

Politics of Identity in the Indonesian Wayang Comics

SENO GUMIRA AJIDARMA

Jakarta Institute of Art

sgumira@gmail.com

Dengan semakin pentingnya identitas bagi kehidupan negara-bangsa, perjuangan ideologis untuk menjadi asli juga berlangsung sepanjang sejarah komik wayang, dari 1955 sampai hari ini. Terandaikan datang dari sumber susastra epik berbahasa Sanskerta, bukti pertama alihwahannya adalah relief Ramayana di Candi Prambanan pada abad ke-9; dan baru pada 960 terjemahan Wirataparwa, bagian Mahabharata, diselesaikan penulis anonim. Jauh sebelum berbentuk komik, kedua epik ini merupakan situs kepentingan politis segala alihwahana, dari terjemahan Jawa Kuna atas bahasa Sanskerta dari India, sampai kepada penafsiran bagi pementasan wayang kulit dan wayang orang dari sumber-sumber susastra. Komik wayang sendiri lahir sebagai jalan keluar dari tekanan politis, ketika pada 1955 komik dirazia dan dibakar. Betapapun, meski genre komik wayang lantas menjadi pilihan ideologis, bentuk, gaya, dan genre wayang yang mau dipilih masih berada dalam kontestasi politik identitas bagi representasi Indonesia. Komik wayang adalah situs perjuangan dari berbagai kelompok dengan kepentingan politik identitas bagi gagasan Indonesia.

Kata kunci: politik identitas, kontestasi tanda-tanda, perjuangan ideologis.

As identity become more and more important in the life of a nation-state in the age of globalization, the ideological struggle to be original, like there is an original signifier of “Indonesia”, happen as long as the history of wayang comics itself, from 1955 until today. Theoretically come from a Sanskrit source literary epic of Ramayana and Mahabharata, the first evidence of intermediation are the reliefs of Ramayana at Prambanan Temple in the 9th century, as the year 856 AD marked the official use of the temple; and only in the year of 960 an anonymous writer finished the translation of Wirataparwa, part of Mahabharata from Sastra Parwa. Long before come to the comic form, these two epics were the sites of political interest on all of the intermediations, from the Old Javanese translations of the Indian’s Sanskrit, to the shadow play and dance-drama interpretations from the literary sources. The wayang comic itself born as a way out from political repression outside, when in the 1955 comics were hunted to be seized and burn. However, as the wayang comic genre going to be an ideological choice, which the best form, style, and genre to choose is still an ongoing contestation of identity politics to represent Indonesia. Wayang comic is the site of struggle of groups in society with the interest of identity politics with an idea of Indonesia, where the discourse of the sub-ordinated groups appear as a resistance to the discourse of dominant groups.

Keywords: identity politics, contestation of signs, ideological struggle.

Peer Review : 1 - 20 September 2017, Accepted to Publish : 22 September 2017.

1. BACKGROUND: FROM RELIEF TO COMIC-BOOKS

The year of 856 AD marked the official use of Siva-Grha temple complex. It is the oldest evidence of the use of the Ramayana epic as found in the form of relief or narrative carving on its wall. Together with Mahabharata, both are the main sources of the sub-culture that would better be called the wayang culture. Logically the relief then should have depended, referred to, or at least related to the written literature source, but the oldest Ramayana text found was written before the year 930 (Zoetmulder, 1983: 294)

There is no written evidence of the puppet leather in a shadow play so far in the classical age in Java, but the word *wayang* in some Old Javanese texts shows a resemblance to a description of shadow play on the screen, as written in *Bhomantaka* in the 12th century (Zoetmulder, 1983: 264):

*when they hide behind the shadow of the cloud
their form are seen but (only) blur
then they reappear like wayang puppet
reflected on the white screen
while the sun functioned
as the lamp on the stage*

So, the word *wayang* then has two meanings: (1) puppet or player, both in shadow play and on stage; (2) every narrative which uses Mahabharata and Ramayana as its source. As for the other intermediation, the dance-drama, it happens that the mutual evidence, the word *wayang wwang*, is literary used to show that the characters or figures are not puppets anymore, but a human being (*wwang*), which is written on a literature work from *Hariwangsa* in the 12th century (Zoetmulder, 1983: 266)

*the clouds formed like wayang wwang
the kuntul birds flyng, shouting hala-hala
that were applause by thundering waves and the sky
as in a dance show, the spectators cheering*

These two forms of theater art, the shadow play that uses leather puppet and the dance-drama on stage, will have a determinant factor of contribution in the struggle of ideology in Indonesian wayang-comics.

