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The Existence and Visual Language Analysis of the Punakawan Reliefs at Surowono Temple

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ABSTRACT

When researchers in the fields of Fine Arts and Design study traditional artworks—particularly the Hindu-Buddhist temple reliefs found in the Indonesian archipelago—there is a tendency to employ "Western" approaches or methodologies. Most Western approaches emerged as modern methodologies after the Renaissance (14th–17th centuries); concepts such as the Golden Section, Modulor, *Nirmana* (visual elements/principles), and Semiotics were largely developed in the post-Renaissance era (after the 17th century). Since temple reliefs in the archipelago were created prior to the advent of these Western approaches, their creation naturally did not rely on such methodologies. Consequently, this study examines the reliefs of Surowono Temple in Kediri Regency—specifically those featuring *Punakawan* figures—using a non-Western approach: the *Bahasa Rupa* (Visual Language) framework developed by Prof. Dr. Primadi Tabrani (ITB). This choice is based on the following considerations: (1) the *Punakawan* reliefs at Surowono Temple were created during the Majapahit era, long before Western approaches emerged; (2) *Punakawan* figures are unique to the archipelago (absent in India and the West) and originated from the cosmology, spatial concepts, and temporal context of that time; and (3) Tabrani's *Bahasa Rupa* approach is grounded in fundamental theories of ontogeny and phylogeny, serving as a "grounded theory" that is both distinctive and aligned with the archipelago's cosmology. From a cosmological perspective, this study concludes that the *Punakawan* reliefs at Surowono Temple utilize a distinctive visual language characterized by: (1) head-to-toe depiction; (2) enlargement; (3) reduction; (4) detailed enlargement; (5) X-ray view; (6) illusory scene boundaries; (7) multiple background layers; (8) twinning/duplication; (9) shifting/displacement; (10) bottom panel line serving as the ground line; (11) a combination of *pradaksina* (clockwise) and *prasawya* (counter-clockwise) viewing sequences; and (12) the inclusion of a time dimension within the RWD (*Ruang-Waktu-Datar* or Flat-Space-Time) framework.

KEYWORDS

Existence, Visual Language, Punakawan Reliefs, Surowono Temple

Introduction

A current trend involves numerous studies focusing on artifacts from the Indonesian archipelago that are analyzed using Western approaches or methodologies, raising questions about their suitability. This study on the *Bahasa Rupa* (Visual Language) of the *Pu-nakawan*

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reliefs at Surowono Temple is motivated by the prevalence of Western methodologies used to analyze Indonesian visual art artifacts. Researchers rarely employ approaches or methodologies originating within the archipelago, specifically designed for analyzing local artifacts—such as the *Bahasa Rupa* analytical framework developed by Prof. Dr. Primadi Tabrani of ITB. Instead, many studies analyze Indonesian artifacts and reliefs using Western analytical frameworks, such as: aesthetic studies of East Javanese temple reliefs using *Nirmana* (Basic Design) theory [1]; semiotic studies of the *Karmawibhangga* reliefs at Borobudur Temple [2]; semiotic analyses of *Jatakamala* reliefs at Borobudur [3]; semiotic studies of floral elements in the *Lalitavistara* reliefs at Borobudur [4]; studies on the proportions of the Blitar *Angka Tahun* temple based on Le Corbusier's Modulor theory [5]; analyses of the Golden Section in Gedong Songo Temple [6]; and aesthetic reviews of film through the lens of the Golden Ratio found in Borobudur relief panels [7]. Thus, the incompatibility of Western analytical frameworks when applied to Hindu-Buddhist visual art from the archipelago stems from the temporal and spatial contexts in which these frameworks originated. Historically, these Western analytical concepts (such as *Nirmana*, Semiotics, the Modulor, the Golden Section, etc.) were developed by Western scholars after the 17th century—long after the Hindu-Buddhist temple reliefs in the archipelago had already been carved (prior to the 16th century).

