

# DRAWING STYLES VISUAL ANALYSIS OF INDONESIAN ACTION COMICS

## CASE STUDY PANDJI TENGGORAK (1968) AND RAIBARONG (2016)

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**Abstract.** Comics are one of popular storytelling media which combines images and text, and is read through specific order. Far before it was known as “comic”, Indonesia already has several forms of storytelling, such as Wayang Beber and relief on Borobudur’s temple. These forms are later known as comics, which evolve through times in Indonesia. Indonesian comics received many influences from other countries. Indonesian comics received most influences from America and Japan. These influences are seen on its story telling, and also, its drawing style. The comics being analyzed on this thesis are those with action genre, also known as “komik silat” in the past, because this genre is one of the most popular genre. There are two titles picked to be analyzed, one is “Pandji Tengkorak”, which represents older generation comic, and “Raibarong”, which represent a more modern comic. To understand how Indonesian comics grows throughout times and the factors behind its growth, this research uses qualitative analysis and descriptive-comparative along with study case as its approach. The result shows the differences between drawing style of the two comics, caused by the trends existing on their respective eras. Internal factors such as the authors personal preferences and media used to create the comics also further influences their drawing styles.

**Keywords:** Action; Comic; Drawing; Indonesia; Style. .

**Abstrak,** Komik adalah salah satu media bercerita populer yang menggabungkan gambar dan teks, dan dibaca melalui urutan tertentu. Jauh sebelum dikenal sebagai Komik, Indonesia sudah memiliki beberapa bentuk bercerita, seperti Wayang Beber dan relief di Candi Borobudur. Bentuk ini kemudian dikenal sebagai komik, yang berkembang. Komik-komik Indonesia mendapat banyak pengaruh dari negara lain. Sebagian besar komik Indonesia menerima pengaruh dari Amerika dan Jepang. Pengaruh ini terlihat pada penceritaan dan juga gaya gambarnya. Komik yang dianalisis ini adalah komik aksi yang juga dikenal sebagai "komik Silat", komik aksi adalah salah satu genre yang paling populer. Ada dua judul yang dipilih untuk dianalisis, salah satunya adalah "Pandji tengkorak", yang mewakili komik generasi tua, dan "Raibarong", yang mewakili komik modern dengan tujuan untuk memahami bagaimana komik Indonesia berkembang sepanjang waktu dan faktor di balik pertumbuhannya. Hasilnya menunjukkan perbedaan antara gaya menggambar dari dua komik, yang disebabkan oleh tren yang ada pada era masing-masing. Faktor internal seperti preferensi pribadi penulis dan media yang digunakan menunjukkan pengaruh yang lebih besar pada gaya gambar mereka.

**Kata kunci:** Aksi; Gambar; Gaya; Indonesia; Komik.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Comics, according to KBBI (Indonesian official Dictionary), is a story accompanied by pictures (in magazines, newspapers, or in the form of books) which contents is funny and generally easy to digest. Another expert stated comics a form of reading which combines words and pictures, presented in specific sequences [1] [2]. Comics are also known as sequential art. From these definitions, it can be concluded that the comic is a story that can be read, composed of words and images, has a sequence, and is generally easier to digest.

In Indonesia, comics have been around since ancient times. The oldest form of comics found in Indonesia consists of pictures in palm leaves and reliefs in the temple. Relief at Borobudur and Prambanan are able to show the sequence of events in one panel. There is also wayang beber, a traditional storytelling art which shows a series of images on leather scrolls, whose story is narrated by the puppeteer. [3]

Comics in Indonesia not only end up being the only ancient artifacts. In more modern times, Indonesian comic got influenced from the west and east during the world wars. There are three major influences which impacts greatly affect Indonesian comics, such as American comics, European comics and Asian comics [4]. One of the first influence came from the east, namely Chinese newspaper Sin Po in 1930.

Indonesian comics used to be just an extra in the newspaper, and after some time, Indonesian comics changes. Inspired by the success of American superhero comics, Indonesian authors attempt to create American superhero character in Indonesian setting. Many imitations of American heroes began to appear in many Indonesian comics.

These imitations then received heavy criticism from the educators. They argued that comics are not educating, contain dangerous ideas, and its publication was threatened to be stopped. To counter this criticism, a new type of comic called "Wayang" comics were born. These comics are originally published between 1954 and 1955.