After the first Indonesian comic created by Kho Wan Gie in 1931 as the Put On comic-strips in newspaper

Sin Po (Atmowiloto, 1981) the development of the media enjoy a popularity as a modern form of entertainment, which in a way disturbed the established values. In the time of chances and political turmoil after the independence, a great number of comic books were used as a commodity and a popular entertainment. This created unrest among the so called educators, who then called on the authority and some groups in the society to seize and to openly burn comic books (Atmowiloto, 1980) As a response to the situation, the Publishers came up with a way out to keep the market, i.e. comic stories created at that time should be based on an ideology that had already accepted and merged in the society like traditional stories (Atmowiloto, 1979).

In this case, the idea that came to the discourse is wayang stories, particularly Ramayana and Mahabharata. Although they came from India as a foreign culture, but they had been recreated and re-interpreted as a negotiated adaptation from the original source for hundred of years. In case of a graphic adaptation from the epics, especially in the form of comic books, there are some alternatives to refer to as a visual choice: the relief on the temple, the leather-puppet theater, and the dance-drama. Theoretically, the relief and the leather-puppet are already a visual representation, but the reference to the dance-drama is going to be dominant as a genre, although not without a contestation from the leather puppet style. It's interesting to search, by also considering the comic-books formal introductions from the non-visual facts, how the ideological background come into play and become a determinant factor of the production.

2. IDENTITY AS A POLITICAL CASE: THE PROBLEM IN QUESTION

2.1. As the answer to the "traditional ideology" that should be a guarantee for the establishment of comics books and to avoid the suspicion and the negative feeling that came along with the popularity of comic-books, R. A. Kosasih, after a trial with *Arjuna Wiwaha*, created *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* - as a long series. This also acted as an answer to the assignment from the Publisher to create a best seller. However, the problem is, although these wayang comics were a huge success through decades, at least from 1955 to 1970, Kosasih intensely based the narrative not on the local-traditional wayang story, but on the

so called original story from India. With all the success, even as the pioneer of wayang comics that were accepted by the readers, how could this be valid as the identity of Indonesia?

- 2.2. From the collections of the research materials about wayang comic books, there are some pre-survey that found that after R.A. Kosasih's creations there were many variations of styles in the same genre, which is realism. At the same time, there were also many variations of styles outside that dominant genre. With the idea that each creator of the wayang comics from the past until recent years, 2016, wants to construct something indigenous, despite the many choices they have, how could an identity be isolated as a unity, if a solid identity of Indonesia is the goal of each representation?

3. METHOD: THE CONTESTATION OF SIGN IN A CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

3.1. Identity, The Politics, and The Project

The concept of identity is like an instant answer to the problem, but in this survey of wayang comics, how the facts construct the answer is more relevant than the answer itself. Following how the traces of sign in comic books are going to construct—as well as deconstruct—an identity, could function as a test of these concepts. So, these are the trilogy of the concepts of identity:

- 3.1.1. Identity is defined as a production, not an essence that it is fix and permanent. Identity is always in a process, is always constructing inside—not outside—representation. It also means that authority and originality in the concept of “cultural identity” is problematic (Hall in Woodward, 1997: 51) because actually there is no essence of identity that can be found, except on the contrary that identity is constituted by fractured multiple identities (Barker, 2004: 94). Identity is thus marked out by difference, as a representational form in a symbol as well as a social system, to see the self *not* like the other (Woodward, 1997: 8-15)
- 3.1.2. Politics of identity is concerned with the making and the maintenance of cultural

rights for those persons making identity claims within the society and culture, usually through the formation of coalitions where at least some values are shared. Politics of identity is a sub-set of cultural politics and is thus also concerned with the ‘power to name’ and to make particular descriptions stick (Barker, 2004: 95).

