

Research Article

The Influence of Japanese Popular Culture on Cepot Visualization in Digital Media

Muhammad Hidayattuloh

School of Creative Industries, Telkom University, Bandung, Indonesia

Abstract.

Wayang Golek is one of the most popular traditional performances in West Java. In the show, Wayang Golek presents puppet characters that support the storyline that is being built. As one of the Punakawan characters, Cepot in Wayang Golek received a positive response and became a show icon. Cepot's popularity does not stop at stage performances but is also expressed in digital media with different visualizations that are influenced by Japanese popular culture. Looking at the types, Japanese popular culture in Indonesia includes comics, fashion, and animation. As a Japanese animation genre, mecha presents fictional robot figures that influence illustrators in designing Cepot illustrations for digital media. The results of the illustration present Cepot's appearance which is different from his original form by combining the Cepot character in Wayang Golek with a Japanese fictional robot. This study uses qualitative methods with popular culture theory. It concludes that popular culture in these illustrations presents interesting and attractive visualizations and can communicate traditional culture to a broader and global reach.

Corresponding Author:

Muhammad Hidayattuloh; email:

hidayat-

tuloh@telkomuniversity.ac.id

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1. Introduction

Of the many traditional arts in the West Java region, wayang golek has relatively high popularity in Sundanese society. The large number of events, both private and government agencies, or television broadcasts showing wayang golek performances more or less influence the popularity of this art in society. In the show, the story told by the puppeteer, supported by the role of wayang characters and other elements, can captivate the audience even in a one-night show format.

Generally, the characters found in Wayang Golek are divided into Satria, Punakawan, Ponggawa, and Buta. The Punakawan characters in wayang golek and wayang kulit are characters that are not found in Hindu wayang, these characters include Semar, Petruk (in wayang golek it is called Dawala), Gareng, and Bagong. Apart from these punakawan, in the Sundanese wayang golek, the figure of Cepot or Astrajingga is a

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new character who is included in the punakawan group (1). As the favorite Wayang Golek character by the audience, cepot is unique in various aspects, both in form and in his communication style. In communication, his communication style tends towards comedy and being able to convey messages of good advice, criticism, advice, and satire given through jokes (2). Whereas in the visual aspect, cepot is different from other punakawan characters by having characteristics which include a dominant red facial skin color, a thin mustache, one tooth on the front, hands that tend to clench, uses a Sundanese headband, *Barangbang Semplak* (3). In the aspect of clothing, the clothes worn by Cepot are according to the times. The long-sleeved black pangsi shirt with a sarong wrapped around the neck makes Cepot look different from other wayang golek characters (2). Meanwhile, regarding weapons, Cepot is equipped with a bedog/machete pinned to his waist.

Cepot's high popularity on the puppet show stage resulted in the presence of this figure off the stage, which was expressed in digital illustrations in various media. The illustration is the work of illustrators using a cepot figure. Still, it has been engineered by adding different visualizations of robotic elements as an influence from the mecha character which is Japanese popular culture. This research will examine how the impact of popular culture influences the form of Cepot's illustrations on digital media

2. Research Methods

This research uses qualitative methods and a case study approach. A qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in written or spoken words from the observed object. Meanwhile, a case study is a study of a case in real life, in a contemporary context or setting. Case study research aims to understand specific issues, problems, or concerns. (4).

The primary data used in this study is the illustration of cepot from the Behance website with the keyword cepot mecha. The image taken as a case study is the creation of an nco dot account which has more views and likes than the others until March 7, 2023. The choice of this site is due to its credibility as a social media site that displays creative works initiated by Adobe.

The analysis uses a comparative method, which compares Cepot's appearance in the wayang golek show with Cepot's illustrations, which are influenced by Japanese popular culture related to mecha.

3. Results and Discussion

By definition, popular culture is a form of culture that is understood as the form of culture that is most liked and understood by the general public. In a situation of postmodernism, popular culture has become an arena for cultural change to occur; popular culture is no longer seen as a medium for entertainment, shallow escape, or leisure time but has become a severe art field with all its characteristics which imply social dynamics that occur and are essential to study. In popular culture, the tendency for recycling in all fields is often with the intention of parody, irony, nostalgia, or revitalization by colliding all texts and contexts (5).

At this time, popular culture originating from Japan is easily accessible through conventional or digital media with the internet network. Japanese popular culture, sometimes called J-Pop, generally includes television shows, films, comics/manga, anime (Japanese animation), music, and fashion. Of these forms, anime, manga, and fashion are Indonesia's most popular Japanese cultural forms (6).

