

Identification of The Character Figures Visual Style in Wayang Beber of Pacitan Painting

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Abstract

This paper describes a transformation of wayang beber of Pacitan character figures visual style and identification of its features. Wayang beber is one of wayang forms; it is a traditional theater art that originated on Indonesian island of Java. It uses series of painted scroll as storytelling medium. Wayang beber is rare form of wayang, today it only could be found in Pacitan city, in east Java, and Wonosari in Yogyakarta. Wayang beber found in Pacitan called wayang beber of Pacitan. Wayang beber of Pacitan has distinct visual style to depict human figure. This visual style is one of pinnacle of Javanese artistic tradition that has strong influence within Javanese society. It is a part of traditional artistic knowledge that should be preserved and developed. The main problem for preservation is a lack of visual and textual documentation. Our research on this paper is focusing on a study of the visual style of wayang beber of Pacitan character figures. The purpose is to compile an artistic knowledge for preserving wayang beber tradition. We traced the origin of the visual style, and identified the distinguishable features. As a result, we found four important features on the visual style; those are stylized shape, distorted proportion, outline drawing, and polychromatic color.

Keywords: wayang beber of Pacitan history, wayang beber of Pacitan visual style, Indonesian cultural heritage

1 Introduction

Wayang is an Indonesian traditional theatre art that originated on Indonesia Island of Java. Wayang has many forms; one of them is wayang beber. Wayang beber uses series of painted scroll as medium. Only two sets of wayang beber could be found today. The first one is kept in city of Pacitan, in East Java, and the second one is kept in Wonosari, Yogyakarta. The first one now is known as wayang beber of Pacitan (see Fig.1) and the second one known as wayang beber of Wonosari. Wayang beber initially use in a traditional ceremony to pray for safety and prosperous in life [1]. For this reason, wayang beber considered as a sacred relic by the local community.

In 2003, wayang was recognized by the UNESCO as Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. By this recognition, wayang need to be safeguarded. According to UNESCO [2] the importance of intangible cultural heritage is on the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it. In the case of wayang, it consists of multidimensional knowledge including knowledge of visual arts and crafts [3]. Our paper discusses this knowledge of visual art and craft behind wayang beber, especially wayang beber of Pacitan.

Wayang beber of Pacitan and wayang beber of Wonosari, both have a distinctive visual style to depict human figures. This visual style could be seen as one of pinnacle of Javanese artistic tradition. Research by Nuning Adisasmito [4] found that the visual style of wayang beber has strong influence for Javanese illustration in 19th century. It also inspires some

Indonesian visual artists today, such as Wayang Beber Metropolitan Community in Jakarta, and an artist named Dani Iswardana from Surakarta, Indonesia. They not only use wayang beber as media for their work, but they adopt its visual style as well.

Visual style is a distinguishable ensemble of visual characteristics, qualities, or expression in the work of art [5]. The visual style of wayang beber of Pacitan could become a valuable artistic knowledge for the development of Indonesian art. However the main problem is lack of documentation. Until now, only few researches dedicate research on wayang beber, especially on the visual aspect. As a consequence the existence of wayang beber of Pacitan is in danger. Not only the



Figure1. Wayang beber of Pacitan scroll

knowledge but also the artefact of wayang beber of Pacitan will be lost, since the condition of its original painting now is very poor.

To preserve wayang beber of Pacitan, we make a project to design a digital documentation and promote wayang beber of Pacitan. This paper explains a chapter of the project which tries to extract the artistic knowledge behind wayang beber of Pacitan, especially related to the visual style of its figures.

This paper consists of two parts. In the first part we traced origin of the visual style of wayang beber of Pacitan figure, and studied its transformation. In the second part we analyzed distinguishable features of the visual style as the result of the transformation.

2 Origin and Transformation of wayang beber of Pacitan figure visual style

The story spread within the Pacitan locals, as explained by Wartyo [1], said that wayang beber of Pacitan was inherited from Majapahit Kingdom era around 14th century in Java. Wayang beber of Pacitan paintings were given to Nala Derma, the first wayang beber performer from Pacitan as a gift for healing the Majapahit princess. Then the paintings were inherited from one generation of performer to the next in Pacitan.