- 3.1.3. The idea of identity as a project refers to the ongoing creation of narratives of self-identity relating to our perceptions of the past, present and hopefully - the future. Though cultural theory now understands identities as being fractured or multiple, in everyday life we continue to describe ourselves in terms of a narrative of the self. As modernity not only breaks down the traditional forms of identity but also increases the levels of resources for identity, so we are all faced with the task of constructing our identities as a project (Barker, 2004: 96).

3.2. Reading the Sign: Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Approach

These concepts were the main instrument for the examination of wayang comics. The method is to compare comic-books to one another, with both the syntagmatic, by chronological order; and paradigmatic approach, by tracing the signifiers (Barthes, 1973: 35-49, 58-88), so that the hegemonic process of the ideological struggle can be detected. The search for a chronology from one sign to another would then take the sign as a cultural trace, which can be logically consistent, paradoxical, or conflictual (Storey, 2008: 79-82).

4. TWO STEPS OF ANALYSIS: FROM TWO ALTERNATIVES TO PLURAL EXPRESSION

The first is the analysis of the wayang comics that were Published from 1955 to 1965, and the second were Published from the year 2009 to 2015. Nevertheless, in between these periods, in 1984-1985 there is an interruption on the vacuum of production. The different of these two periods is that the first one happened when comics was still matter as a choice of entertainment, while the second one happened after Indonesian comics industry was a guerilla movement when the market was dominated by Japanese manga.

4.1. The Dominant Realists

Kosasih began to create *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* that became a best seller in the year 1955-1956. Knowing these as the pioneers of wayang comics, in this limited space, an attention to the plot and clothing will reveal some aspects of the identity politics.

In the plot of these two epic stories, we couldn't find the *panakawan* characters, that is a unique local identity of wayang expression in literature, shadow leather-puppet theatre and dance-drama. Kosasih consciously mentioned in the introduction of *Mahabharata* that he is going to tell the story "without fantasy or addition", because it's based on the Hindu's *kanda*, so the reader couldn't meet them. But in some episodes, Kosasih also declared his willingness to compromise when it came to familiar characters such as Drupadi, who is changed from being married to the five Pandawas to only one; or Gatotkaca, from non-flying giant to the flying-knight; while the female warrior SIKhandi, whose gender is changed to male, remains a male warrior as the "original" source. In the local wayang story, SIKhandi is Srikandi, one of the many wives of Arjuna, that, like SIKhandi, will defeat the undefeatable Bhishma in Bharatayudha, the war between the Bharata dynasties.

The clothing, as the consequences of the realism drawing, then has a clear relation with the costume of dance-drama, that when intermediated to the comic form of realism will lose at least the dance function. For instance it is not logical that these realist characters don't wear upper clothing, while it is common for the dance-drama in a stage setting. As these are the pioneers of wayang comics, this is how a new visual language created with a combination, or even a mix, of the newly introduced concept of realism drawing to wayang stories with the old symbolism of traditional dance.

So there are three aspects interrelated in the discourse of identity: (1) the search for the truest identity can't deny the existence of the dominant local discourse of identity as could be found; (2) while Kosasih wanted to go back to the ancient Mahabharata, his creation was actually an alternative to the dominant in the local site.



Ramayana by R. A. Kosasih
: Orientation to the stage performance.

It is an enrichment to wayang culture, so that the reader generally could have two versions of Mahabharata—in this case, identity is a multiple identity as well; (3) with an orientation that is more exclusively "original", outside the traditional culture that is limited to primordial community, although the wayang comics is inferior in the local atmosphere, with comic-books as mass media and national language Bahasa Indonesia as the media for the story, the Kosasih's Mahabharata now is superior to the local classics.

4.2. Contestation for The Realists

The success of Kosasih then invited followers from the same genre. Although every comic artist has their own style of drawing, generally they take the school of realism that becomes a genre of wayang comics. In the meantime, Melodi Publishing company, which Published Kosasih's works, also Published nearly all the other artists' works, and made Melodi's products dominate the market. The fact that Melodi was based in Bandung, West Java, where its wayang tradition as part of the Sundanese culture was somewhat different from the wayang tradition, invited a reaction from another tradition that is politically dominant in the new republic, partly because of the population, that is called Javanese culture. Actually it's debatable whether there is one definitive Java, but for the comic Publisher from Surakarta, Central Java, it has to be.