Contemporary scholarship and scientific methods tend to be grounded in principles that emerged between the classical and modern eras [8]. Historical studies reveal that semiotic theory has appeared in various versions from the classical period to the present, including those by Saussure (1916), Peirce (1860s), Barthes (1950s), Eco (1968), and Jencks (1968) [8] [9]. While the foundations of aesthetic theory date back to Ancient Greece, aesthetics was only formally introduced as a field of study by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in 1735. Subsequently, a foundational course (*Vorkurs*) in aesthetics was introduced by Johannes Itten in 1919 and modified by László Moholy-Nagy in 1923; it was further developed academically within an experimental laboratory at the Bauhaus in Germany, eventually becoming known as "Basic Design" theory [10] [11]. In Indonesia, Basic Design theory was introduced through academic channels under the name *Rupa Dasar*, and is currently known among academics as *Nirmana* [12] [13]. Furthermore, the Modulor theory was developed by Le Corbusier between 1942 and 1948, with its complete codification achieved in 1945 [14]. Although the scientific basis for the Golden Section (or Golden Ratio) dates back to Ancient Greece—specifically to Euclid (c. 300 BCE)—the concept was only formally defined and published under that specific mathematical name in a scientific journal in 1835 [15] [16]. The application of scientific principles and methods—ranging from the Golden Ratio to *Nirmana*—to the analysis of visual art has long been established in the West, notably during the Renaissance period spanning the 14th to the 17th centuries [17] [18]. In the history of Western art, the Renaissance is viewed as a bridge or a foundational milestone for the emergence of modern Western art scholarship [19] [20]. Based on this historical data, it can be concluded that the development and discovery of modern Western scholarly concepts—such as studies, approaches, analytical frameworks, and methodologies—historically occurred after the Renaissance (post-17th century). Conversely, Surowono Temple was constructed between 1358 and 1361 CE [21]. In terms of the methodology of artistic creation (specifically within the visual arts), the artifacts and reliefs of Surowono Temple came into existence because they were grounded in a specific creative context [22] [23] [24]. The motivations and purposes behind such creation vary widely, with religious systems

being one such factor [22] [23] [24]. Research by Riharyani indicates that the reliefs of Surowono Temple were created against the backdrop of a Hindu-Buddhist (Shiva-Sogata) religious system [25] and within a mythic-ontological realm [26]. Thus, it can be concluded that the religious system and mythic-ontological realm serving as the context for Surowono Temple's creation constitute a cosmology of its making—one bound by specific spatial (the Majapahit realm) and temporal (1358–1361 CE [21]) parameters. Given the established construction period of 1358–1361 CE [21], it is evident that Surowono Temple was erected long before the advent of theories regarding aesthetics, *nirmana* (design principles), semiotics, the Modulor, the Golden Section, and other Western analytical frameworks. Given the dates of their creation, the construction of Surowono Temple could not—from a methodological standpoint [22] [23] [24]—have been based on principles or guidelines theorized in Western scholarly or methodological texts written after the temple itself was built. Consequently, when contemporary scholars apply Western methodologies or "analytical frameworks" to these Nusantara artifacts, the approach often proves ill-suited to the cosmology underlying their creation. Forcing a Western analytical approach onto the reliefs of Surowono Temple inevitably leads to methodological incongruity. Therefore, it is essential to employ an analytical framework rooted in the cosmology appropriate to the time and place in which the artifact—Surowono Temple—was created.

