

# The Head Iconography of the Chinese - Javanese Shadow Puppet (Wacinwa) Collection of the Sonobudoyo State Museum of Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Hanggar Budi Prasetya

*Puppetry Department, Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta, Jl. Parangtritis Km 6.5, Bantul, Yogyakarta, Indonesia*

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**Abstract:** The aim of my research is to explore and describe the iconography of the Chinese – Javanese shadow puppet (*Wacinwa*) collection of the Sonobudoyo State Museum of Yogyakarta (SSMY). To explore the iconography of the collection means at the same time to identify the shadow puppet characters. The shadow puppet set of the museum was made in 1925 and have been popular between 1925 and 1967 mainly among the Peranakan Chinese communities in Indonesia. Later on, for more than forty years, until 2014 this puppet was not performed largely because of political reasons. Since 2014, this puppet, a unique tradition of art, has been performed again several times. Although the quality and the condition of this puppet collection are considerably good, a detailed iconographical study and especially, a complete catalogue of it, is still missing. According to the research I can differentiate the following eight groups in the *Wacinwa* Collection of SSMY: 1. priests and monks; 2. emperors or kings; 3. aristocrats and noblemen; 4. generals and commanders; 5. soldiers; 6. vendors and sellers; 7. children; 8. weapons (accessories). However in my present research my aim is to describe and identify the characters of the *Wacinwa* collection of the SSMY, Indonesia one by one. In the early stage, I attempted to identify the *wacinwa* by comparing it with the image on Sie Jin Kui's comic. In fact, this way turned to be unsuccessful. An image existing in the comics is excessively unclear. Then I compared it with the Chinese shadow puppet (*pi ying xi*) and the Javanese shadow puppet. By looking at its iconography, *wacinwa* is closer to *Pi ying xi*.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The main problem regarding the identification of the characters is that we do not know about any existing parallel wayang sets. The *Wacinwa* set of puppets were made to perform the Sie Jin Kui (Xi Rengui) epic, written during the Tang dynasty, but the iconography of the characters are clearly following the art of the Ming dynasty (Prasetya, 2014, Prasetya, at al, 2015).



Figure 1: *Pi ying xi* (left), *Wacinwa* (right)



Figure 2. Javanese shadow puppet

The first time identifying the Chinese-Javanese shadow puppet (*wacinwa*), I initially thought that this

puppet is a two-dimensional shape from three dimensional other Chinese puppet called *potehi* (Prasetya, 2014). This assumption turns out to be false somehow. The *wacinwa* is more likely influenced by *Pi ying xi* (figure 1) and Javanese shadow puppet (figure 2)

The closeness between *pi ying xi* and *Wacinwa* can be viewed from the puppet accessories and equipments, for example, a palanquin (figure 2) and a house (figure 3).



Figure 3: Palanquin *Wacinwa* (left) *pi ying xi* (right).



Figure 4: House - *Wacinwa* (left) *pi ying xi* (right).

## 2 THE ICONOGRAPHY OF HEAD

The heads of both *Wacinwa* and *Pi ying xi* are a very important part. The head of the puppet's character are changeable (Figure 5). The State Museum of Yogyakarta's (SMY) collection of *wacinwa* has 159 heads and 165 intact puppets consisting of human figures (along with the head and the body), weapons, flora, and fauna. As evidently observed, the head can be grouped into several categories, namely (1) the head without accessories; (2) the head with the bun hairdo; (3) the head with fewer accessories; (4) the head of a woman; (5) the head of a royal low-level worker wearing a hat; (6) the head with a simple fastening strap; (7) the head with a simple hat; (8) the head with flower accessories; (9) the head wearing a magnificent hat with red flower accessories; (10) the head wearing a hat like the Roman army; (11) the head wearing a hat with long feather accessories; (12) the head wearing a crown.



Figure 5: Changeable puppet's head.

### The head without accessories



Figure 6: Head without accessories.

The head without accessories is used to describe ordinary people, such as farmers or labourers'.