From the introduction, the drawing, and the language of the comic book *Semantri Ngender I* (Sulardi, 1956) there could be found the sign of resistance, like the statement that only in

Javanese language, the beauty of wayang art will maintain better. This is the first sign of awareness that the market is dominated by West Javanese Publishers, while the fact that Bahasa Indonesia, after hundred years of process, is the legitimate national language, doesn't look totally accepted by the old guards at the time. The faithfulness to the very specific and unique leather puppet style also shows the tendency for an extreme alternative, which then underlined by the Javanese language that is quite sophisticated so that only readers with language quality as the *dalang* (puppeteer) could perfectly understand.

The introduction of another title, *Ramajana* (Djumadi, 1956) with the orientation of pictures from the backdrop on the dance-drama stage, even mentioned that not only Central Java was the center of Javanese culture, but that the comics in the market did not match with the values of "our ancestors", as Kosasih's policy is to use the Indian version, that he took as the original. Nevertheless, the fact is, while Kosasih's wayang is the minority in the local-traditional wayang culture, on the contrary as part of the new mass media phenomena at the time, with the use Bahasa Indonesia, it actually becomes better known for the young generation of the new republic.

4.3. Ratmojo's Work: Negotiation of Styles

In the wayang comics scene, the signifiers are not only conflictual, between the dominant and the sub-ordinate groups in the market, but also mutually on negotiation as one of the signifiers of the process, that before the domination of realism, as an orientation to the dance-drama with all the cultural background, there are not only challenges but a mixture of styles as well.

The comic book *Mintaraga* by Ratmojo shows that while the chosen school of drawing is realism, so consequently it is three dimensional, but the style that can only be presented as two dimensional form as the puppet-leather's carving style is an important part of the picture. Although in the wayang comics, Ratmojo's approach seems like the only one, but outside the genre, like comic books that have the sources from traditional folklore, there are some artists that have the same way of drawing as Ratmojo, such as Moch. Radjien and S. Topo. The later even writes his



Two dimensional leather puppet style
in the three dimensional drama-dance form.

work as carving (*sungging*), like the making of leather puppet, not drawing. So in the comic books sites of cultural struggle, these approaches is an important movement.

4.4. When The Wayang Comics Goes Plural

There was a long domination of realism in wayang comics until 1980, while the popularity of wayang comic itself drastically declined after the rise of martial arts comics from 1970s. Although the realism school is quite dominant in wayang comics, it's not without variables in practice by each artist, not only on the drawing but also the choice of the ideology of the story. On one side, *Wayang Purwa* by S. Ardisoma and Hadis Sudarma for instance, although it's still can be categorized as realism, but how the body is depicted seems to refer the same philosophical background of the leather puppet's symbolism, where the body is not physical but ideological. From this point of view alone, Ardisoma could be said to have stepped further than Kosasih. While on the other side, the story content of *Wayang Purwa* is historically political, because although *Mahabharata* by Vyasa and *Ramayana* by Valmiki are actually a different two long stories from India, at least in Javanese culture there are two cycles of one continuous story, with *Ramayana* as the former and *Mahabharata* the later. So when Javanese people added the Arjuna-Sasrabahu cycle as the first of three cycle, it's also means that *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are sub-ordinated to the first, that in this case is not only "older" from those two cycles, but the story itself started with the beginning of the world.

