

# APPLICATION OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURE VLADIMIR PROPP AND EDMUND BURKE FELDMAN OF HORNBILL SYMBOL THROUGH ENSERA WAT BUJANG SUGI FOLKLORE

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**Abstract:** This research was conducted to examine the effectiveness of Vladimir Propp's narrative structure and Edmund Burke Feldman theory on the Hornbill symbol through folklore of Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi. The method used in this study is based on the morphological theory of Vladimir Propp and Edmund Burke Feldman theory as a second. The objective of this study is to carry out an academic study on how the narrative structure of Vladimir Propp and Feldman theory implemented toward Hornbill symbol in the folklore of Iban Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi. To analyze the data, the researcher classified the scene according to 3 important elements, namely setting, character and theme. 4 experts in Iban folklore and 4 visual artists were interviewed. Data collection was conducted from interviews and documentation. The study uses descriptive qualitative methods and narrative analysis.

**Keywords:** Narrative Analysis, Vladimir Propp, Edmund Burke Feldman, Iban Folklore, Hornbill Symbol

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Your Folklorists and researchers often create digital archives to preserve, protect, and organize folklore materials. This is to provide a systematic and accessible way to manage various elements of folklore such as folklore, myths, legends, folk music, customs, and other traditional expressions (Abd Rahim, 2014). As we all know, Malaysia is a diverse country with a rich cultural and tradition tapestry, and each state has its own collection of folklore that reflects local traditions, beliefs, and customs. In this study, folklore is important to preserving and passing the cultural heritage to the new generation today. In this new era, they serve as a unique form of storytelling that encapsulates the values, beliefs, traditions, and wisdom of culture including Borneo legend folklore as known as Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi.

The *Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi* (Folklore) or the Legend of Wat Bujang Sugi is a popular Iban epic in the form of a traditional song chanted by an experienced bard either for entertainment or for healing a critically sick person. The epic has been recorded in Radio Malaysia Sarawak and Tun Jugah Foundation. It has also been published into books in its poetical format and has been converted into a novel by an author, Jantan Uambat of Tun Jugah Foundation upon which this research is based.

In the folklore, Hornbill Festival or *Gawai Burong Kenyalang* is the highest and a major significant of traditional festival celebrated by the Iban people until today. Hornbill Festival is associated with the Iban's traditional animistic beliefs and involves the celebration of the especial harvest season, complete with various rituals and ceremonies. Hornbill Festival also part of a celebration deeply embedded in the cultural, spiritual, and social fabric woven such as *Pua Kumbu* of the Iban community in Sarawak. It serves as a reminder of the community's roots, a time for gratitude for the harvest, and a vibrant expression of cultural identity. These narratives usually involve on recounting the historical, events, genealogies, and moral lessons.

As mentioned by Constantinou and Andreou (2022), as a storyteller, it is their scope to bringing the folklores alive. In Sarawak folklore, the storyteller, and the artist play an important role in maintaining the vitality of their culture and tradition by ensuring that the culture heritage is not lost and keep alive. This folklore of Wat Bujang Sugi must be appreciated by future generation like the others folklore such as *Apai Saloi*, *Bujang Berani*, *Pak Kadok* many more. In Iban culture and tradition, Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi only well known among certain society and group. But in contemporary world today, the folklore are allowed to be more advance as the traditional writing and technology has been use for documentation towards preservation such as folklore in written, digital forms such as animation and visualization whereas intangible to tangible form. Despite of technology changes, the essence of traditional folklore remains a vital part of many

societies. As folklore is a dynamic and part of the living cultures, it's always allowing the creativity, adaption, and reinterpretation over time to the artist as a main medium in interpreting the visual of the folklore alive. As far as folklore transmission relies on memory, oral performance, and community participation, this was making the folklore as fundamental part of the cultural heritage in the Iban society.

Moreover, in this folklore of Wat Bujang Sugi, the symbol of hornbill is a vital visual and play an important role in Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi. A symbol, part of the powerful tools for communication, cultural expression, emotional connection, and the conveyance of complex ideas. The hornbill symbol also helps in shaping the individuals as a Iban and the societies understand and interact with the world around them. Through this research, the audience will be able to understand the symbol of Hornbill *Burong Kenyalang* in Wat Bujang Sugi folklore, that representing via contemporary artwork as installation art.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term of Hornbill Festival is associated with the indigenous people of Sarawak, a state in Malaysia on the island of Borneo. The Hornbill Festival is a significant cultural and religious celebration among the Iban people, who are one of the major ethnic groups in Sarawak. This festival is deeply rooted in the traditional animistic beliefs of the Iban community. The Iban people also belief in symbol that referring the God. In their belief system, there are symbols and motifs that hold significance and are often associated with their understanding of the divine or the spiritual realm. As humans and creativity are deeply rooted in our nature, cultural diversity, and the evolving landscape of social and technological developments. This dynamic interplay continues to shape the way individuals and societies experience, interpret, and engage with the world around them.