According to Tabrani [27], Western academic circles were struck by the discovery of the *Bahasa Rupa* (Visual Language) approach—or "analytical tool"—developed by Prof. Dr. Primadi Tabrani (known as *Bahasa Rupa* vT). Tabrani's dissertation on *Bahasa Rupa* vT was voluminous enough to fill an entire crate; in 1991, the U.S. Library of Congress ordered seven crates of it. Despite the dissertation being written in Indonesian, the U.S. was keen to distribute it to various fine arts institutions across the country at the time [27]. This account highlights the significance attributed to Tabrani's *Bahasa Rupa* discovery (*Bahasa Rupa* vT) from an American or Western academic perspective. Tabrani suspected that the findings in his dissertation might soon be disseminated and put into practice in the U.S., even while *Bahasa Rupa* vT had not yet gained significant traction in Indonesia [27]. In fact, the novelty and suitability of the *Bahasa Rupa* vT "analytical tool" for analyzing Nusantara artifacts are grounded in the theories of ontogeny and phylogeny [28] [29]. Ontogeny is the science or theory describing the origins and developmental process of an organism from a fertilized egg to its adult form [29] [30] [31]. Meanwhile, phylogeny is briefly defined as the study of evolutionary relationships among organisms [29] [32] [33]. Based on these theories of ontogeny and phylogeny [29], prehistoric cave paintings and children's drawings share the same visual language—specifically regarding their *Cara Wimba* (visual representation methods) and *Tata Ungkapan* (modes of expression). This occurs because prehistoric images created by adults represent a "cultural-genetic" continuation of children's drawings—specifically those created before children receive a modern education that prioritizes reason over feeling [28]. Consequently, prehistoric paintings and children's drawings possess a uni-que character that distinguishes them from images created by modern individuals. The unique nature of the visual language (*Bahasa Rupa*) of children and prehistoric humans can only be grasped through the analytical framework of vT *Bahasa Rupa*. According to Piliang, although vT *Bahasa Rupa* can be situated within the study of denotation, the storytelling aspect inherent to it is not addressed by the disciplines of semiotics or semantics. This storytelling aspect serves as a foundational theory in the study of vT *Bahasa Rupa*—an element that has

been overlooked in visual studies, both in Indonesia and the West [34]. Thus, it can be concluded that the analytical framework of vT *Bahasa Rupa* is more grounded (Grounded Theory)—or better suited—for analyzing Nusantara artifacts (such as the *Punakawan* reliefs at Surowono Temple) when compared to Western analytical frameworks like semiotics, the Modulor, *Nirmana*, and so forth.

Candi Surowono is a temple that has rarely been studied by art researchers, despite having frequently been the subject of archaeological inquiry. Therefore, to bring the subject into the scholarly arena, it is necessary to conduct research on the *Punakawan* reliefs of Candi Surowono using the *Bahasa Rupa* vT (Visual Language) framework. Several studies on Candi Surowono that did not employ the *Bahasa Rupa* vT analytical lens include: (1) *Narrative Bas-Reliefs at Candi Surawana* by Prof. Peter Worsley (B.A. Hons, D.Lit.) in book [35]; (2) "Candi Surowono: Sidapaksa, A Nobleman with A Cap" in Kieven's dissertation [36]; (3) *The Tantri Reliefs On Ancient Javanese Candi* by Marijke J. Klokke, published as a series in VKI [37]; as well as various studies by Indonesian researchers. The *Bahasa Rupa* of the Candi Surowono reliefs—specifically the entire corpus of reliefs—was previously studied by Harto [26]. Building upon Harto's research [26], there is a need for further study focusing specifically on the *Bahasa Rupa* of the *Punakawan* reliefs; consequently, this article specifically examines the *Bahasa Rupa* of the Candi Surowono *Punakawan* reliefs. Historically, the *Punakawan* are figures indigenous to the Nusantara region, with no counterparts found in India or the West [38] [39] [40] [41] [42] [43] [44]; thus, it is essential to examine both the nature of their existence and their *Bahasa Rupa*.

Based on the preceding discussion, research into the *Bahasa Rupa* (visual language) of the Punakawan is deemed important; therefore, this study aims to highlight and describe the visual language of the Punakawan reliefs at Surowono Temple in accordance with the cosmology of their creation.