In the reign of Sukarno, Indonesia moves with the spirit of nationalism. Nationalism-themed comics are springing up around the 1960s. The stories consist of struggle gaining independence, a war against the invaders, and the ambition to become a superpower in Asia.

Romance comics appear after the comic in general separated from politicization. The stories that depict the love lives of adolescents also appear. But, rather than telling a story of young couple in love, Indonesian romance comics are filled eroticism and violence. The presence of romance comics with negative elements are then triggered protests from various people. Some were worried about the impact on children, some were upset because they were expecting a comic as a learning media and did not accept the negative contents. Under such controversies, Indonesian comics underwent vacuum period.

Later in the 1990s, comics China and Japan enter Indonesia. Comics like Tony Wong (Tiger Wong and "Tapak Sakti"), Takeshi Maekawa (Kungfu Boy) and Kyoko Mizuki-Yumiko Igarashi (Candy Candy) caught Indonesian attention. Comics from these two different countries presents a different way of reading for Indonesian readers. Chinese comics are loaded with imaginative motion scenes, while Japanese comics presents a readable image sequence and 2nd person perspective in the narrative [4]. Asian comics then become a trend among local comic authors as well readers, even to this day.

The changing trends in Indonesian comics also influence its style of drawing. The changes do not affect only the character's drawing, but also on the elements of comics, such as the panels, the reading directions, backgrounds arts, word balloons, lettering and onomatopoeia [5] [6].

This study focused on analyzing changes in two comic drawing style which genre is "action". Two titles compared are the Pandji Tengkorak(1968) by Hans Jaladara and Raibarong (2016) by Alex Irzaqi. This study aims to find out the differences and similarities of the two comic drawing styles from different eras as well to find out the internal and external cause of the difference/similarities.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Research Methods

The research method used in this research is descriptive-comparative analysis method with a case study approach. Qualitative analysis method is a method to explore and understand the meaning of a phenomenon, which is derived from social or humanitarian problems [7]. The descriptive method was performed to identify the visual elements of the two comic book based on variables that have been determined. Then the comparative method used to identify differences contained in both the comic.

The approach taken in this study is a multidisciplinary approach. Multidisciplinary approach is done by reviewing research approach using a variety of disciplines This study uses a case study approach. As a support, this study also uses visual and historical approach. Historical approach described the phenomenon in chronological explanation regarding the development of comics in Indonesia, ranging from ancient comics to the modern comics. The historical explanation is then combined with the evolving dynamics in society which influence the development of comics in Indonesia. Visual approach itself means the objects to be analyzed is the drawing/images.

### 2.2 Research Process

To obtain the data relating to the research, there are several methods that can be done:

#### 1. Purposive sampling technique

The purposive sampling technique is a sampling technique in which researchers have determined the specific characteristics in accordance with the purpose of research, which is expected to answer the research problems. The specific characteristics refer to images or drawing with similar meaning.

In choosing a panel sample to be examined, there are a few things taken into consideration. Given the era difference when Pandji Tengkorak and Raibarong was made, presumably there will be similarities and differences in the comic. Thus, the variable that will be examined are panels that contain similar scene and meaning.

- (1) The depiction of the main character
- (2) The portrayal of the comic panel and the direction of reading
- (3) The depiction of the background
- (4) *Lettering*
- (5) Depictions of fight scene

#### 2. Literature Study

A literature study is the activity of searching for information on written sources, such as books, magazines, records, articles, journals, and documents like. Another expert mention that literature study is the search for reference or the theory from the existing literature, which deals with research problems. The information from literature serves as the base theory as well to correct or o support the discovery in the research.

#### 3. Interview

The interview is a question-and-answer activity among the interviewer and the informant to obtain additional data about the object of research. Interviews were taken in the form of questions and answers online via facebook and email. The advantage of the interview a to obtain more personal information. But there were also shortcomings such as the answers to the interview can be a biased response. The informants who will be interviewed are the author of "Pandji Tengkorak" Hans Jaladara and the author of "Raibarong" Alex Irzaqi.

After sampling and determine which variables to use, the next step taken is data analysis and processing. The analysis is performed to get an answer to the problem of research.