However we see a contradiction between this story and the style of wayang beber of Pacitan figures. We studied the wayang beber of Pacitan figures and compared it with another type of wayang that called wayang *kulit purwa*. Wayang *kulit purwa* is the most popular type of wayang in Indonesia, many researches and documentation could be found related to this type of wayang. We found that the figures in wayang beber of Pacitan and wayang *kulit purwa* have very similar appearance. A paper written by Koesoemadinata explained that the appearance of wayang *kulit purwa* figure was begun in Islamic period in Java [3]. It was a result of Islamic values inclusion into the wayang art. Therefore we oppose that wayang beber of Pacitan was made at Majapahit Kingdom era. Majapahit was a Hindu kingdom that ruled Java before Islamic period. Wayang was made under the patronage of reigning monarch, so that wayang figures that was influenced by Islamic values wouldn't made under the Hindu patron.

Nevertheless several literatures infer there is a wayang beber painting that was made within Hindu period of Majapahit. The painting was painted by the son of Majapahit King, Brawijaya in 1378 AD [6]. The existence of this wayang beber painting also written in a record made by Ma Huan, a Chinese voyager whose visited Java in year 1416 AD [7]. He said that in that era wayang beber was used in some rituals.

Regarding this matter, we concur with Primadi Tabrani [8]. In his dissertation, he explained that wayang beber painting that was made in Majapahit era was not wayang beber that we know as wayang beber of Pacitan today. He referred to Sayid, a wayang performer and expert, who described that wayang figure in Majapahit era, was more realistic.

However, wayang beber of Majapahit era is thought to have vanished, so that we can't compare its figure style with wayang beber of Pacitan. Even then, we still could observe the



Figure2. Relief of Panataran temple



Figure3. Wayang *kulit* of Bali

style of wayang figure from Hindu era by looking at other types of wayang such wayang *batu* of Panataran temple or wayang *kulit* of Bali.

Wayang *batu* is a wayang carved on stone which could found on relief of Hindu temple of Panataran in East Java (see Fig.2). It was made at 11th century before Majapahit era. Wayang *kulit* of Bali is wayang made of leather that could be found in Bali Island (see Fig.3). Until now Bali has strong Hindu tradition. In contrast to Java, Bali never been influenced by Islam. Therefore wayang *kulit* of Bali hasn't changed as happened on Java.

We found that figures in wayang *batu* of Panataran and wayang *kulit* of Bali have typical features. The figures are depicted from the side. Although the shape has been simplified, their proportions still resemble a real human figure. The figures are not as thin as the figure on wayang beber of Pacitan. We infer that the wayang beber of Majapahit era has these typical features; so, it is different with wayang beber of Pacitan.

The connection between wayang beber of Majapahit and wayang beber of Pacitan could be found in paper by Tabrani [8] and, Mulyono [9]. In both papers, they explained when the first Islamic Kingdom of Java conquered Majapahit, all relics including wayang beber are taken. The possession of relic is seen as symbol of domination.



Figure4. Wayang kulit purwa puppet



Figure5. Wayang kulit purwaperformance

In that era, wayang was an important part of Javanese people life who still follows Hindu religion. The king and religious leader of Demak modified wayang and used it as tools for spreading Islam. Modification of wayang form was done to follow Islamic view which forbids a real depiction of human figure. The entire figure was more simplified and depicted from the side. Instead of painted it on one piece of paper, wayang figures were separated one by one. The figure was made into a flat puppet using leather. This type of wayang then is known as wayang *kulit* (see Fig.4). Wayang *kulit* kept on improved, the wayang *kulit purwa* form that known today was appeared around year 1613-1645 AD in the era of Islamic Kingdom of Mataram [10]. According to this explanation, we conclude that the shift of religion within the society affects the visual style of wayang figure in Java. Wayang's visual no longer portrayed human figure, it is now symbolize human personality [11]. The shape of wayang's body and attributes is considered as a symbol that describes the personality of the wayang character.

