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Meanings behind community resistance in the play *Leng* and their cultural relevance: a theater-semiotics analysis

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ABSTRACT

The displacement of individuals from their homes, farms, rice fields, and other livelihood sources, particularly among marginalized populations, remains a pertinent issue in contemporary society. Bambang Widoyo SP's play *Leng* reflects events that exemplify the authoritarian and materialistic tendencies of those in power. This research endeavors to examine the various meanings of resistance evident in *Leng*, particularly in relation to materialism and authoritarianism, and to identify the role of local wisdom in the play. Employing qualitative methods and Krippendorff's content analysis, this study interprets the play through the lens of theater-semiotics. The findings illustrate that the resistance exhibited by characters such as Bongkrek and his peers against the oppressive and materialistic Juragan reflects the struggles of small communities against corrupt and authoritarian regimes, exemplified by Indonesia's New Order regime, which prioritized personal wealth accumulation. Furthermore, Mbok Senik's character embodies the importance of local wisdom as a means of achieving a contented life, especially in the twenty-first century.

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1. Introduction

During the modern era of Indonesian theater in the 1980s, plays were typically composed in the national language of Indonesian to ensure accessibility for audiences from diverse linguistic and ethnic backgrounds across the nation. In contrast, Bambang Widoyo SP's *Leng* (written 1985, published 1998) presents a unique case study as it is written in Javanese, amidst a landscape where many Javanese writers and dramatists opted for Indonesian as their medium of expression. *Leng* was deliberately written in Javanese. The play reflects the author's deep-seated concerns for the plight of marginalized individuals who have been left vulnerable to the policies of development that often favor the interests of the privileged classes. The play, when contextualized, highlights three pivotal themes, including (1) resistance against symbols of authoritarian power; (2) the contrast between materialistic-pragmatic characters and those who prioritize local wisdom values; and (3) the promotion of local wisdom as an ideal means of survival in a world characterized by materialism and authoritarianism. These themes are of immense significance in contemporary times, where life is replete with authoritarianism and materialism, and where the adoption of local wisdom values may offer viable solutions for enduring in the twenty-first century.

Thus far, a number of researchers have analyzed the play *Leng*. Wiharyanti conducted a study that specifically focused on the theme of the story (Wiharyanti, 2003), while Sumpeno (2007) concentrated on the intrinsic aspects of the story in terms of the characters' suffering but did not utilize any specific approach as its formal object. Furthermore, none of the previous researchers have touched upon the elements of materialism, authoritarianism, and local wisdom in the play. Also, the application of the theater-semiotics approach in examining *Leng* has not been attempted before, despite its potential importance in comprehending the meanings of the play. Abimanyu and Marsono, (2014) studied the structure of *Leng*, but they did not analyze its significance in the historical context of Indonesia from the

New Order Era to the Reformation Era, which is actually symbolically evident in *Leng*, and hence their study does not explore its meanings.

The New Order regime in Indonesia was characterized by widespread repression and systemic stigma against individuals and communities who held ideas considered to be contrary to the ideology of those in power. The New Order lasted from 1966 to 1998, instigating a political environment that was highly authoritarian, and centralizing the political hegemony of Indonesia's federal government (Jadidah, 2020). In addition to the centralization of the nation's politics, restrictions on civil liberties and economic and political inequality were common phenomena throughout the New Order era in Indonesia. In other words, the New Order era reflected systemic control from the central government, spurring a number of individuals to resist through cultural arts performances as a means of expression within the prevalent political and social strictures of the time.

This paper concentrates on three key themes, which include: (1) resistance to authoritarian power symbols; (2) materialistic-pragmatic characters juxtaposed with those who embody local wisdom; and (3) local wisdom as a solution for achieving an ideal life in the twenty-first century. These three themes form the focal point of this study. This study is premised on the notion that drama is a manifestation of human creativity. Widoyo SP, as the playwright of *Leng*, is part of society and uses the surrounding social reality as inspiration for his dramatic works, whether through realistic or symbolic forms, among others. The creation of *Leng* by Widoyo SP can be viewed as an attempt to respond to, engage with, and reimagine the realities he observes. The same can be said about Widoyo SP's creative process. His works are a response to the social reality of the oppression experienced by the marginalized, with an aim to communicate this reality and eventually reframe it through his dramatic works. In this regard, it is evident that dramatic works, including films, can serve as a means to articulate anti-developmentalism, anti-urbanization, and uphold the preservation of local cultures that have been marginalized (Taufiqurrohman et al., 2017).