According to Sarah (2021), a symbol is a form that gives meaning to every word or sentence contained in a literary work. This also referring to the symbol in folklore of Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi. Apart from that, the symbol also contributed to the combination of "ritual" and "language" in the context of ritual languages often imparts specific traits that distinguish them from everyday language use. Mohamed et al. (2021) defined that the term "ritual" carries the meaning of holy and sacred, usually related to the spiritual matter. According to Bakhir et al. (2018), Traditional folklore is also including folk music and song, bardic legends, animal fables, ghost stories, epics, fairy tales, symbolic lore, and mythologies. In this folklore, characters, setting, and storyline has its unique set of strengths. Meanwhile, Michalopoulos and Xue (2019), traditionally held beliefs, customs, and stories of a community are collected and passed down from

generation to generation through oral tradition. Understanding the historical and cultural context in which folktales were created enriches the interpretation of these narratives. They become windows into the past, offering insights into the worldview, values, and challenges faced by the people who crafted and shared these timeless stories.

According to Telban (2022), in essence, narratives in folklore serve as a fundamental means of human expression, communication, and understanding. They can be factual or fictional, traditional or contemporary, and they come in various forms, each with its own unique characteristics and purposes. Whether rooted or steeped in imagination, narratives play a crucial role in shaping cultures, preserving histories, and entertaining audiences. There are many ways to present a narrative, such as through a series of spoken or written words, still or moving images, or any combination of these, as well as in the context of a healing process. Dibaba (2021), defined that narrator is derived from the Latin verb *narrare* (to tell), which is itself derived from the adjective *gnarus* (to narrate) or (knowing or skilled). Along with argumentation, description, and exposition, the four rhetorical modes of discourse include narrative in its broadest sense. In other words, it is a fiction writing technique where the narrator speaks with the reader directly and without intermediaries. It was also explained that a narrative is simply an account of an event sequence that takes place in space and time, rather than a collection of events.

Their development is not random but rather follows an ordered sequence of events linked together by the logic of cause and effect. It is likely that narratives predate the dawn of civilization on earth. Cave art has been linked to visual storytelling for at least 30,000 years, according to historical sources. People also used to tell each other stories before writing them down. According to previous research by Scalise Sugiyama (2001), the design of narrative is unlikely to have evolved by coincidence. It is a species-typical, reliably developing, complicated cognitive activity. Furthermore, the folklore record demonstrates that narrative content remains consistent across cultures. Meanwhile Cragoe (2016) ,narrative has been used to pass culture down through generations, help people understand their surroundings, and provide a sense of community and identity through telling and listening, as well as the unique characteristics of the characters and stories by themselves.

Folklore and mythology are the most common surviving stories that connect us to our ancestors. Folklore can reveal information about history, experience, life perspective, culture, religion, politics, dreams, wishes, and any other activity in the area. This demonstrates how folklore influences reality by describing the state of society in the past. Society's previous lives play an essential role in determining its future lives. The history of human society has been characterized by the release of restrictions and the acquisition of freedom through improved capabilities (Cardoso da Silva et al. 2021).

Through folklore, a culture can learn from its ancestors' life to enhance their own lives

in the future. Lesmana et al. (2015) has stated that the advantages were their interesting package, story and illustration.

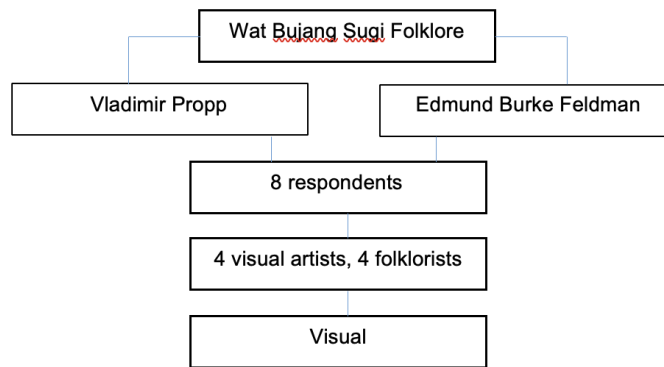
Apart from that as explained by Wicaksono and Macaryus (2019) the folklore, reflecting local wisdom passed down orally at first, had educational values, according to the author. Despite from that Nanda et al. (2021) describe how teaching moral ideals to youngsters through folklore is more effective since it is understandable and grasps the implicit moral lessons. The researcher is also found that, there are values that can improve our characters, namely: religion, independence, curiosity, hard work, responsibility, honesty, creativity, and the spirit of working hard (Chamalah 2019).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 *The application Structure Narrative of Vladimir Propp and Edmund Burke Feldman theory***

In this study, the main methodology applied in the study of Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi's was from Vladimir Propp and Edmund Burke Feldman. The first theory of Vladimir Propp was used as a main method to define the 31 morphology components to gather the data before interview. The data finding was obtained during the interview session with 4 visual artists and even 4 folklorists were interviewed to obtain data. From the data findings, the researcher produces a visual of the findings which is the hornbill symbol. In fact, researchers have held exhibitions of the results of these findings.