Methods

Broadly speaking, this study employs a qualitative research approach utilizing purposive sampling, with the *Punakawan* reliefs of Surowono Temple serving as the research object [45] [46]. The analytical framework used to examine these reliefs is the *bahasa rupa* (visual language) theory [28] proposed by Primadi Tabrani [47]. The study is situated within a historical context—encompassing both synchronic and diachronic perspectives [48]—that situates the *Punakawan* reliefs archaeologically. The research process incorporates data analysis and processing methods drawn from archaeology [49] to ensure a reconstruction that is valid in terms of the space and time associated with the creation of the *Punakawan* reliefs. The aim is for the findings to be grounded in reality (Grounded Theory [50] [51]) and aligned with the cosmology underlying the creation of the Surowono Temple's *Punakawan* reliefs. Data validity is established through data triangulation [45] [46] and source criticism methods [52] [49] [53] [54], involving cross-verification via a literature review approach [55] [56] [57] [58].

Result

A. An Etymological Study and the Existence of the Punakawan

Tracing the definition of the *Punakawan* requires a literature-based approach [55] [56] [57] [58], as it necessitates consulting various sources. According to Soekmono [59], the *Punakawan* are defined as comic servants who invariably accompany the *ksatria* (knights or noble warriors). More specifically, Prawiroatmodjo (cited in Sukadana [60]) explains that the term *punakawan* (or *panakawan*) derives from the Kawi word *pana*—meaning "truly wise" or "deeply understanding"—implying that *panakawan* can be interpreted as "a truly wise companion." This etymological meaning has evidently suffered from an "erosion and degradation of understanding" due to superficial observations of the *Punakawan*'s role in various *wayang* (shadow puppet) performances; consequently, the public often interprets the term merely as "servant," "retainer," or "attendant." This superficial view overlooks the fact that a servant or retainer can only function efficiently and effectively if they possess qualities that the person they serve lacks [59]. Scholars generally agree that the *Punakawan* represent an "indigenous Indonesian element" absent from the original Indian versions of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* epics [59] [61] [62].

The presence of the *Punakawan* in the world of Javanese puppetry is often equated with the history of the *Punakawan* themselves. Their story typically begins with the emergence of *Semar* (*Sang Hyang Ismaya*), who was born from an egg white. The yolk became the figure of *Manikmaya*—later known as *Batara Guru* (king of the gods)—while the eggshell became *Tejamantri*, later known as *Togog* or *Antaga*. This miraculous egg appeared as a result of *Sang Hyang Tunggal's* prayers and supplications to *Sang Hyang Wenang* for offspring; *Sang Hyang Tunggal* was the son of *Sang Hyang Wenang* [63]. Balinese puppetry features "right-side" *Punakawan* named *Merdah* and *Tualen* (*Twalen*), and "left-side" *Punakawan* named *Delem/Melem* and *Sangut* [64].

The mythological origin of Semar—specifically his emergence from an egg white—is based on the *Serat Purwakandha* and *Serat Manik Maya*. The *Serat Purwakandha* was compiled at the initiative of Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono V, the ruler of the Yogyakarta Sultanate, in 1887 CE. Meanwhile, the *Serat Manik Maya* was written at the behest of Gusti Kanjeng Ratu Kancana (the consort of Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwana VI); this text was compiled and completed in the Javanese year 1794 (1865 CE) [63]. The dates of these two texts (1865 and 1887) postdate the era of the Islamic Mataram Sultanate under Sultan Agung (1613–1645); this implies that this specific mythological account of Semar's origin emerged within the cosmological framework of literary creation during the Islamic-Classical period. This stands in stark contrast to the cosmology surrounding the creation of the *Punakawan* figures at Surowono Temple, which belongs to the mythic-ontological stage of the Hindu-Buddhist era.