### The head with the bun hairdo

The head with the bun hairdo is used to describe the figures who are rather high-class, for example, traders or farmers (Figure 7).



Figure 7: The head with the bun hairdo

### The head with fewer accessories

The head with fewer accessories is used to describe figures of clergies or the royal workers.



Figure 8: The head with fewer accessories.

### The head of female

The female head is classified into four types, that is, a head without accessories and with fewer accessories. The female head without accessories means an ordinary person. The head using accessories are used to describe women in a particular class, for example, the army, the civil servants, and so forth. This puppet head is almost the same with the female head of *pi ying xi* (Figure 9)



Figure 9: Female head and *wacinwa* puppet



Figure 10: The female head of *pi ying xi*.

### The head of a low-level royal worker

The head as shown in figure 11 describes low-level royal workers who push the carts or low-ranking soldiers.



Figure 11: The head of a low-level royal worker

### The head with a simple fastening strap



Figure 12: Head and puppet with a simple strap of *acinwa* (left and center), *pi ying xi* (right).

### The head with a simple hat



Figure 13: The head of the figures of traders or farmers

### The head of the roman army

This model of head as shown in the figure 16 describes the secondary rank army. Such a model of head is not found in the *pi ying xi*.



Figure 16: The Roman soldier-like head.

### The head with flower accessories



Figure 14: The head of a secondary rank soldier figure

### The head wearing a hat with long feather accessories

The head wearing a hat with long feather is also found in the *pi ying xi* puppet (Figure 17). The head accessories as such are only worn by the top leaders in the war.



Figure 17: The head and the puppet of *wacinwa*'s general (left and center) and *pi ying xi* (right).

### The head wearing a magnificent hat with red flower accessories



*Wacinwa*

*Wacinwa*

*Pi ying xi* (Liu lilin, 1988)

Figure 15: The head and the puppet of *wacinwa*'s secondary rank soldiers (left and center), *pi ying xi* (right).

## The crown head



Figure 18: The head and *Wacinwa*'s puppet (left and center) and *pi ying xi* (right).

Three parts of the head were observed, namely the shape of the eyes, the mouth, and the the nose.

### 2.1. The Shape of Mouth

*Wacinwa*'s mouth shape resembles a human's mouth. This shape resembles the shape of *pi ying xi*. If compared to the Javanese puppet, it is different considerably. The Javanese puppet has many different forms (Figure 19).



Figure 19: Some forms of eyes, noses, and mouths of Javanese puppets.

*Wacinwa* puppet's mouth is similar to a human's mouth.



Figure 20: *Wacinwa*'s mouth (left) and *pi ying xi* (right).

### 2.2. The Shape of Nose

*Wacinwa*'s nose shape is similar to the shape of *pi ying xi*'s nose. If compared to the Javanese puppet, it shows a big difference. As has been observed, there are only two kinds of noses, that is, the long nose and the common human's nose.



Figure 21: The shape of *Wacinwa*'s nose



Figure 22: The shape of *pi ying xi*'s nose

### 2.3. The Shape of Eye

*Wacinwa* puppet's eyes shape is similar to *pi ying xi*'s, but the eyes of *pi ying xi* have their own meanings. They take three forms namely long, narrow eyes (a) that tilt up at the outside corner are used for good character; crafty or wicked characters have triangular eyes (b); and round eyes are used for brave, hardly warriors (c) (Jilin, 1998: 15).



Figure 23: *Pi ying xi*'s eyes

Similar to *pi ying xi*'s eyes, *wacinwa* also has three types of eyes (Figure 24).



Figure 24: *Wacinwa* puppet's eyes

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

The form of *wacinwa* puppet is simpler than that of *pi ying xi* and Javanese puppet. The form of *wacinwa* is a blend of *pi ying xi* and Javanese puppet. The characters in *pi ying xi* resemble the characters in *wacinwa*. Therefore, iconography of *pi ying xi* can be used to help identify *wacinwa*.

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