We also figured that the transformation of wayang figure shape is also caused by the change of wayang form, from a painted scroll to a puppet. Wayang *kulit purwa* puppet has very distinct shape. It has a big head, long neck, wide shoulder and long thin arm. Entire body of the puppet is carved by a complex pattern. The reason behind this shape could be related to a necessity of wayang *kulit* performance. Sukasman, a wayang performer and maker has interpreted the shape of wayang *kulit* puppet [12]. He explains that in the wayang *kulit* performance, the shape of the puppet must be able to be identified easily by the audiences. The thin and distorted puppet's body will help this identification. The long neck will make the head of wayang could be seen easily from a distance. The wide shoulder and long arm is necessary so that the wayang puppet's arms could be easily moved. Moreover, wayang *kulit* is performed behind a screen, lit by light; most of the audience only see shadow of the puppet (see Fig.5). The carved pattern make the shadow looks more artistic and it helps audience to identify the wayang character.



Figure6. Wayang beber of Pacitan figures

We reckon that the shape of wayang *kulit purwa* puppets become a prototype for later development of wayang art. It then becomes a visual style for wayang figure in later period, including wayang beber of Pacitan. We referred to scholar like Salim [13] and Tabrani that estimate wayang beber of Pacitan made after wayang *kulit*. They argue that visual style of the figure on wayang beber of Pacitan painting imitates the shape of wayang *kulit purwa* puppet (see Fig.6). Another explanation could support this argument. According to Sudrajat [6] there is a way to find out the production year of the wayang beber of Pacitan painting. Traditional wayang painting always has certain pictures symbolize the production year. Sudrajat explain the symbol in wayang beber of Pacitan painting could be interpreted as 1614 (Javanese year) or 1692 AD. So, referring to the visual style and the symbol of production year, we believe that wayang beber of Pacitan estimated made around 1692 AD within Islamic Kingdom of Kartasura era in Kartasura city, Central Java. So, how wayang beber could be found in Pacitan, a small city in East Java?

Regarding this matter, Tabrani, referring to Sayid, relate it to the rebellion at Kartasura palace in 1742 AD. When the king was evacuated from the Palace at Kartasura city in Central Java to Ponorogo in East Java, they brought all the relics including wayang beber. There was a possibility that wayang beber was left behind in Pacitan which is located between Kartasura and Ponorogo [8].

Based on these literatures we conclude that wayang beber of Pacitan came from a period after wayang *kulit purwa*. Its visual style is derived from the shape of wayang *kulit purwa* puppets. For the transformation timeline see Fig.7.

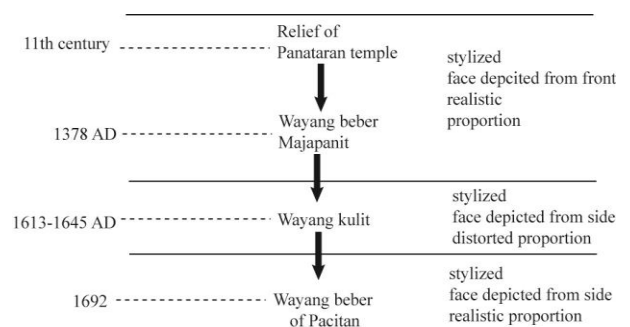


Figure7. Wayang transformation time line

3 Distinguishable Features of The Character Figures Visual Style in Wayang Beber of Pacitan

To analyze visual style of wayang beber of Pacitan figure, we referred to Primadi Tabrani's theory of visual language [14]. Based on this theory, a visual style could be described by analyze the visual elements, such as lines, colors, shape, etc., which are used to form an image. Tabrani has categorized several ways to use visual elements, and we identified four ways are applied to draw Wayang beber of Pacitan figure, those are:

1. outline drawing
2. polychromatic color
3. distorted proportion
4. stylized depiction

3.1 Outline Drawing

Outline drawing emphasizes the use of line to form a shape. It focuses on clarity of the picture to convey a message rather than resemblance to reality. We found that the lines of wayang beber of Pacitan figure are single and expressive. They are clear, continuous, wiggly, and has variation of thickness. There are two kinds of lines, thick lines which used for the outline and thinner lines which used to depict detail of the figure, such body hair, skin wrinkles, or fold of cloth (see Fig.8). The lines have various colors depend on the color of the figures.

