the potential characteristics of the region (Burhanuddin, 2020), and in the form of material based on the needs of the community around the school. Thus, it would be very appropriate if one day SDN 2 Sidowarno has a local content curriculum for wayang making because the school is located in Need Hamlet, which is a center for wayang crafts.

The craftsmen also look after, pay attention to, and help the school and its students through learning wayang, even though they are not their own children, in order to preserve the wayang craft. There are already many vocational school students in the surrounding area who have apprenticed at the craftsmen's homes. Puppet makers also need to accept students for internships or home visits, including students from the ISI Surakarta who have related courses in their curriculum. This activity helped me study the wayang sungging procedure course at ISI Surakarta (Aisyah, 2022).

This interaction between industry and universities can be classified as teaching and learning collaboration (Garrick et al., 2004) (Anatan, 2008). The collaboration of artisans with students from surrounding educational institutions shows that the artisans have implemented the fostering method, which is an attitude of protecting one another (Masrukah 2020) (Kusumawati et al., 2023). Artisans also maintain, pay attention to, and help schools and their students through wayang learning, in order to preserve wayang crafts.

The artisans with the caring (*Asih*), sharpening (*Asah*), and fostering (*Asuh*) attitudes above reflect the *Among* System they practice in their artistic life. They have a “sense of belonging” (*handarbeni* in Java) to the wayang craft, which they inherited from their ancestors who had been puppet masters since the reign of Paku Buwono X, so they feel obligated to preserve it. The preservation of wayang is a form of sustainability as traditional art. The attitude and sense of Butuh artisans, in line with

the opinion which states that members have a sense of ownership is a factor that determines sustainability (Haneef et al., 2014).

The sense of belonging to Butuh Hamlet was also shown by the puppeteer Ki Purbo Asmoro, a famous puppeteer from Solo had a box of wayang prada made by a Butuh artisans. In providing opportunities for the younger generation, especially novice artisans, Ki Purbo Asmoro (2022) usually orders wayang creations for online performances, as he says: "Now I make aesthetic puppets, just one or two, for certain things, for example virtual performances. The inlay is not necessary to be done by Mas Tugimin. The young people assisted by Mas Tugimin can do it, too. In the future, it will also for preserving wayang."



Chart 1. The wayang craft continuity system
(Design: I.R. Kusumawati, 2023)

Ki Purbo Asmoro gave space for the artisans of Butuh to regenerate by delegating wayang-making to young people in his village as potential heirs. This is relevant to the statement, "I hope there must be a regeneration of wayang artisans, both sculptors, and makers, not to be cut off" (Ki Susilo Thengkleng, 2022). "Nowadays, it is difficult for the younger generation to be asked to pursue the tatah sungging profession, that is a concern for all of us. After all, wayang is our culture, ours,

ancestral heritage, if it is practiced it also brings good luck, really..." convincing suggestion from Ki Bambang Suwarno (2022).

The artisans of Butuh have made various efforts, starting from pursuing the profession of wayang artisans as an ancestral heritage that can fulfill their daily needs, competing and achieving the title of *Kampung Berseri*, to implementing the *Among* system (*Asih, Asah, Asuh*) in developing skills (*tatah sungging*) which owned, shows that community empowerment has been successful. This is in line with the opinion that states that the driving factors influencing the empowerment of village communities are economic needs, community awareness of preserving superior local potential, and interest in activities according to their abilities (Lestari, 2019).

Community empowerment based on efforts to preserve ancestral heritage, locality, and identity, increase the economy and welfare, as well as *dakwah* media can guarantee the realization of the sustainability of traditional arts (Kusumawati et al., 2023). D. Zamawi Imron said, "If someone is creative in understanding tradition, that wisdom can remind us of today's life" (Imron, 2008). The continuation of traditional art will lead to a better life.

5. Conclusion

Wayang as a traditional craft to meet the limited needs of the world for wayang kulit performances faces tough challenges both externally and internally. External factors are related to the market and the development of the times, while internal factors concern the necessities of life and the children who are expected to be their successors. However, the fact shows that wayang artisans in Butuh Hamlet can exist until now, a form of the continuation of wayang craft.

This sustainability is indicated by the fact that there are still many residents who pursue the profession of artisans both young and old, crafts are still the main source of income for residents, residents' belief that wayang is a medium of propaganda (*dakwah*), and the achievements of Butuh Hamlet, which earned the title of *Kampung Berseri*. Apart from that, they continue to work on promoting wayang crafts with the

Among System, in which they care, sharpen, and foster one another in developing wayang crafts so that they remain sustainable even though times are increasingly modern.

The ability to respond to internal and external factors needs to be developed in village communities so that they can move forward with the times. The Butuh Hamlet craft, which exists today and has a positive image and achievement, deserves to be used as a model for other regions wishing to develop their traditional arts. Thus, each region can have a superior product that reflects its unique characteristics.

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ARTISTIC : International Journal of Creation and Innovation

Publisher:
Program Pascasarjana
Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI) Surakarta

Available online at:
<https://jurnal.isi-ska.ac.id/index.php/artistic>

How to Cite:
Kusumawati, I. R. (2024). Religion and Culture Based Arts Sustainability Model in the "Among" System: Empirical Study in Butuh, The Wayang Hamlet. *ARTISTIC : International Journal of Creation and Innovation*, 5(2), 160-176, DOI: 10.33153/artistic.v5i2.6437