2. Literature review

2.1. Resistance

The concept of resistance is commonly used to describe opposition or dissent against structures of authority or legitimacy, as noted by Murphy (Murphy, 2021). James C. Scott defines resistance as a response to pressures experienced by individuals or groups, resulting in rejection of change in their lives (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013). Nietzsche discussed Foucault similarly asserts that resistance is a natural consequence of power relations (Nietzsche, 2013). This form of resistance often emerges in situations where individuals or groups experience economic, political, or legal pressures that challenge their values and interpretation of reality, leading to responses to public regulations (Greenberg et al., 2020; Murphy, 2021). Sukmana illustrates various forms of resistance, including ridicule, cooptation, formal social control, violence, and silence, which can be expressed through symbolic languages and behaviors (Sukmana, 2016).

Performing arts have been known to incorporate resistance tactics, such as ridicule (Foley, 2015; Strother, 2021; Tazmini, 2021). According to Stam (2020), performing arts serve as not only a means of self-expression for the actors, but also a space for negotiating social resistance tactics (Stam, 2020). The resistance tactics are reflected not only in the structure of the story, but also in the characters' traits and portrayal, which challenge the dominant discourse in power (Ristić, 2020; Rivers, 2015; Wynne, 2020). Resistance tactics in performing arts contribute to the creation of meanings and decision-making in communities to uphold equality and equal access, as pointed out by Currás and Sastre (2020). Tohri et al., (2020) assert that resistance can lead to collective movements driven by a shared sense of solidarity and idealism, focusing on actions against power for change. Hence, resistance can be expressed not only structurally, but also culturally through performing arts, as suggested by Alpyspaeva and Abdykarimova (2022).

2.2. Modern theater

Modern drama or theater is a form of performing art that utilizes a literary script in its presentation. Abdulah and Dimiyati (2015), further differentiate modern drama from traditional drama by its use of

scripted dialogue, rather than improvised dialogue associated with traditional arts. According to Bekh et al., (2021), modern drama is a component of the cultural system that emerged as a result of Western modernization. The people of the city have created modern drama with a national character, and have shifted the context, creativity, taste and intention of drama by traditional artists (Figueira, 2019; Prushkovska, 2017; Raystifa, 2021).

Modern drama is also known as liberation drama (Cohen & Sarkar, 2021; Osman, 2014; Thompson & Jabouin, 2021). As explained by Ferrera Cuesta, (2020), modern drama is a performing art that often showcases forms of liberation from existing traditions. Modern drama possesses several characteristics, such as (1) incorporating traditional theater elements, (2) having themes that speak within a regional and national framework, (3) being acculturative and collaborative, and (4) containing specific contexts and meanings (Jen, 2016; Liang, 2021; Loxley & O'Neill Toning, 2016). Therefore, modern drama is not only a means of expression but also a means of reflecting values and expressing criticism towards a particular situation (Pandin et al., 2019). In his research, Rusmana, (2018) mentions the adaptation of the Sundanese folktale *Nata Sukma* into theatrical form as an example of modern drama that expresses imaginative resistance and critique towards the current reality, particularly due to the ecological damage caused by modernization and industrialization.

2.3. Theater-Semiotics

Semiotics, as defined by Sahid et al., (2017), is a scientific field that studies signs and their related aspects. In semiotics, signs can be perceived explicitly or implicitly (Cobley, 2016). Since semiotics concerns itself with the examination of sign systems, processes, and functions (Hénault, 2016), much of the literature on the subject focuses on sign processes or semiosis, which includes marking and communication, as well as signs and symbols (Schielke, 2019; Suryaningrum et al., 2020). Sign processes in semiology branches into semantics, syntax, and pragmatics (Borges, 2019). The use of semiotics in scientific fields has had a significant impact, extending beyond the atomistic understanding of signs proposed by Peirce and Saussure, who focused on decontextualizing signs (Yakin & Totu, 2014). In contemporary times, semiotics has undergone significant development, indicating that it is a fundamental field of study that should be included as a core discipline in education and the arts (Kuli & Väli, 2011).

The use of semiotics in theater arts has been employed to unveil the meanings behind the theatrical performances (Hadzantonis, 2022; Williamson, 2016; Xu & Tateo, 2022). According to Sahid, (2013), theater serves as a medium of communication where each element constitutes a sign. It was A.J. Greimas who initiated the discourse on theater-semiotics, wherein meanings are derived from the elements present in writing drama texts and their performance context. Semiotics in theater provides a metaphorical tool to analyze images, physical aspects, and sounds to uncover the intended meanings and contexts that actors aim to convey. This is because everything that appears on stage is a symbol possessing unique characteristics, properties, and attributes (Ovadija, 2018). Consequently, theater-semiotics concentrates on analyzing dramatic and performance texts that are often communicated through symbolic gestures, facial expressions, and language. Its primary objective is to comprehend how meanings are generated and transmitted through the system of symbols that constitute an entire artistic presentation (Sahid et al., 2017).