In this research is more focusing on the narratives from the participants which collected through semi-structured interviews. The guided interview merely through interviewing namely the informal conversational interview, semi-structured interview and the standardized open-ended interview. The most significant advantage of this qualitative method allows actual participants to communicate and convey their thoughts and experiences about Iban folklore directly from own perspectives, without intertwine from third party such as interpreter. When conducting interview with semi structured approach, the interview structure is flexible and allow conversation progress naturally and gather more information that unfamiliar or have been discussed effectively.



**Figure 1:** The flow of the methodology analysis Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi

#### 4. DATA FINDING AND ANALYSIS

This study shows that the theory of Vladimir Propp is significant to apply in this folklore, Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi. Propp's even states that the function in the story will produce setting, characters and theme. Through the 3 based element namely setting, character and theme, the audience will know the outcome and moral values that can be taken from the whole story. Based on the analysis that has been carried out from the research, the respondent data was accurate and most of them was stated and mentioned that in the folklore, Hornbill Festival was the end of the scene and main outcome from the data finding. The research also come out with the visual of hornbill symbol according to the interview data. Benedict Sandin the Iban researcher was mentioned about that *Gawai Burong Kenyalang* was one of the highest festivals in Dayak community, Iban dan Bidayuh. The main reason of *Gawai Burong Kenyalang* has been held because to honor the hero of the Iban after their success in war expedition. According to Kreditsu (2023), Hornbill Festival has led to a resurgence of pride in our indigenous heritage thereby revitalizing celebrations of traditional indigenous festivals.

This festival is important for Iban community. This shows that Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi has a religious and spiritual significance such as in sacred meanings. In the folklore, the hero, Wat Bujang Sugi was the main character in the folklore. Through the journey of the hero, he has gone through a lot of challenges until the war expedition. In the folklore, the war expedition that led by the hero has won. Sugi's reputation as a warrior grew tremendously. The folks unanimously made him the leader at a big meeting to plan a raid against their traditional enemy across the expansive sea, Raja Ribai. Mentioned about the symbol of the hornbill, symbols hold profound religious and spiritual significance in the Iban community. They can represent deities, spiritual concepts, or rituals. The folklore, religious symbols are used in worship, prayer, and

religious art, serving as a means of connecting individuals to their faith especially in Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi folklore.

#### ***4.1. The Visual of Hornbill Symbol from Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi Folklore***

In artwork, symbol is one of the main objects or images and it is providing artist with a powerful mean in communication and expression. In Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi folklore, the hornbill symbols contain complex ideas, emotions and concepts into visual representations that easily understood by the audience. Apart from that, symbol also serve as a visual language and allowing artist to convey the meaning in more universally and accessible way. Therefore, by using symbol also the artist can use it to carry cultural r historical significance. The artist also can use them to connect with their work in a broader context. The artists also can communicate the ideas that resonate with specific communities or reference historical events, traditions, or belief systems through symbol.

In this research, the researcher uses hornbill symbols to infuse the artwork with personal and emotional meanings. The hornbill symbol to the research holds a deep significance for the artist, serving as a visual representation of experiences, beliefs, and feelings. This has allows for a more personalized connection between the artist and the audience. In summary, hornbill symbols in artwork serve as powerful tools for communication, expression, and interpretation. They allow artists to convey meaning, establish connections with cultural and historical contexts, and engage viewers on multiple levels of ages. The use of symbols enriches the artistic experience by providing depth, layers of meaning, and a bridge between the artist and the audience. There are scenes within a story, which is part of the narration. A scene is described as a place where something occurs or a setting in a story or folklore in which one or more people interact through action or speech. By applying the theory of Vladimir Propp, the folklore of Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi abstract the potential scenes that contain three of the most important elements, namely setting, character, and theme in an interesting way.

Propp's theory is a fundamental structural analysis, and it is possible to find it in its original form in folklore after it has gone through several transformations. But folklore has always maintained the same structural framework, even when it has been transformed into various forms. Even though Propp's theory is based on Russian folklore, these functions can be found in a variety of other types of stories, including comedy, myth, epic, romance, and stories in general, among other things. As a result, the Propp research model can be applied to the analysis of the Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi narrative.