As one of the genres in Japanese animation, mecha comes from the word mechanical, which can refer to all mechanical-based things in the form of cars, electronic equipment, machines, and even robots. The mecha genre first appeared in 1956 from the Japanese comic/manga entitled *Tetsujin 28-Go*, which was written by Mesetrru Yokoyama and made an animated version in 1963. In the story, the animation tells about a giant robot figure controlled by humans to fight their enemies. The story idea was welcomed and inspired the mecha genre in subsequent generations (7).

Seeing the high popularity of the mecha genre resulted in Cepot's illustrations combining the Cepot character in *Wayang Golek* with a Japanese fictional robot figure, which is part of popular culture. Of the many designs on the Behance site that use the keyword report mecha as a search tool, the spot illustration created by the nco dot account has many views and likes compared to other illustrations of these keywords. The work was broadcast on April 6, 2021, and has received 257 views with nine likes until March 7, 2023.

In the Cepot illustration designed by the nco dot behance account, there are aspects of deformation and stylization related to the change in Cepot's shape visible on the headband, hair, face, neck and clothes. Meanwhile, in terms of color, the nose, teeth, and mustache still refer to their initial form.

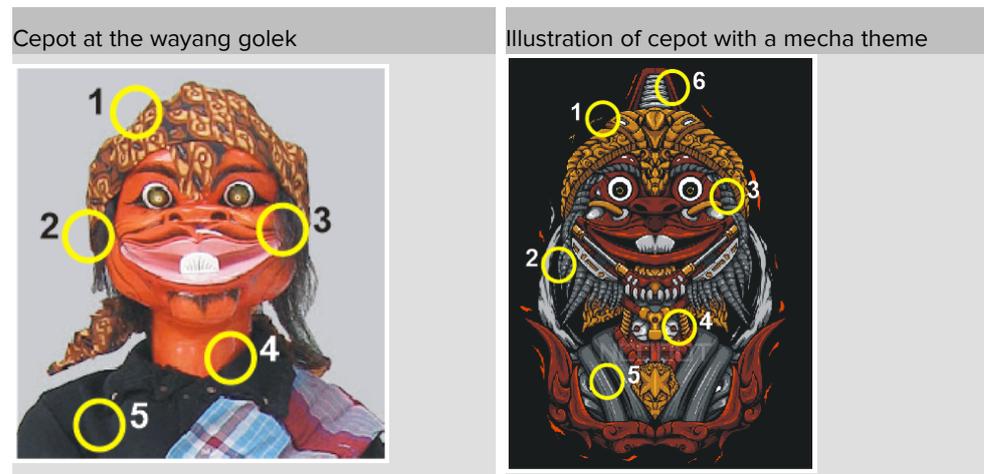


Figure 1: An illustration of a mecha-themed cepot by nco dot found on the Behance website.

Image source: https://www.behance.net/gallery/116987741/cepot-mecha?tracking_source=search_projects%7Ccepot+mecha accessed on 7 March 2023 at 15.11.

Referring to the picture in the table above, it can be seen that there is a difference in the headband (1). If initially the cepot headband was made of batik cloth, then in the illustration of the cepot, the headband looks like it is made of iron, which is given a yellow color and a stacked effect like a pile of solid objects. Apart from that, the hair (2), initially in the form of strands like human hair, is made thicker in this illustration,

TABLE 1: Comparison between Cepot's character in wayang golek and Cepot's illustration from nco dot with the theme of cepot mecha.



like the formation of wires, to support the robot theme. On the face (3), there is an additional element on the cheek that looks like a pipe coming out from the side of the nose. On the neck and chin (4), if at first, it was more similar to a human neck or chin, in this illustration, there is an additional visualization of a mechanical spring element, which emphasizes the robotic component as part of the theme it carries. In the clothing section (5), if the depot clothing was initially a black pangsi shirt, then in this illustration, it is like stacked metal elements with the addition of a necklace in the middle. Apart from the addition of the objects that have been mentioned, in the head section (6) there is an addition of objects that are different from their origin to strengthen the theme.

4. Conclusion

As a popular culture, the mecha genre anime has influenced the visualization of Cepot's design illustrations in digital media. The resulting illustration is strikingly different from Cepot's form in the Wayang Golek show. The illustration of the cepot design found on digital media with the mecha theme attempts to communicate Indonesian culture regarding wayang golek to a broader (global) reach. In this effort, the role of the creator who captures issues related to Japanese popular culture as well as technological support allows him to present a new and attractive figure of Cepot without losing the visual identity on Cepot's face to a global audience

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