The semiotic approach to theater involves analyzing both play texts and performance texts. The play text serves as a significant sign structure, while performance texts comprise a complex set of theatrical signs that encompass various visual, aural, and kinetic aspects, which have been considered intriguing and can aid in comprehending the meanings of the entire drama text (Ovadija, 2018). Semiotics allows for a structural examination of drama texts, wherein signs are viewed as having two aspects, signifier and signified, according to Ferdinand de Saussure. Signifier is the concept or form of the sign, while signified is its meaning (Nöth, 1991). Within drama texts, most language signs are symbols. Semiotic analysis includes investigating both denotative and connotative meanings, as noted by Sahid, (2017) and Sui and Fan (2015). Denotative is the first-level meaning related to the interpreter's culture and ideology, while connotative as the second-level meaning is formed by the interpreter's ideological culture (Khafaga, 2022). It is noteworthy that this study focuses on the play text of *Leng*, rather than its performance text.

According to Petr Bogatyrev (Elam, 2002), connotations are signs that refer to other signs. The processes of connotation in various semiotic systems have been explored by many scholars of semiotics. Nöth, (1991, pp. 71–73) characterizes ‘connotative semiotics’ as a branch of semiotics that examines how semiotic systems serve as the medium of expression for other semiotic systems. Connotation is a secondary semantic function that establishes a signifier-signified relation at a higher level of signification. A given signifier may convey both a primary and a secondary meaning in a specific context. A signifier may also have multiple meanings at both the denotative and the connotative levels. The study of the meanings of signs encompasses both denotation and connotation (Sui & Fan, 2015).

3. Method

This study employed a literature review at the Indonesia Institute of the Arts Yogyakarta, situated in the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia. The study analyzed the text of the play *Leng* by Bambang Widoyo SP (1998), who has authored a total of seven plays. His plays are known to shed light on the struggles of the common people who are often marginalized by those in positions of power and economic privilege. In *Leng*, the playwright portrays the resistance of the character Bongkrek and his peers against Juragan’s authoritarian and materialistic behavior. Additionally, the character Mbok Senik is depicted as a symbol of local wisdom values that offer an alternative approach to Juragan’s oppressive and materialistic attitudes.

Given the type and characteristics of the data under investigation, it was determined that the application of a qualitative method was more suitable for this research. The application of such method proved to be beneficial in the development of a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject at hand (Vanner, 2018). To interpret the signs in the play *Leng* more deeply, a case study approach was utilized. The data collected for this study comprises of words, phrases, and sentences that act as signs in the play, and are related to the theme of resistance against authoritarianism and materialism. In addition, the data also includes local wisdom values that provide solutions for the twenty-first century society. The qualitative data was categorized based on their relevance to the themes of resistance to authoritarianism and materialism with regard to local wisdom values, which were identified through an analysis of the signs present in the play.

This study began with a careful reading of Bambang Widoyo SP’s seven plays: *Brug*, composed in 1982; *Suk Suk Peng* and *Rol*, both written in 1983; *Leng*, written in 1985; *Reh*, written from 1986 until 1987; *Tuk*, written in 1989; and *Dom*, composed in 1990. Most of Widoyo SP’s plays depict the plight of the lower classes who are oppressed by modern development and industry. *Leng* was selected as the sample for this study because it provides a more comprehensive depiction of the marginalization of small people than the other six plays. Moreover, *Leng* presents local wisdom values as an alternative solution to the disruption of industrial society. Thus, *Leng* was chosen as the most representative sample and its inclusion in this study is justified.

The initial data collection for this study involved a close reading of the play’s text. This enabled the extraction of relevant words, phrases, and sentences in *Leng* that pertain to the theme of resistance to authoritarianism and materialism with regard to local wisdom values. The subsequent phase of this study entails identifying and analyzing data related to characters in *Leng* who embody authoritarian and materialistic tendencies, as well as those who exemplify local wisdom values. In line with semiotic principles, these characters are regarded as significant signs that necessitate interpretation to derive meaning.

The Krippendorff’s content analysis was employed to examine and expose the significant aspects of the artwork, such as its content, meanings, and essential elements (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Data analysis in this study refers to the methodology carried out by which focused on three processes. First, the process of data reduction, which entails rearranging data into a more systematic form based on its classification according to the relevant situation, conditions and implications. Second, data verification, which is the process of assessing whether the data was reduced according to the questions asked. And finally, data description, or the process of displaying the obtained data and presenting it in the form of a table containing text and text narratives that have been verified according to the relevance of this study’s argument. From the results of these three processes, the data analysis stage is then carried out inductively as a basis for the interpretation of the collected data (Fernando, Galuh Larasati, et al., 2023; Fernando, Larasati, et al., 2023).