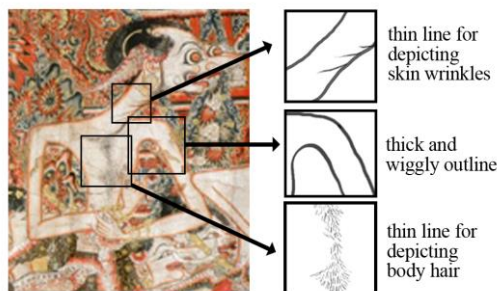


Figure8. Lines features in wayang beber of Pacitan figure

3.2 Polychromatic Color.

Polychromatic color means that wayang beber of Pacitan figure consist colors with different hue. We identified five color hues in the figures, such as red, green, yellow, white, and black. Each color is used in several values, as instance there are pure red, light red and dark red. All colors are solid, they have no gradation. The transition from light color to dark is made by stacking color one upon another. The unique color feature of wayang beber of Pacitan figure is resulting by a specific Javanese traditional coloring procedure that called *sungging*. In this procedure colors are added in specific order, it started with the light color and followed by darker color.

Sukir [15] explained there are three types of coloring in this traditional procedure (see Fig.9), they are:

- Basic color, this coloring uses only one solid color. We found this coloring in the most of wayang beber of Pacitan figures.
- Layered Color, this coloring is used to make gradient by piling up the color. We found this coloring on the cloth and tree images.

- Multiple Layered Colors, this type of coloring is used more than one layered color in one image; we found this coloring on the cloth images of wayang beber of Pacitan figures.

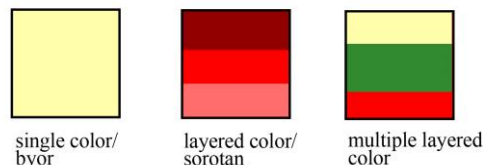


Figure9. Color feature in wayang beber of Pacitan figure

Sungging is not just about procedure for adding color. It is also followed by a process to add pattern to certain area of the painting. Usually it was added to a wide area that colored by basic color. We identified the pattern in wayang beber of Pacitan figure's clothes. There are two kinds of patterns are used. First is floral pattern. This pattern is used to portray Javanese traditional cloth called *batik*; it is a typical clothes that worn by Javanese. The second one is a thin line pattern. It is used to fill up figure's clothes which not covered by floral pattern. *Sungging* is ended by a process of drawing lines to fix the shape and adds the details of the figure.

We consider that the whole *sungging* procedure gives wayang beber of Pacitan figure distinct visual features.

3.3 Distorted proportion

Wayang beber of Pacitan figures have a distinct shape. It has big head, long neck, and wide shoulder. The arms are longer than the legs. In term of visual language theory it called distorted depiction. This shape is derived from wayang kulit purwa puppet. As explain in chapter 2, the shape is caused by necessity of wayang kulit purwa performance.

One distinguishable feature of the figure shape is the head which is placed forward (see Fig.10). According to Sukasman, the purpose is so that when two figures are shown against each other, they seem to communicate [12].

However we found that figures shape of wayang beber of Pacitan has differences with the wayang kulit puppets. First, wayang beber of Pacitan figures seem taller and have more realistic proportion. Arms of wayang beber of Pacitan figures are shorter. Their hands position is above the knee, whereas the hand position of wayang kulit figures is below the knee. Shoulder of wayang kulit figures is wider; the right shoulder proportion is twice longer than the left shoulder. The right and the left shoulder proportion of wayang kulit beber of Pacitan