In the world of wayang, the *Serat Purwakandha* records the existence of Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong as Semar's adopted sons (they are not his biological children). Gareng was originally the son of a priest who had been cursed and was subsequently liberated by Semar; he is also depicted as a handsome and powerful knight named Bambang Sukodadi from the Bluluktiba hermitage. Due to his arrogance, he fought with Petruk, resulting in physical deformities for

both of them. Semar intervened to break up the fight, adopted them both, and renamed them Nala Gareng and Nala Petruk. Another version explains that Petruk was the son of a *jin* king—Bausastra or Prabu Gandarwarajabali—who later joined forces with Semar. Meanwhile, Bagong was created by Semar through his inner spiritual power; consequently, Bagong is often considered to resemble Semar physically and is referred to as the shadow (or soul) of Semar himself [63]. These origin stories of Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong constitute *lakon carangan* (derivative or non-canonical tales) developed by *dalang* (puppeteers) during the Mataram Islam era. These narratives gained even greater depth of meaning when the *dalang* interpreted the names of the *Punakawan* (clown-servants) in accordance with the Classical Islamic and Mataram Islamic cosmology of the time.

As an example of the application of Classical Islamic or Mataram Islamic cosmology, the name "Gareng" is derived from the Arabic word *Qariin* (companion); its full form is often interpreted as originating from the phrase *Naala Qariin*, which, when pronounced by Ja-vanese speakers, became "Nala Gareng".Philosophically, this is understood as an exhortation for individuals to be wise in seeking friends or companions who always encourage goodness. However, there are also interpretations suggesting that the name "Gareng" derives from the Arabic *Khoiron*, meaning "good deeds."The name of the *Puna-kawan* figure Petruk originates from the Arabic *Fatruuk* (meaning "abandon vice"), while the name Bagong derives from the Arabic *Baghaa* (meaning "to rebel against evil") [38] [44].

B. The Presence of Punakawan Reliefs During the Hindu-Buddhist Period in the Indonesian Archipelago

Beyond Surowono Temple, *Punakawan* reliefs are actually widely distributed across va-rious temples in East Java—including Kendalisodo, Tegowangi, Jago, the Main Temple at Panataran, the Panataran *Pendopo* Terrace, Mirigambar, Ceto, Sukuh, and Gua Pasir—as well as appearing in relief fragments and terracotta pieces at the Trowulan and Panataran Blitar museums, and in Bali.

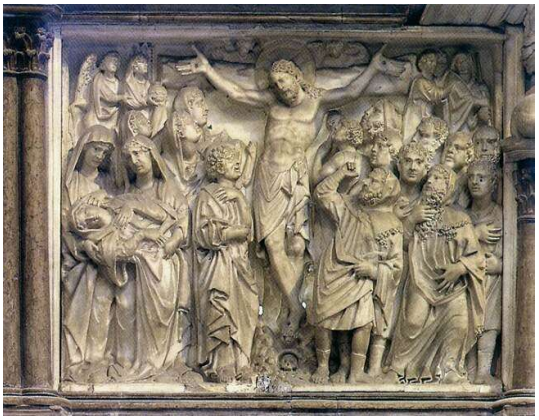


Figure 1. One of the panels, Pulpit relief: Crucifixion by Nicola Pisano (artist during the Proto-Renassance period), which is in the Baptistery Pulpit, Pisa Cathedral-Italy, 1259-1261 (source: https://www.wga.hu/art/p/pisano/nicola/1pisa/2relief4.jpg)



Figure 2. Two *Punakawan* figures at the third-floor entrance of Jago Temple, Tumpang Malang (Source: author's doc.)

While Indonesia possesses the *Punakawan* reliefs of Jago Temple (dating to the 13th century), the West—specifically Europe during the Pro-to-Renaissance period—produced a contemporary marble relief by the artist Nicola Pisano. This marble relief can be compared to the *Punakawan* reliefs of Candi Jago [65], using the *Bahasa Rupa* (Visual Language) analytical framework [47]. Because these two artifacts originate from different regions (West and East) yet share the same timeframe (the 13th century), their visual languages can be compared synchronically [48] on an "apples-to-apples" basis. The following section outlines these two artifacts, while the comparative analysis is presented in the Discussion section.