4. Results

In *Leng*, the characters' conduct reflects the challenges of contemporary life, encompassing social, economic, cultural, and ethical predicaments. These issues lead to the manifestation of characters who exhibit traits of dominance, capriciousness, cruelty, and materialism, straying from the ethical norms derived from local wisdom values. Conversely, some characters possess humanistic wisdom, guided by local wisdom as a moral compass. These characters can be categorized into three groups: those who resist authoritarianism, those who resist materialism, and those who view local wisdom values as a pathway towards resolving life's difficulties.

4.1. Resistance to authoritarianism

The play portrays Juragan's ambition to enlarge his factory by taking over the land belonging to the locals, including that of Bongkrek. Nevertheless, Bongkrek steadfastly opposes Juragan's authoritarian conduct and defends his entitlement to the land. Bongkrek acknowledges the land's importance as a valuable part of his heritage that must to be safeguarded. Despite the adversities he encounters due to Juragan's capricious actions, Bongkrek remains unwavering in his commitment to protecting his land, as shown in the following excerpt:

Pak Rebo:

Hey, hold on, Krek! You're not going to give up your yard to the east of the factory?

Bongkrek:

I'll put my life on the line. Even if the factory owner is to deploy all troops from the village and the entire regency, forget a whole yard, I will not surrender even a single thorn

Pak Rebo:

That's right, Krek! That's right. We inherited this land from our parents. It must be respected. It must be considered sacred as the graves in the village here.

Bongkrek:

The only inheritance of any value from my parents to my grandchildren is land. And now the factory's fighting for it. If we let this go on, they'll do whatever it takes. Soon maybe they'll have the gall to start evicting people from their graves. (Widoyo SP, 1998, p. 80)

Kecik:

What's really going on with Kang Bongkrek being chased by Juragan, Mbok?

Mbok Senik:

Don't know. I guess he's being made to feel like he's not at home here. In his own village. So that he'll leave soon. That land's been targeted by the factory.

Kecik:

So cruel.

Mbok Senik:

Life is cruel. Like for me and you. Doesn't our work here feel too hard? Just rolling through it like some lifeless thing... just going through the motions.

Kecik:

In the past, Kang Bongkrek once defended me and my friends when we were fired from the factory. Factories got rid of workers once the machines from abroad came. Kang Bongkrek, Kang Parno, Kang Kabul will defend themselves but Juragan's firing them. I don't understand the whole story. But I know they were punished. At first, he was moved to the security post. Then, every morning, Kang Bongkrek was asked to go before management at the head office. He was interrogated, and the police were called. I don't know how many times he can be taken out of the factory before his livelihood is at stake. (Bambang Widoyo SP, 1998, pp. 116–117).

Bongkrek's resistance to authoritarianism is exemplified by his fearless confrontation with Juragan, who had previously threatened to kill dissidents (Widoyo SP, 1998). The conflict arose when Bongkrek's wife, Yatmi, sold their land to pay for their sick child's treatment. Bongkrek was upset not only because Yatmi sold it without his consent, but also because the buyer was Juragan. Tragically, their son did not survive the illness. Bongkrek's frustration with Juragan's authoritarianism reached a boiling point, and he bravely challenged Juragan and others who turned a blind eye to the suffering of the oppressed.

The detrimental consequences of the factory's expansion on the local community are widely recognized. Nevertheless, Parno and Kabul opt for a subtler mode of resistance against Juragan's authoritarianism in

their fight to protect their land. Unlike Bongkrek, they refrain from openly challenging Juragan's actions. Despite this, the relentless agony eventually wears them down, making them susceptible to the persuasive overtures of Juragan's emissaries, who dangle job opportunities before them. Unfortunately, Parno and Kabul not only fall prey to these false promises but also meet a tragic fate unbeknownst to others (Widoyo SP, 1998). This depiction highlights the contrast between Bongkrek's unwavering resistance and the more vulnerable approach taken by Parno and Kabul, who prove unable to endure the ongoing hardships.

4.2. Resistance to materialism

Juragan's preoccupation with personal wealth and possessions underscores his materialistic outlook. He constantly frets over the possibility of losing his riches, leaving him in a perpetual state of anxiety, as if he were being pursued by thieves looking to rob his assets and ransack his factory. Juragan is trapped in a distressing world of delusions, rendering his life far from peaceful (Widoyo SP, 1998). Despite his vast wealth, he is unable to derive true enjoyment from it. In contrast, Bongkrek, despite living in poverty and relying on his income as a factory worker, staunchly refuses to part with his land for Juragan's factory expansion. This contrast is exemplified in the following exchange between Juragan and Bongkrek:

Juragan:

This is for the people.

Bongkrek:

So, why's everyone silent? Have they gone dumb?

Juragan:

This is for development

Bongkrek:

Development for whom?