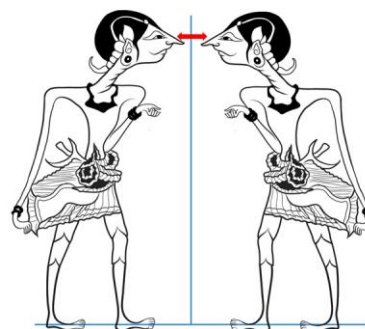


Figure10. Two figures of wayang shown against each other,

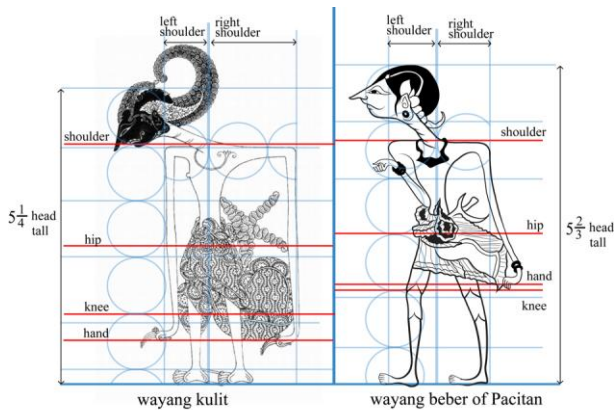


Figure 11. Comparison of wayang kulit puppet and wayang beber of Pacitan figure

figures is more balanced (see Fig.11). The shape also has more curved contour, it shows a three-dimensional impression. We believe this difference is caused by the change of wayang medium, from puppet to painted scroll. The shape of wayang beber of Pacitan figure is no longer limited by the necessity of puppet performance.

3.4 Stylized depiction

Stylized depiction shape of wayang beber of Pacitan figure was made to follow Islamic view that prohibited realistic depiction of human or animal.

Stylize is a depiction that portray an object according a particular formats, rather than realistic representation. In wayang beber of Pacitan figure, the formats include angle of depiction, size of depiction, and symbolic depiction.

3.4.1 Angle of Depiction

Basically, the figures in wayang beber of Pacitan painting are depicted from the side, but if they are observed more carefully, each body part of the figures could be seen depicted from various views (see Fig.12). It could be described as:

- The head, nose and mouth are depicted from side.
- The eye is depicted from front.
- The shoulder is depicted from front.
- The body torso is depicted side
- The arms and legs are depicted from side
- The feet are depicted from side and above

This way of depiction is called multiple views. Multiple views is a depiction of image as if seen from different directions, different distances, or different time in one picture [16].

As mentioned before, the visual style of wayang beber Pacitan figure is derived from wayang kulit puppet. In the performance, wayang kulit puppet is shown as a shadow or silhouette. In this case, the multiple view depiction is used so that the silhouette of puppet's body parts could be easily recognized. Every body part of human figure could be easily recognized from certain angle. As instance, a nose is easily recognized from the side, whereas eyes are easily recognized from the front.

3.4.2 Size of Depiction

In wayang beber of Pacitan painting all the figures are drawn completely from its head to toe. This is called full body depiction. It is a typical depiction of figures in Indonesian

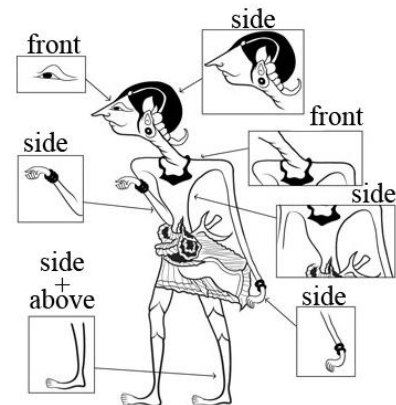


Figure 12. Multiple views in wayang beber of Pacitan figure

traditional art. This kind of depiction could be seen in Panataran temple relief, wayang kulit puppet, and certainly in wayang beber of Pacitan painting. All figures in wayang beber of Pacitan painting are always drawn in same size. The figures those are close to viewer and the one that far from viewer have no different in size.

3.4.3 Symbolic Depiction

Wayang beber of Pacitan figures were made not to depict human physic, but to depict human personalities. The human personalities are symbolized by certain shape of wayang's body parts and attributes. To understand the symbols, we studied literatures of symbolism in wayang kulit purwa explained by Sayid [17], Purwadi [11], and Long [18]

Symbolized personalities in wayang kulit purwa could be known from its character types. According to Long, the character types are determined by the iconographic features of its figures. The most major determinant are body size which is consist of four major sizes, eye shape that include seven major types (see Fig.13), mouth shape that also has seven styles (see Fig.14), and tilt of head which consist of three kinds of position (see Fig.16). Another important features include stance, shape of nose (see Fig.15), and adornment.