Discussion

A. The Existence of the Visual Language of Punakawan Reliefs During the Transitional Period of Historical Eras.

Based on Figure 1, it is evident that the relief by Nicola Pisano employs the "vT" visual language—specifically *Cara Wimba* 1 (CW 1)—wherein the subject is depicted or carved from head to toe. This method reflects an Eastern tradition, a visual language also utilized in Figure 2, the *Punakawan* relief at Singasari Temple. Despite the vast geographical separation (Italy and Indonesia), both appear to employ the same vT visual language—CW 1: depiction from head to toe. The shared use of this vT visual language is not attributable to their concurrent creation in the 13th century (despite differing historical contexts); rather, it likely stems from the fact that both artifacts originated during transitional phases in their respective historical periods, prior to the advent of the modern visual language that would later influence such works. The relief panel in Figure 1 reveals how Nicola Pisano's creative process was influenced by earlier Medieval works. This marble relief was produced during the historical transition in Europe from the Medieval era to the Renaissance—a period often termed the Proto-Renaissance. Medieval works were broadly influenced by the art of Greco-Roman antiquity, which also utilized the traditional "head-to-toe" visual language. Consequently, when Nicola Pisano created this work, he was—in terms of both ontogeny and phylogeny—unaware of the hereditary influence exerted by Greco-Roman art [66].

The same applies to the artisans of the Singasari Temple; the sculptors of the *Punakawan* reliefs at Singasari were subject to hereditary influences—transmitted through both ontogeny and phylogeny—derived from sculptors of the preceding Kediri era. Similarly, the Kediri-era relief sculptors had inherited techniques from those of the Medang (or Old Mataram) period. Tracing the lineage further back, the artisans of the Medang/Old Mataram era were likewise influenced—ontogenetically and phylo-genetically—by sculptors from India. Indian sculptural styles were indirectly transmitted to Java, shaping the visual language and relief-carving styles found in Javanese temples such as Borobudur and Prambanan. This Indian visual influence originated in the Gandhara school of sculpture in Northern India. That region was a zone of cultural acculturation where Indian sculptors adopted techniques—such as naturalistic anatomy, realistic drapery, and physical proportions—characteristic of the Greek style following the invasion by Alexander the Great (327–325 BCE). The Gandhara style subsequently exerted a profound influence on the Gupta art style in India, which later became the primary foundation for the aesthetics, architecture, and relief-carving styles of Java. This influence from the

Gandhara style is often cited as a pinnacle of Indian culture, deeply shaped by the Hellenistic culture of ancient Greece [67] [68] [69].

B. Hellenism: A Contributor to the Distinctive Visual Language of Archipelago Artworks

Historically, the sculptors of distinctive Indian reliefs were based in northwestern India (the Indus Valley), a region invaded between 327 and 325 BCE by Alexander the Great of ancient Greece (the Kingdom of Macedon) [70]. Following Alexander's death in 323 BCE, the influence of Greek Hellenism became increasingly pronounced. This process began with the Indo-Greek Dynasty—which ruled the Indus Valley from 180 BCE to 10 CE—collaborating with the Indo-Scythians (180 BCE – 75 CE) to foster a fusion of Greek and local cultures. This development continued under the Kushan Empire (30 CE – 375 CE); originally rulers of ancient Bactria near the Oxus River (Amu Darya), the Kushans expanded their dominion across Central and South Asia. The reign of King Kanishka the Great marked the pinnacle of the evolution of Hellenism in India. Rather than erasing the Greek legacy, King Kanishka the Great assimilated it to give rise to Gandhara art (Greco-Buddhist art). It was during the Kushan era that Gandhara art reached its zenith as a Hellenistic style, blending with local Indian Hindu-Buddhist traditions—specifically the Mathura and Gupta art styles. This fusion resulted in an iconographic structure featuring a Buddha statue with an Apollo-like face and naturalistic anatomy, combining the visual characteristics of deities and the Buddha with distinctly Greek physical proportions. It was heavily influenced by the realistic aesthetics of Greek sculpture—such as wavy hairstyles and naturally draped robes (featuring realistic folds) reminiscent of the god Apollo [71] [72]. Indo-Hellenistic art (specifically the Gandhara/Gupta styles) reached Java gradually over centuries through peaceful, collective means—facilitated by trade routes used by merchants (*Vaishya*), interactions involving priests (*Brahmana*) and monks, and the journeys of local Javanese artists (sculptors or *taksaka* and architects or *silpin*) who traveled to India to study (a phenomenon known as the "Return Flow Theory" or *Teori Arus Balik*) [67] [68] [69]. While Archipelago sculptors and architects did not adopt this Indo-Hellenistic style wholesale, local artists during the Medang/Ancient Mataram era creatively adapted and refined it, thereby giving rise to a distinctive Archipelago visual language. As noted by Hariani Santiko, the rules found in the *Manasara* treatise were not strictly applied to the design and relief work of temples in Indonesia [62] [73]. The *Manasara* (*Manasara Shilpa Shastra*) is a classical Sanskrit treatise from ancient India containing comprehensive guidelines on architecture, design, urban planning, and the art of building. It appears that the "3N" concept (*Niteni*—observe/recognize, *Nirokke*—imitate, *Nambahi*—add/innovate) proposed by Ki Hadjar Dewantara—or the currently popular ATM principle (*Amati*—observe, *Tiru*—imitate, *Modifikasi*—modify)—was already being practiced by the ancestors of the Medang/Ancient Mataram kingdom. Guided by these 3N or ATM concepts, the Medang ancestors successfully created the distinctive visual style found in the *Lalitavistara* reliefs at Borobudur Temple [28] [47].