Juragan:

It's for the future...

Bongkrek:

Whose future?

Juragan:

Hurry up! Quick, go there! The road is clear now

Bongkrek:

Everyone's chosen to be deaf, blind, all dumb! Scums...
(Wardoyo SP, 1998, pp. 123–124)

Juragan:

Regardless, I'll destroy anyone who gets in my way. Who'd dare to block me? The factory must go on. This supports the needs of many people. For the life of the community. For the sake of the future, for the sake of development. If you want to move forward, don't look left or right! Hide your ignorance.

Bongkrek:

Look, everyone makes themselves deaf.

Juragan:

Hurry up! Come on, quickly! Get there, get there quickly!

Bongkrek:

They'd rather not look. Everyone pretends to be blind. Talk. Go on, talk.

Juragan:

This is for the people.

Bongkrek:

You're all still silent? You've all gone speechless? (Wardoyo SP, 1998, pp. 123–124).

Juragan:

Dor...you have to get Bagong instead. Useless boy. In place of tomorrow's sacrifice we expand the factory to the east.

Bedor:

A sacrifice to expand the factory to the east? The land owner still lives on the land.

Juragan:

Don't worry. Someone has already made arrangements. Prepare envelopes of money for the high-ranking officials managing the land. I'm really itching to expand here. To expand the factory while there are sponsors. (Wardoyo SP, 1988, p. 112)

As the above excerpts demonstrate, Juragan continues to legitimize ways to expand his factory. He shows no concern for the suffering of the people around the factory Bongkrek is a staunch opponent of Juragan's accumulation of wealth at the expense of the impoverished workers and local community members who have lost their land to the factory expansion. Juragan, in turn, resorts to enlisting the support of the police to intimidate and potentially eliminate Bongkrek, who refuses to cease his resistance to the factory expansion (Widoyo SP, 1998).

Pak Rebo, another character in the play, shares a subtle opposition to Juragan's fixation on materialism. He disagrees with the proposed expansion of the factory, which would result in the displacement of the tomb of Kyai Bakal, a location he relies on for his livelihood as a caretaker (Widoyo SP, 1998). He expresses his dissent to those around him. As the intermediary for prayers to God at the tomb, he often receives payment from pilgrims who seek blessings for job promotions, business success, finding a soul-mate, and other such matters. In this respect, Pak Rebo is not entirely immune to materialism himself. In addition to his concern for the potential demolition of the tomb, he is also anxious about the possibility of others discovering the prayers he has memorized and uses to sustain himself financially.

Pak Rebo:

Hold up! I'll take care of it! How come you know all my prayers? Where did you steal them from? Damn it...! Prayers for earning a living being used heedlessly... Surely... Surely, you're the cause! No wonder my heart's not at peace these past few days. I'm losing sleep; I keep losing at gambling; food tastes all stale. It turns out that you're the culprit. Damned lblees! It's obvious you're planning to take my job, take away my rank.

Janaka:

How much does it cost?

Mbok Senik:

Bo, Rebo...Over here. He wants to donate.
(Pak Rebo turns around, focuses on Mbok Senik)

Pak Rebo:

How? Who?

Mbok Senik:

This man...This one here. (Looking at Janaka)

Pak Rebo:

Oh, please, come a little closer, brother. Since last night I've been thinking, how come our new brother hasn't paid yet? But it didn't feel right for me to ask. Please... (Wardaya SP, 1998, p. 103)

Pak Rebo:

Wow, here...before I forget. Sorry, Janaka, I'd like to ask you to put your money there in the money box, first. (points to the three money boxes laid in front of the grave awning)

Janaka:

How much, sir?

Pak Rebo:

Whatever you can sincerely give. There are three boxes. (Wardaya SP, 1998. p. 106)

Pak Rebo's inclination towards materialism is further demonstrated through his regular solicitation for celebratory feasts from guests whose prayers have been answered, despite the customary understanding that any reward for the caretaker is given voluntarily. This behavior is regarded as a breach of Javanese societal norms, resulting in subtle opposition from those visiting the tomb (Widoyo SP, 1998). The visitors reject Rebo's commercialization of the tomb, indicating their reluctance to participate in such practices.

Furthermore, there is the character of Kecik who also opposes Juragan's materialistic tendencies in seizing her land, albeit as a woman, she refrains from engaging in verbal confrontation like Bongkrek. Kecik's resistance manifests as apathy towards Juragan's actions.

4.3. Local wisdom values

The Javanese local wisdom that emphasizes a resigned and accepting (*nrimo*) attitude towards life, which is embodied by Mbok Senik, holds significant value in the context of resisting Juragan's materialistic and authoritarian behavior. This attitude enables her to avoid being ensnared by unrealistic desires or aspirations that are unattainable (Widoyo SP, 1998). As depicted in the play, Mbok Senik advises Bongkrek, who persistently confronts Juragan, to wholeheartedly embrace the adversity that comes his way.