**Figure 2:** The interpretation of Hornbill symbol in Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi through Visual

The figure 2 shows the visual of hornbill symbol that representing the whole folklore as a main subject. Folklore, as a multidimensional cultural expression, takes various forms that can be visually represented. For example, paintings can capture the vibrant traditions and stories passed down through generations, showcasing the rich tapestry of folklore. In this visual, the hornbill symbol was place at *ruai* or veranda. *Ruai* or Veranda was a meeting point for any celebration and events at the longhouse. In the Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi folklore, the Iban people held the *Gawai Burong Kenyalang* at the veranda of the longhouse. This symbol was implemented from the bird of hornbill as an iconic to Sarawak people.

Benedict Sandin was one of the Iban expert in cultural and Iban tradition, saying that the *Gawai Burong Kenyalang* was one of the highest festivals in Iban community. This festival is to honor the successful of the hero who winning in the war expedition. According to Kreditsu (2023), Hornbill Festival has caused a resurgence of pleasure in our indigenous historical past thereby revitalizing celebrations of conventional indigenous festivals. For Sarawak people, *Burong Kenyalang* as known as Rhinoceros Hornbill and that is part of National Bird in Borneo. In addition, the visual of the hornbill also represent the tradition of the Iban people and highlighting the celebration of the cultural diversity. To understand the methodology that behind folklore of Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi, installation art has been used and applied in this research.





**Figure 3:** The Installation Art from The Data Finding and The Interview Data

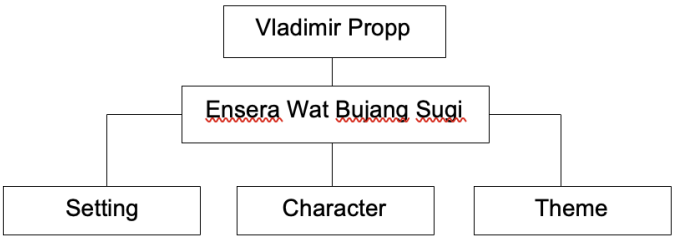
Figure 3 shows that the whole visual of the installation artwork from Wat Bujang Sugi folklore. The small cube represents the first journey of Wat Bujang Sugi until the end of the expedition according to the Vladimir Propp theory. The main data was on the wall, the symbol of the Hornbill that took place at the *ruai* or veranda, meeting point for the Iban people.

By using flowcharts or visual in this research, it can help to illustrate the process of identification, documentation, and the analysis of the folklore. This also depicting the steps taken by folklorists to study underrepresented groups and Iban cultural expressions. Another visual representation also could be timeline that depicted the evolution of the folklore over time, showing the transition from traditional form of transmission as like oral storytelling to modern form as means as written text and digital form.

These visual representations also not only providing a snapshot of folklore and its various aspects of side but also helps aid in comprehending the complex methodology that employed by folklorists and the artist. The visualization of folklore and its methodology is crucial in capturing its multidimensional nature and understanding the processes involved in studying it (McGregory, 2016). By visually representing folklore and the methodology behind it, more comprehensive understanding of its multidimensional nature and the processes are involved in studying and it can be

achieved. Visual representations of folklore and its methodology are essential in capturing the multidimensional nature of this cultural expression and understanding the processes involved in studying it.

**4.2. The Visual The 3 Element That Influence the Finding**



**Figure 4:** The 3 Important Elements in the Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi Finding

**5. DISCUSSION**

In the discussion, that based on the analysis by using Propp morphology theory, the narrative of structure Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi resulting that the application of Propp narrative structure using hornbill symbol through Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi folklore was successful. Therefore, the positive moral values also and were obtained from the story of Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi are contained in the whole story. In addition, the young generation should learn and inherit their tradition and culture and the positive moral values in the story. Through these various themes, folklore plays a vital role in transmitting moral values, cultural norms, and societal expectations from one generation to another. Folklore serves as a dynamic and accessible means of instilling ethical principles and shaping the moral compass of individuals within a community.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In a conclusion, the use of Propp's morphology has been use in wide range of narrative by all discipline and academician that not only specific to folklore only. In Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi, the theory significance extends far beyond and have the potential applied in the narrative thereby making it an important point for reference in the research of folklore as well as interpretation. Meanwhile, Edmund Burke Feldman theory helps in visualization of the finding of the folklore in term of visualization. The research also provides a comprehensive and reflective synthesis of the research finding, interpreting all the scene through both theories Vladimir Propp and Edmund Burke Feldman theories. In term of practical implications, this research able to demonstrate the interesting visual. Apart from that, the researcher able to understand the folklore especially from Betong area. The researcher also contributes meaningfully to the advancement of knowledge in the field of folklore and visual for future research especially for Tun Jugah Foundation reproducing the Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi Folklore in second edition of novel.

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