C. The Distinctive Visual Language of the Punakawan Reliefs at Surowono Temple

Surowono Temple in Kediri Regency was built facing west, with its entrance located on the western side. The *Arjunawiwaha* narrative reliefs carved onto the walls of the temple's base

are generally read in a *pradaksina* (clockwise) direction—starting from the left side of the entrance and ending at the right side of the entrance stairs—though there is a contradictory section: the eastern *Arjunawiwaha* relief panel is read in a *prasavya* (counter-clockwise) direction [26]. This indicates that the *Punakawan* reliefs within the *Arjunawiwaha* narrative employ the vT visual language, utilizing a combination of *pradaksina* and *prasawya* reading sequences. This combined reading method is a distinctive feature of the vT visual language found at Surowono Temple. The *Arjunawiwaha* reliefs at Surowono Temple depict several figures, including Arjuna, Lord Shiva, Niwatakawaca, Mamangmuka, Goddess Supraba, Lord Indra, the *Punakawan*, and other supporting characters [26]. The following is an analysis of the vT visual language regarding the *Punakawan* figures in the *Arjunawiwaha* reliefs at Surowono Temple, arranged in *pradaksina* order.



Figure 3.
2 Punakawan Surowono 1st north side (Author's doc.)



Figure 4.
2 Punakawan Surowono 2nd north side, Arjuna debates with Shiva (Author's doc.)



Figure 5.
2 Punakawan Surowono, north side, 3rd, accompanying Arjuna when fighting Shiva (author's doc.)

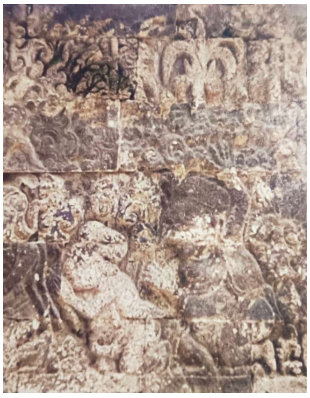


Figure 6.
2 Punakawan Surowono, north side 4, accompanying Arjuna when he worshipped Shiva (author's doc.)