Bongkrek:

I do too. It's just that Parno and Kabul are not steadfast enough.

Mbok Senik:

Krek, you're on your own now. Your pals have given up, don't deny that. Accept that for now. Let your heart settle. (Widoyo SP, 1998, p. 68).

Mbok Senik:

Patience. If it's all just talk behind your back, it's meaningless.

Bongkrek:

Should I confront this?

Mbok Senik:

Can you really win? Don't push too hard. Remember that later on your brother will bear the consequences. If you want to act, you have to be careful. Don't lash out without thinking, like Kabul and Parno. Up to now no one has heard from them. Where were they taken? No one knows if they're dead or alive. (Widoyo SP, 1998, p. 68)

Bongkrek:

Well... that's where the mistake lies. No wonder we keep losing. Getting trampled on constantly. The time to give in is over. Now people are looking out for their own safety. Continuing to choose to play deaf, dumb and blind. What we are facing is like an inanimate object. Without a heart.

Mbok Senik:

People who are silent are close to victory, whereas those who act a lot are closer to defeat. (Widoyo SP, 1998, p. 69)

Mbok Senik's advice to Bongkrek in the three excerpts above holds significant meaning. Should Bongkrek follow it, he would be better off. The values of Javanese local wisdom embodied by Mbok Senik indirectly serve as a form of resistance against the materialistic notions of Juragan and Rebo. By embracing the concepts of surrender and *nrimo*, Mbok Senik is able to navigate through life's upheavals with a greater sense of inner peace. In contrast, Bongkrek's open hostility towards Juragan ultimately leads to his death by being burned alive, while Juragan also burned in it. Meanwhile, at the end of the story, Pak Rebo disappears, his fate is unclear. Ultimately, Mbok Senik's adherence to these local wisdom values enable her to survive and thrive amidst the turbulent realities of life. This underscores the vital importance of local wisdom in enabling individuals to successfully navigate through life's challenges.

Bongkrek's adherence to the values of local wisdom is manifested in his strong desire to protect his ancestral land, which was passed down to him from his parents. This determination motivates him to challenge Juragan's authoritarian and arbitrary behavior. Bongkrek and his fellow villagers believe that their inherited land should be safeguarded and respected (Widoyo SP, 1998). Their commitment to these local values encourages them to resist Juragan's materialistic agenda, which ultimately results in Juragan calling on the security forces to suppress Bongkrek and his supporters.

The values of local wisdom that emphasize the importance of prudence and caution, as exemplified by Mbok Senik's approach, have significant implications for navigating life's challenges. Rather than being impulsive, Mbok Senik consistently displays a realistic and pragmatic perspective when approaching problems, and often provides helpful advice to Bongkrek. For instance, she encourages him to exercise caution and learn from others' experiences before taking action (Widoyo SP, 1998). Despite her wise counsel, Bongkrek disregards her advice, thereby illustrating his reluctance to adopt the prudent and measured approach advocated by local wisdom. Mbok Senik's adherence to the principles of resignation, *nrimo*, and avoiding rash behavior enable her to sidestep various difficulties in life.

5. Discussion

The subsequent analysis explores the significance of the symbols present in the play *Leng* by employing theater-semiotics, with a particular focus on the dramatic text. Saussure's theory asserts that signs in semiotics consist of two elements, namely the signifier and the signified (Nöth, 1991). Within the drama, the majority of the linguistic signs are represented through symbols, and their meanings are conveyed both denotatively (at the primary level) and connotatively (at the secondary level and beyond).

5.1. Meaning of land eviction

Through the semiotic approach of theater, the event of Juragan's attempt to seize Bongkrek's land (signifier) can be analyzed using Ferdinand de Saussure's perspective, which emphasizes the denotative and connotative meanings of a sign. Denotatively, the event can be interpreted as a strong man seizing the land of the weak (signified). Connotatively, the event can be viewed as a commentary on the displacement of people's land in the process of development, as seen in the case of reservoirs, offices, highways, toll roads, bridges, and ports built by the ruling regime in Indonesia. Often, people's lands are acquired through forced purchase or low compensation, which disadvantages the people. Those who resist such policies will be considered dissidents (Farchan, 2022) and may face intimidation and torture by the security forces. This can be seen in the case of the Kedungombo Reservoir in the 1980s and the Wadas Reservoir in 2022, among others. Bongkrek's and his peers' response to Juragan's policies can be seen through James C Scott's lens (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013) as a form of resistance in the face of significant pressure.