The other artists, together from Bandung, Jakarta, and Medan Publishing house, like Dardja Sutisna (writer), Ardina (painter), Hidajat Dana (p), Oerip (p), Moech A. Affandi (w), Nana Suganda (w), Sungkawa AL (w), Sutjanda (w), R. Hidayat, R. Hamzah (w), A. R. (p), A. R. Rosadhy (w), Bahzar (p), Dj. Bulkani (w), Djun (p), As. Wakidy (p), etc., however, in their spirit of diversity, although still in the same realism, enrich the genre with *carangan* or the sub-section of mostly Mahabharata's fragments. Although they were not as popular as Kosasih, their creation—the story and the drawing—can't easily be underestimated. Ardisoma, who was critically accepted as having achieved the further dimension of interpretation than Kosasih, also draw this kind of wayang comics. It's true that all the titles looked just like followers who tried to fill the market which was opened by Kosasih's *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, but to take a close attention and readings, these *carangan* wayang comics were actually more than just good. The way they try to differentiate themselves from each other, with or without the standard stories, gives the Indonesian wayang comics the competition of creativity that benefits the readers, and then the culture.

On the long break, when the market was dominated by the translated Japanese manga comics, the first resistance, actually an interruption, happened to be a nostalgia, not only with the nearly perfect realism, but with the wayang comic genre as well. That's what happen when *Mahabharata* by Teguh Santosa was Published as a series in *Ananda* magazine in 1984. One year later a Publisher asked Teguh to create the full colour *Mahabharata*, and the same thing from Jan Mintaraga for *Ramayana*. As these two artists were the icons of the 1970s, only further proofed the spirit of resistance to the domination of manga comics in the market. However, their creation couldn't compete in a world of comics that was dominated by manga, and the break of wayang comics from Indonesian comics scenery continues.

4.4.1. The first sign of the return of wayang comics is the manga style wayang comics that is created by Is Yuniarto, *Garudayana*, in 2009. This story uses Mahabharata like a set that already exists, for his own story about an adventure of a little bird named Garu, that in the future will be Garuda. However, with the hegemony of this

manga style, it doesn't mean that Indonesian comic is dominated by Japanese comic, because with the manga style this comic is going to be very unique as an Indonesian wayang comic, while at the same time is the only manga wayang comic in the world. These series claim openly as a project of an identity politics to continue the tradition in a new way. Along with the narrative, the plot some time is interrupted with an encyclopedic information of characters, architecture, and iconographical context, like the comic book is a celebration of culture.

4.4.2. In 2010, *Baratayuda* by Andik & Afif was Published as a full color comic that was aimed to be a literature for children. Depicted also with the influence from manga, the story of *Mahabharata* was told from the point of view of Jaras Dhyara and Asoka, the twin brother-sister. While the expression of the manga style was adjusted to the genre of children books, the plot gives a wide portion to the world of Jaras and Asoka, which is quite familiar with signs from the local world. From the context of the Indonesian wayang comic, this comic contributes to the diversity because although the style is clearly manga, it is depicted carefully for children to the introduction of the Indonesian world.

4.4.3. In 2014 enter the Indonesian comic world the publication of *Mahabharata* by GunGun. As this comic was supported by the official authority of Hindu Bali religion, it seems to be very consistent and faithful to the Indian source, although if it is compared to the Indian comic itself that is translated in Indonesia, there are still some slight differences. However, generally this kind of information, as a *dharma wacana* (like *dakwah* in Islam), in the form of comic settled a new position in wayang comics. Not only that GunGun does not compromise some characters like Kosasih, but at the same time the iconographical signs presented a very dominant Balinese culture. As big as the project, the series nearly cover everything from the source, 19 *parwa*, Bharatayudha, and the standard Hindu text as Bagawad Gita, Sarasamuccaya, and Manawa Dharmasastra in the form of comic book.



Wayang comics as the *dharma wacana* project.

4.4.4. The comic *Mahabharata* by Apri Kusbiantoro is like a representation of a long awaited dream, that Indonesian comics, especially in this genre of wayang comics, critically and commercially, could be as good as any good comic in the world. The glossy paper for the spectacular full colour picture, the artistic approach, and the format of the book obviously show the goals to reach the ideal comic. More important from Apri's work, the realism orientation isn't limited to the dance-drama stage, but goes far beyond the boundaries, like penetrate to the real life outside the stage. So these are the presentation of wayang characters as "real people" where the clothing is not a dance costume and the surrounding is not a stage backdrop. Apri also step further with the stylization of the written text as "like a literature" and as philosophical as it could be. Regarding the luxury and the kind of unlimited freedom, this comic is like a celebration of realism.