Figures 3 through 6 depict two *Punakawan* figures accompanying Arjuna in a sequence of scenes, though the narrative content differs. These four images of the *Punakawan* reveal a shared visual language (*Bahasa Rupa* vT). The two *Punakawan* figures differ in build—one is stout, while the other is somewhat leaner. Consistent visual elements across the *Punakawan* figures include the following attributes: (1) a cap resembling a cabernet hat; (2) a loincloth; (3) a bare chest; (4) minimal ornamentation (lacking necklaces, armbands, wrist/ankle cuffs, earrings, or traditional *pending* belts); (5) broad ears resembling those of a Buddha statue; (6) bare feet; (7) a flat nose; (8) a protruding belly; and (9) a dwarfish stature (relative to Arjuna's height). The visual language (*Bahasa Rupa* vT) employed across most of the relief panels follows "Cara Wimba 1" (CW 1): (1) full-body depiction (head-to-toe) for the *Punakawan* and trees; (2) enlargement, where the *Punakawan* are carved larger than the trees; (3) reduction, where the trees are carved smaller than the *Punakawan*; and (4) the use of a Medium Long Shot (MLS)—a modern visual language convention—in the depiction of the *Punakawan*. CW 2 is evident when the relief carver depicts a tree (serving as the background for the *Punakawan*) using an X-ray perspective—omitting leaves and branches that would otherwise obstruct the view of those extending to the left and right. Compositional Convention 1 (TU 1), which addresses the concept of "shifted" interior space, is demonstrated by the depiction of this background tree, which is shifted to the right, to the left, or upwards. The upward shifting of tree forms creates a spatial arrangement that suggests depth, establishing a sense of varying distances—where the

uppermost background element is furthest from the viewer and the lowest is closest. The technique of aligning the bottom edge with the ground line is evident where the feet of the *Punakawan* figures touch the lower frame of the relief panel, signaling contact with the ground; sculptors employed this method to convey spatial depth. To emphasize the significance of the scene in *TU* 4, the sculptor utilized the visual language element of "Enlarged Detailed Forms" (vT *Rinci Diperbesar*)—seen in the depiction of the *Punakawan* figures and the detailed foliage in the background—thereby highlighting the importance of the event.



Figure 7. Eastern relief panel of the Arjunawiwaha at Surowono Temple, read in prasawya order (Author's doc.)

In fact, the panel in Figure 7 and the panels in Figures 4–6 share three identical scenes within a single panel. However, regarding Figures 4–6—which ideally would appear as a single panel (representing one sequence)—the *Punakawan* figures were separated into three distinct images (4–6) to ensure the focus remained on them. The visual language (vT) in Figure 7 shares similarities with that of Figures 4–6, ranging from CW 1 (a view from head to toe, enlarged) to TU 4 (detailed enlargement). Additionally, Figure 7 employs certain visual language elements that differ from those in Figures 4–6, including: (1) multiple viewpoints visible in the figure of the god Indra and several buildings (circled in purple); and (2) the fact that, unlike in the other examples, the *Punakawan* figures in Figure 7 are not depicted as duplicates, whereas the figure of Supraba is duplicated twice (across two scenes). This duplication technique is used to convey spatial and temporal dimensions (TU 3), whereas Figures 4–6 apply the duplication technique to the *Punakawan*, Arjuna, and Shiva figures. Figure 7 also features distinctive visual language elements—specifically, a bronze mirror motif (circled in red) and a pseudo-scene boundary (circled in light blue)—that are not found in other temples. While there are other *Punakawan* figures that could be analyzed, they are not presented here due to page limitations; notably, the visual language employed for them is relatively consistent with that found in Figures 3–7.

Conclusion

The origins of the *Punakawan* figures in the Nusantara region likely date back to the Kediri era; it was during this period that the influence of Indian Hellenism waned, and Kediri artists transformed Indian influences into a distinctively Nusantara visual language that was more grounded and cosmological in nature. Based on this research, it can be concluded from a cosmological perspective that the *Punakawan* reliefs at Surowono Temple exhibit a specific visual language characterized by: (1) head-to-toe depiction; (2) enlargement; (3) detailed enlargement; (4) X-ray view; (5) multiple perspectives; (6) implied scene boundaries; (7) twinning; (8) displacement; (9) baseline as ground line; (10) multiple background layers; (11) a

combination of *pradaksina* and *prasawya* (clockwise and counter-clockwise) movements; and (12) a temporal dimension within the RWD (Flat-Space-Time) framework.

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