5.2. The meaning of authoritarianism

The incident of Bongkrek confronting Juragan recklessly (signifier) can be connotatively interpreted as a form of resistance by the Indonesian people against the authoritarian and arbitrary actions of the New Order regime (signified). Bongkrek and his peers' resistance to Juragan's power is due to various economic, political, and legal pressures. Informed by their beliefs and values in interpreting regulations and reality (Greenberg et al., 2020; Murphy, 2021), they respond to a regulation implemented in the public sphere. Bongkrek's attitude reflects the struggles of the Indonesian people who were often the victims of various New Order policies that violated their human rights (Juang et al., 1998). Under Soeharto's corrupt and nepotistic leadership, the people faced evictions, intimidation, and a lack of participation in the democratization process (Ashaf, 2006). According to Sukmana (2016), such policies led to popular resistance as a form of social control, culminating in the 1998 Reformation movement spearheaded by students and democracy activists, including Amien Rais, President Soeharto was successfully outstep. Since then, Indonesia has been considered more democratic than during the New Order Era.

5.3. Meaning of people's resistance to the industrial world

In the theatrical production, the actions of characters like Pak Rebo, Parno, Keci, and Kabul who engage in subtle forms of resistance to the eviction of their land (signifier) can be interpreted denotatively as a rejection of Juragan's factory expansion plans (signified). The characters' resistance takes the form of silent behavior and symbolic actions (Sukmana, 2016). On a connotative level, their actions allude to real-life cases in which the expansion of industrial factories has resulted in land seizures and evictions, often met with opposition from local communities. Despite the use of manipulative and oppressive tactics by capital owners who collude with local authorities and security forces, not all members of affected communities accept the acquisition of their land without resistance. In some cases, the authorities resort to buying land at lower than market prices. A similar case of land acquisition is that of PT Wirakarya Sakti, which claimed ownership over agricultural land in Jambi that the Tebo Farmers Union believed belonged to them (CNN Indonesia, 2020). According to Foucault's power theory, wherever power is exercised, there is always resistance (Niesche, 2013). In the play, Bongkrek and his peers' resistance to eviction in the face of Juragan's factory expansion plans is a clear example of such resistance.

5.4. Meaning of conglomerate's greed

Juragan's actions to amass wealth (signifier) denote his insatiable greed for wealth and profit (signified). Connotatively, Juragan's actions mirror those of the black conglomerates in Indonesia who relentlessly seek to expand their businesses and accumulate more wealth, violating various laws and regulations in the process. These conglomerates have been known to evade taxes, operate without proper licenses, and illegally evict people from their land. In the pursuit of profit, they disregard environmental conservation

regulations and pollute the environment, causing harm to the local communities. This phenomenon is not new and has been present since the New Order Era, where many conglomerates evaded credit from banks, contributing to the downturn of the Indonesian economy (Indonesia Corruption Watch, 2019). PT Freeport Indonesia, a gold mining company in Papua, is a prime example of a conglomerate that has caused environmental degradation in the local community (Astuti & Putranti, 2018). The black conglomerates' insatiable greed for wealth and disregard for ethical business practices has had detrimental effects on the environment and society, highlighting the need for stronger regulations and accountability.

5.5. Meanings related to corrupt officials

The portrayal of Pak Rebo as a grave caretaker who monetizes religious rituals (signifier) denotatively suggests that he is flouting established societal norms (signified). Pak Rebo's conduct is connotatively linked to the problem of corruption among officials in Indonesia. Corruption is a severe infringement of society's social and economic rights and can no longer be categorized as an ordinary crime, but rather an exceptional one. Corruption is a societal malady that undermines life and is therefore not tolerated by the public (Pertiwi, 2018). The bureaucracy in Indonesia is rife with officials who engage in embezzlement of public funds (Setiawan et al., 2017). Practically every government institution harbors corrupt individuals. Several regional heads, governors, and ministers have been apprehended by Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission for their participation in corrupt activities, despite their status as elected officials (Suhendi, 2020). Typically, officials implicated in corruption scandals involve their subordinates in these illicit dealings.

5.6. Meanings related to local wisdom

The play *Leng* depicts the demise of Juragan, along with his burning factory, while Mbok Senik and several other characters manage to survive until the end of the story. The denotative interpretation of these events is that the character of Mbok Senik, who adheres to the values of local wisdom *nrimo*, is able to persevere while Juragan, who is characterized by authoritarianism, materialism, and disregard for local wisdom, meets a tragic end. *Nrimo* is an attitude of being able to accept whatever happens to us without rebelling and protesting (Suseno, 2001). Local wisdom is a system of traditional knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation in the community. In a broader sense, this event can be interpreted as a call for Indonesians to look towards local wisdom values in order to navigate the challenges of the twenty-first century. Local wisdom can play a role in absorbing, managing, and filtering foreign influences according to local capabilities and wisdom. This period is rife with moral decay, uncertainty, materialism, authoritarianism, unbridled modernization, and cutthroat global competition, among others, making it difficult to survive under such circumstances. Therefore, an alternative path based on truth is imperative in order to survive, and this path can be found in ethnic local wisdom values of Nusantara (Indonesia). These values offer practical solutions to various life challenges, including the maintenance of harmonious life and relationships (Takwa et al., 2022). Moreover, works of art such as drama can aid in preserving marginalized local cultures (Taufiqurrohman et al., 2017) (Table 1).