4.4.5. *Gugur* by Sungging that appeared in an "indie" collection of short comics in 2015, is just a marginal publication without further impact yet. However it could become meaningful for the function of check and balance to Apri's luxurious *Mahabharata*. In the same genre of realism, compared to the colorful and glossy competitor, the black and white drawing in the gloomy paper happens to be the mutual artistic quality. Sungging depictions is on the same ideology: the pursuit of the ultimate artistic achievement. Maybe this is why, just like the former comic, when each panel is an excellent work, it isn't really related with the flowing

of the story plot. In *Gugur* every panel could stand up as an independent panel.

4.4.6. *Serat Tripama*, that was Published in 2016, created by the contemporary *dalang* Sujiwo Tejo, has an important meaning as the first wayang comic in 60 year that refers to the shadow play narrative of leather-puppet, since the publication of *Semantri Ngenger I* in 1956. It might be a coincidence that the story is actually the same, but the difference then reflects the determination of time. While the old one consciously want to be faithful to a tradition, the new comic differs itself with a new way of telling by an urban *dalang*. The result is a new wayang comic. Not only that the artist has no limitation like the mainstream comics of the picture from panel to panel, but also the language, the plot, and the meaning are treated upside down. The return of the shadow play's alternative, although with a very different approach—precisely more of a contemporary shadow play than of a leather-puppet style—after marginalized for so long, is important for the understanding of the circle of culture.



Comics with The Shadow Play Orientation (1956 & 2016)
: The Story of Revival

4.5. Small Market, Many Styles

At this point, to follow the development of the signifiers in the wayang comic books with syntagmatic and paradigmatic approach, it is clear that this second step, after decades of stagnancy with reprints from the 1960s in the marginal 1980-2000 market, doesn't show any specific domination. The manga style is the way of the first two different kind of comics, and the two kind of realism that followed

don't make each of them dominate the scene, while the latest development takes a way of telling that is so different, that only could refer contingently with the shadow play. So the free small market become a site of free styles of comic genres.

5. CULTURE AS A SITE OF IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE: CONCLUSION.

In the name of identity politics, from 1955 there has been a contestation of sign for the wayang comics to achieve what is the best representation of the ideology from wayang culture. When identity matters, although the theory already defines that it is not possible to isolate a single unique identity, the politics of identity become a drive for the projects of identity. In the case of wayang comics, when the Publishers have to find an alternative ideology after the burning, the choice of wayang is actually also a choice of identity, although the "safe ideology" is more of the concern regarding the political situation at the time.

Then, whatever the ideology in mind, like for instance in the name of the ancestor values, a contestation of the identity become more primordial, thus it is more political, with a special interest for each group. When the market was dominated by the works of Sundanese comic artists in Bandung, West Java, with their orientation to dance-drama stage as the source of intermediation; the competitor from Solo, Central Java, challenged it with the leather puppet artistic style as an alternative orientation. As the market become part of the cultural site, the phenomenal Medan Comics industry also entered wayang comic markets with an argument that the Jawa Deli community, who still wanted to be a Javanese in North Sumatra is the potential consumers (Ismono, 2016: 32). This Medan wayang comics is also depicted in realism. As the commercial interest seems to be a powerful determinant factor, it's the fact that realism happen as the only choice to the embodiment of wayang comics. That's when the wayang comics become a dominant genre for decades.

Being hegemonic as it could be, after the 1970s with the rise of martial arts comics (*komik silat*), the wayang comics began to disappear from the market, and when in the 1980s even when the comics itself is not the only choice of entertainment anymore, the distribution of the comics was only known under the radar. But, however, the business of wayang comic

itself never dies. In the case of comics by Kosasih and other comic artists, in the Klasik series from Melody, it's just like an evergreen commodity: How that people, who mostly read it in the 1960s, still want to relive the experience of reading the reprints. Kosasih even had the opportunity to re-draw *Mahabharata*, *Arjuna Wiwaha*, and creating the new *Bangbang Wisanggeni* in the 1980s. It is in this period that the nostalgic power from *Mahabharata's* Teguh Santosa and *Ramayana's* Jan Mintaraga appear as a cultural struggle to keep wayang comics exist.