**4. Data analysis**





The measures to be taken are:

- 1) Data obtained from literature review and interviews will be sorted and grouped according to associated categories. These data are then summarized and rephrased to obtain the original statement of the researcher.
- 2) Panel samples collected will be identified and are given signs to indicate any differences and similarities. The results were then compared.
- 3) Information obtained from literature study and interviews will be associated with the results obtained from the analysis of sample panels. It is to obtain the relationship between the samples of both the comic panels, Indonesian comic historical progression, and what affects the similarities and differences between the two comics. Those are then compacted into a coherent conclusion.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**1. Depiction of Main Characters**

Table 1. Depiction of the face and Body

Pandji Tengkorak	Raibarong
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The shape of the face is more realistic</li> <li>- More detailed pictures the face</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The shape of the face is more cartoony</li> <li>- Simplified picture of the face</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More realistic body shape</li> <li>- More detailed image of the body organ and proportion</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Body shape is more cartoony</li> <li>- Long arms and legs</li> </ul>

The main character in Pandji Tengkorak is drawn in a realistic drawing style, a style which depicts the drawing as similar as possible as the real object [8]. While the main character of Raibarong is drawn in a cartoon style (Table 1).

The differences in drawing style are influenced by the trend of comic during each period and the authors favorite comic. During the era in which Pandji Tengkorak (1968) was made, American-style comics was prevalent. Many american comics has realistic style. Meanwhile, Raibarong (2016) was made in a era in which japanese comic was the trend, thus influencing its drawing style to be more cartoony/manga style.

Each authors also has a preference in their favorite comics, which influences their style of drawing comic. Pandji Tengkorak, according to Hans Jaladara itself is influenced by several of his favorite comics, Sie Djin Koei (Tjeng Tang), Mahabaratha (RA Kosasih), and comics made by Hardjo Taguan (Figure 1). Raibarong, according to Alex Irzaqi itself also received the influence of several japanese comic and chinese comic. Popular titles such as, Naruto (Masashi Kishimoto), comics Dragon Ball (Akira Toriyama), and comic Wind and Cloud ( Ma Wing-Shing) are admitted to influence Raibarong ( Figure 2).

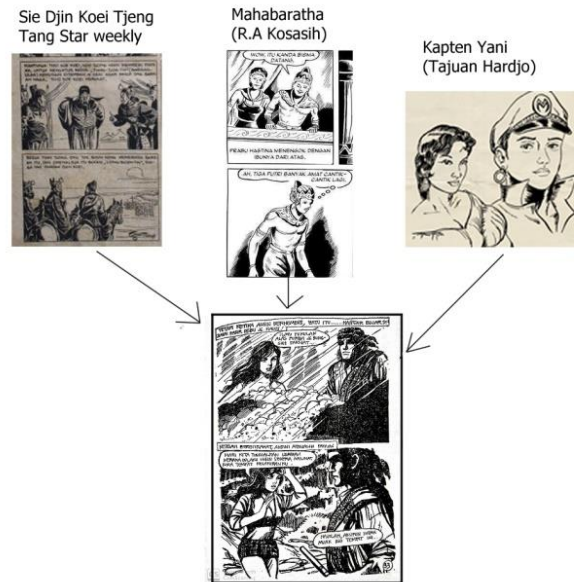


Figure 1. Influence map of Pandji Tengkorak according to the author Hans Jaladara



Figure 2. Influence map of Raibarong according to the author Alex Irzqi

## 2. The portrayal of comic panels and direction of reading

Pandji Tengkorak (1968) generally has a rectangular panel shape and usually consist of two panels in each pages. Some pages also consists of three or four panels, though it is rare. The reading directions is from top to bottom, or from left to right, as seen in Figure 3. This is because at the time of issuance of Pandji Tengkorak, there are rules governing the comic format comics page, contain only two panels each pages (Figure 3) [9].