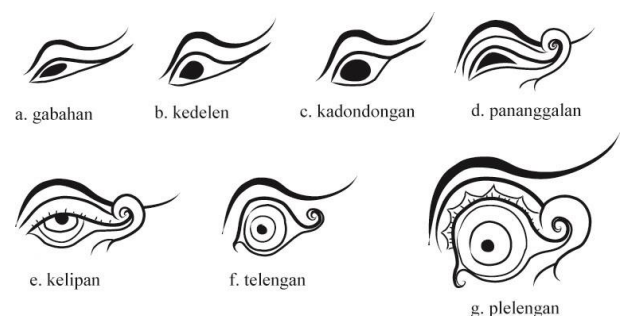


Figure 13. Types of wayang's eye shape

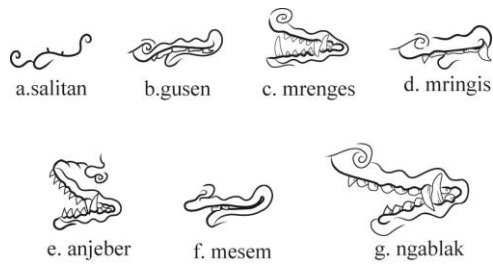


Figure14. Types of wayang's mouth shape

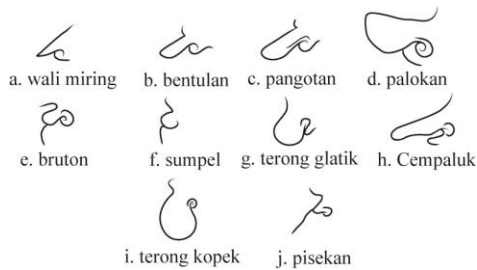


Figure15. Types of wayang's nose shape

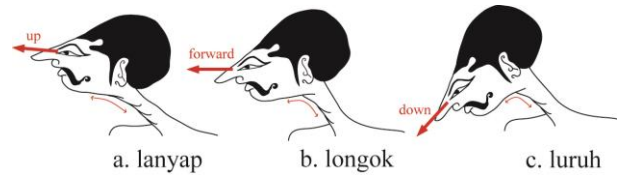


Figure16. Types of wayang's tilt of head

In this paper, we categorized the characters of wayang beber of Pacitan based on body size, eye shape, types of mouth, nose shape, and tilt of the head. These features are used to determine character personalities. We excluded adornment which is used to determine status and social class of the character. We also exclude stance because it difficult to identify in wayang beber of Pacitan figures. The categorization of the important characters could be seen in table 1. The identification of characters' iconographic features in each group could be seen in table 2.

Table 1 Categorization of character in wayang beber of Pacitan

Group	Character Picture	Character Name
I		1. Dewi Sekartaji (female) 2. Jaka Kembang Kuning (male) 3. Sedahrama (male) 4. Retno Mindaka(female)
II		1. Gandarepa (male) 2. Ni Cona Coni (female) 3. Retno Tenggaron (female)
III		1. King of Kediri (male)
IV		1. Arya Jeksa Negara (male) 2. Kili Suci (female)
V		3. King Klana (male)

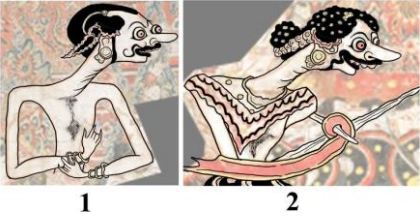


Group	Character Picture	Character Name
VI		1. Demang Kuning (male) 2. Kebo Lorodan (male)
VII		1. Tumenggung Cona Coni (male)
VIII		1. Naladerma (male) 2. Tawangalun (male)