Every time a wayang comic is created and Published, the notion to bequeath the high values of the ancestors, and how important an autonomous identity for a nation, become the ideology. The most interesting thing is that with the same spirit, in the period of the 2000s until now the signifiers of identity from each title can't be defined as an isolated single identity. The latest development sees a formation of the searching and the constructing of an identity that even though is related to each other but is unique in every single title. In this case, it is not actually wrong to mention it as pluralism.

As can be seen as a continuation, from the manga wayang comics of *Garudayana* by Is Yuniarto that consciously refers to local source of the tradition, *Baratayuda* by Andik & Afif with a policy for children that also has a local set, *Mahabharata* by GunGun that formally and normatively a Balinese Hindu *dharma wacana* with a strong local iconography, *Mahabharata* by Apriyadi Kusbiantoro that celebrates the aesthetical realism, *Gugur* by Sungging that widens the perspective, *Serat Tripama* by Sujiwo Tejo as the contemporary shadow play, and considering that there is still a long break from 1985 to 2009, the history of wayang comics then is actually the story of contestation and revival.



Karna & Arjuna: Manga Style by Is Yuniarto



Gugur by Sungging: The Artistic Project?

The identity project of the 2009-2016 period therefore become the activism of creating the most possible representation of a nation, with the most artistic and the most communicatively possible, although it now clearly couldn't appear exactly all the same. The differences of interpretation show how the diversity enrich the discourse of the nation, in this case Indonesia, and this is happening in comic books, a media that only has a very narrow lane of existence, a minority in the age of social media and global communication. In the discourse of meaning: How small is the distribution, how big is the contribution.

WAYANG COMICS: CONTESTATION OF ORIENTATION

Dance-Drama Stage Orientation Leather Puppet / Shadow Play Orientation

- 1955 – *Ramayana* / R.A. Kosasih
- 1955 – *Mahabharata* / R.A. Kosasih
- 1956 – *Wayang Purwa* / S. Ardisoma
- 1956 – *Semantri Ngenger* / Sulardi
- 1960 – *Ramayana* / Djumadi
- 1984 – *Mahabharata* / Teguh Santosa
- 1985 – *Mahabharata* / Teguh (FC)¹
- Ramayana* / Jan Mintaraga (FC)
- 2009 – *Garudayana* / Is Yuniarto
- 2010 – *Baratayuda* / Andik & Afif (FC)
- 2014 – *Mahabharata* / Gun Gun
- 2015 – *Mahabharata* / Apri Kusbiantoro (FC)
- 2015 – *Gugur* / Sungging
- 2016 – *Serat Tripama* / Sujiwo Tejo

- The long break interrupted by the year of 1984 and 1985.

¹ FC = Full color

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Atmowiloto, Arswendo. "Komik Itu Baik (1): Komik Wayang, Siapa Tak Sayang?", *Kompas* daily (1979).

_____. "Sri Asih dalam Tradisi Komik Indonesia", *Kompas* daily, November 1980.

_____. "Kho Wan Gie, Bapak 'Put On', Komik Pertama Indonesia", *Kompas* daily (1981).

Barker, Chris. *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies* (London: SAGE Publications, 2004).

Barthes, Roland. *Element of Semiology*. Translated from the French by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith [New York: Hill & Wang, 1973 (1964)].

Ismono, Henry. *Lintasan Cergam Medan* (Jakarta: Kelompok Kaji Cergam, 2016).

O' Sullivan, Tim. et al. *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1994).

Storey, John. *Cultural Studies & The Theory of Popular Culture: Theories and Methods* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996).

_____. *An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (London: Longman, 2008).

Tulisan, Pabrik. *Seni Komik Indonesia: Buku Stensil Seminar Komik*, 12 November 1980, Senisono, Yogyakarta.

Woodward, Kathryn. (ed.), *Identity and Difference* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997).

Zoetmulder, P.J. *Kalangwan: Sastra Jawa Kuno Selayang Pandang*. Translated from the English by Dick Hartoko [Jakarta: Djambatan, 1983 (1974)].