6. Conclusion

This study finds that *Leng's* drama has a context with socio-political conditions in Indonesia since the New Order era until now, especially those related to industrialization, authoritarianism and corruption. From the analysis of denotative meaning, it can be seen that the author has reminded readers about industrialization that is not environmentally sound, authoritarian leadership, corruption in various levels of society. On the other hand, the author also reminds us of the importance of local wisdom so that humans can survive in the 21st century.

This study can contribute to an understanding of the adverse effects of industrialization that are not environmentally sound, undemocratic leadership, and the dangers of corruption that have spread to various levels of society. The author offers a lifestyle that is based on local wisdom so that people are

Table 1. Table of denotative and connotative meanings.

Resistance type	Description	Denotative and connotative meanings
Resistance against the land eviction	Bongkrek fought against the Juragan, who intended to do land eviction for factory expansion.	Denotatively, the action that Bongkrek does indicates the brave of ordinary people fighting against the capital owner. Connotatively, this event refers to the New Order ruler in Indonesia (President Soeharto) and Reformation Reigm in developing roll road infrastructure, dams, and bridges, often leading to land eviction without reasonable compensation.
People's resistance against the authoritarianism	Bongkrek confronted the Juragan for being authoritarian and arbitrary against ordinary people.	Denotatively, Bongkrek's attitude means that he realized his rights as a person that the Juragan had seized. Connotatively, it means that the Indonesian people were victims of the policies of the New Order regime, which often violated human rights. The policies of the New Order regime often silenced public participation in voicing democracy in various fields and intimidated human rights activists.
Resistance against the industrial world	Rebo, Parno, Kecik, dan Kabul subtly refused the land eviction for the industry.	Denotatively, the attitude of Rebo et al. means that they could no longer stand being bullied. Connotatively, their actions refer to various actual cases of industrialization in the New Order and Reformation Eras, which evicted people's land in its industrial expansion. Sometimes, they colluded with regional heads and security forces to intimidate people into accepting them. The people refused because the authorities usually bought land at low prices.
Resistance against the conglomerates' greed	The Juragan collected as much treasure as he could.	Denotatively, Juragan's actions mean that he is greedy. Connotatively, his actions refer to black conglomerates in Indonesia, with many business entities still wanting to increase their business. Also, they do not pay taxes, evict people's land and damage the environment.
Resistance against the officials' corruption	Rebo drew an entrance fee at the tomb, which was free.	Denotatively, Rebo's actions deviated from the prevailing customs. Connotatively, it means several officials who commit corruption. The Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) has imprisoned many regents, governors, and even ministers for their corruption.
Local wisdom solution	Mbok Senik used local wisdom as her way of life.	Denotatively, the event where Mbok Senik was still alive means that people guided by local wisdom can overcome various life problems. Connotatively, this means that the values of local wisdom can solve various life problems in the modern era, which are all materialistic. It includes maintaining harmonious life and society and interacting with others based on morality and integrity.

more physically and mentally prosperous. For the sake of survival amidst a modern world of materialism, individualism and rationalism, spiritual values are necessary for the sake of balance. In this context, spir- itual values originating from local Javanese wisdom can serve as an alternative approach to life.

The scope of this study is confined to the analysis of one drama, *Leng*, and thus, it cannot present a complete portrayal of the detrimental impact of authoritarian and materialistic conduct on society. In order to draw more meaningful conclusions and generalize the research findings, a comparative analysis of multiple dramas with similar themes, such as the forced eviction of common citizens, is necessary. This will enable a thorough examination of the commonalities and differences between the works and assist in identifying the underlying reasons for the support or opposition to authoritarian and materialistic behavior. In future research, it is recommended to include a larger number of drama samples to accurately map, correlate, and comprehend the dynamics of such behavior.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Nur Sahid, serving both as a researcher and a lecturer within the Department of Theatre, has further expanded the realm of theater studies through his exploration of modern and traditional theater forms, integrating semiotic and sociological methodologies into the examination of theatrical art. The contributors to this document are associated with a variety of arts-focused academic institutions throughout Indonesia. This study includes contributions from Nur Sahid of the Department of Theater, Faculty of Performing Arts, at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts in Yogyakarta.

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