Table 2 Iconographic features of figures in wayang beber of Pacitan

Group	Iconographic Features				
	Body Size	Eye Shape	Mouth shape	Nose shape	Tilt of Head
I	Small	gabahan	salitan	wali miring	luruh
II	Small	gabahan	salitan	wali miring	longok
III	Small	kedelen	salitan	Wali miring	luruh
IV	Small	kedelen	salitan	Wali miring	longok
V	Medium	telengan	salitan	benthulan	lanyap
VI	Big	telengan	gusen	pangotan	lanyap
VII	Medium (fat)	telengan	salitan	benthulan	longok
VIII	Small (fat)	kelipan	mesem	Bruton & terong glatik	longok & lanyap

Long also explain that wayang kulit characters could be classified into six types which are associated with specific personalities. The first types is identified as *alus* or refined character, which has reserve and polite personalities. The second types is identified as muscular or *gagah*, third type is grinning and muscular or called *gusen*, fourth type is ogre and giant character called *danawa*, fifth type is a simian character called *wanara*, and sixth is clown-servants character called *dhagelan*.

We applied this classification into wayang beber of Pacitan characters and found four classes of character. First, we classified the characters in group I, II, III, and IV as refined type. Main features that determined this type is the character's body size. The character has a smallest body among the six types. The body is slender and has a feminine appearance. Generally, refined character has suave and polite personality. This type is divided into two, the character with *gabahan* eye, and character with *kedelen* eye. Each of them

has two variations, character with *luruh* tilt of head, and character with *longok* tilt of head. Variation of eye shape and tilt of head signified degrees of refinement.

Character with *kedelen* eye has more aggressive personality than character with *gabahan* eye. Character with *longok* tilt of head is more aggressive than wayang with *luruh* type. Therefore, character with *gabahan* eye and *luruh* tilt of shape is the most refined character; follow by the character with *gabahan* eye and *longok* character, then the character with *kedelen* eye and *luruh* tilt of head. The character with *kedelen* eye and *longok* tilt of head is the most aggressive character in this class.

Second, we classified the characters in group V and VII as muscular type. Character in group VII has special distinguishable features. It has fat body shape and humped gesture that can't be found in any wayang kulit character. These features make the character difficult to categorize. However based on its general features such as medium body

size, and *salitan* mouth shape, we include this character in muscular type. The characters in this type are strong and have brave personality. The variation of tilt of head signified degrees of aggressiveness. *Lanyap* type is more aggressive than *longok*.

Third, we classified the characters in group VI as grinning and muscular type. This type has big muscular body, signified strong, rude, and aggressive character. Fourth, the characters in group VIII could be classified as clown-servant type. This type is the most diversified category. Each character in this type differs from another. However all clown-servant characters could be easily distinguished from other class of character. This class signifies various personalities

4 Conclusions

We have studied the history of wayang beber of Pacitan and traced origin of its figures visual style. We conclude that the visual style of wayang beber of Pacitan figures is a result of modification from previous types of wayang. The modification occurs because of two main factors. First factor is a cultural change in Javanese society. The inclusion of Islam religion has great impact to Javanese culture, including wayang art. It changes the values, function, and representation of the wayang. Second factor is the innovation in the wayang art. Wayang has developed from stone relief on the temple, to articulated leather puppet, and into sequences of scrolls pictures. This development brings changes not only to the performance technique but also to the visualization of wayang.

As an impact of cultural change and innovation, we identified four important features on visual style of wayang beber of Pacitan figures. Those features are outline drawing, polychromatic color, distorted proportion, and stylized depiction. Stylized depiction is an important feature that is inherited from wayang kulit purwa. It is caused by the implementation of Islamic values which is demanded symbolic depiction. This depiction divided the characters of wayang beber of Pacitan into four classes based on its personalities. Outline drawing, polychromatic color, and distorted proportion are the features that distinguish wayang beber of Pacitan from wayang kulit purwa figures. These features are result of transformation of wayang medium.

5 Future Works

In the next research, we will complete this documentation of wayang beber of Pacitan figures visual style with detail measurement for several attributes of the features such as numerical values of distorted proportion, and colors. We want to find the ratio of distorted proportion in wayang beber of Pacitan figures compared with real human proportion and also compile a chart for colors that used in wayang beber of Pacitan painting.

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