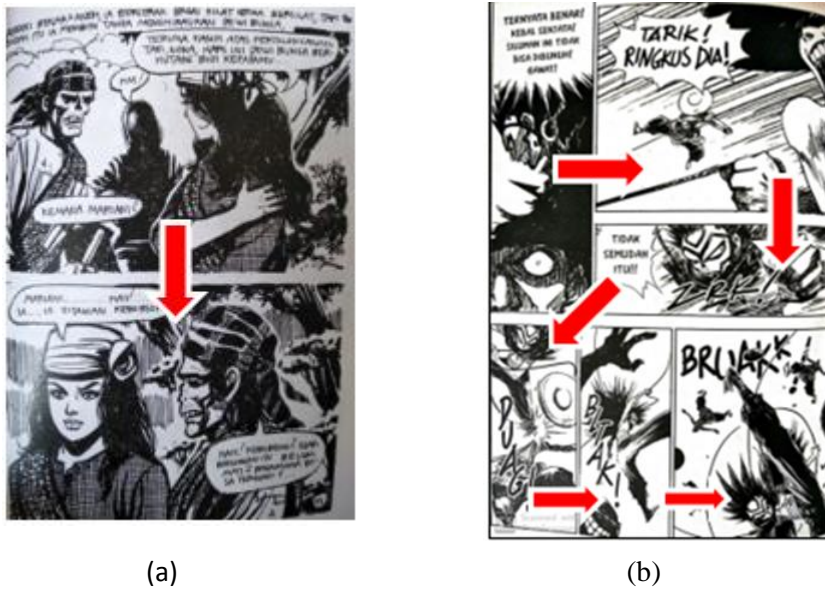


Figure 3. Panel Shape and Directions Pandji Tengkorak (a) and Raibarong (b)

In Raibarong (2016), the rules regarding the comic panel comic is no longer present and the author is free to create the number and shape of the panel. The panel serves as element of storytelling in comics [9]. The use of multi-panel (in single page) found in Japanese comics is seen in Raibarong. Panels on any Raibarong generally rectangular, but as seen Figure 4, the placement and shape has more variety than Pandji Tengkorak. The directions reading has priority of being read from top to down, then left to right.

## 3. The background

In Pandji tengkorak, background is consistently portrayed on each panel. This is because in the process, the author is more relaxed and is not rushed. In addition, the number of the panel is only two on a single page. In Raibarong the background is not consistently portrayed. This is because the comic author sometimes do not have time to work on the background. The large number of panels also making it difficult to consistently have background on every panel (Figure 4).

## 4. Lettering

All text, both contained in the word balloons and sound effects in Pandji Tengkorak are written by hand and using a pen. The text contained in the word balloons in Raibarong is typed using a

computer, for example, in [Figure 5](#). For the sound effects, the text is digitally drawn by hand, as seen in [Figure 6](#).



Figure 4. The background of Pandji Tengkorak (a) and Raibarong (b)

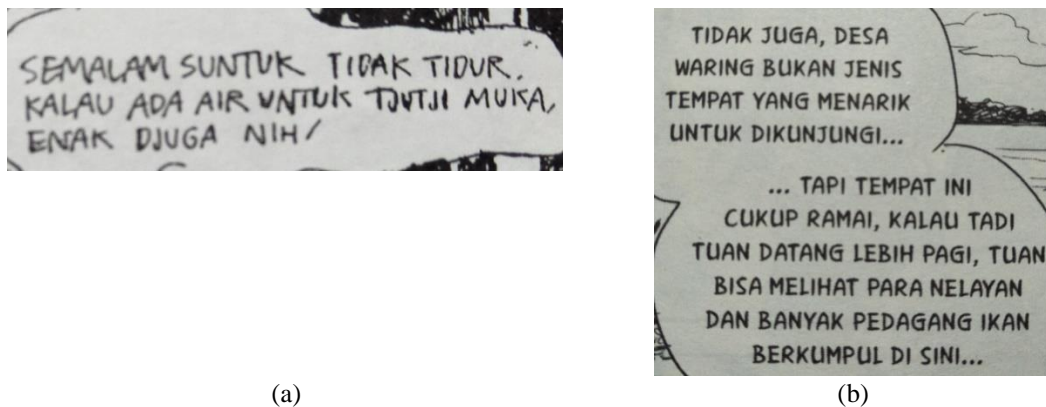


Figure 5. Lettering on Pandji Tengkorak and Raibarong (b)



Figure 6. Sound effect Comic Raibarong

### 5. The depiction of action fights

The fight scenes are scenes that always present in action comics, and these scenes appear on both the comic studied. The difference between the two comics are depictions of scenes and the number of panels used to describe the fight scenes (Figure 7).

In Figure 7, Pandji Tengkorak is shown cutting down his enemy in a single slash. Pandji slashed the enemy in a single panel, without explaining the process of how the slashing goes. Instead of drawing the panel which show the processes, a narrative is presented on the top of the panel.

In Figure 7, before landing an attack on the enemy, some of the sequences were drawn which shows change in expression and movement of the enemy. The chronological panel sequences make the scene look clearer and easier to understand. Five panels were drawn before Raibarong launch his attack on the enemy (Figure 8).



Pandji slashing his enemy



Raibarong attacks the enemy

Figure 7. The depiction of action fights



Figure 8. Raibarong attacks the enemy

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This research consists of comparison of Indonesian action comic's drawing styles from the 1960s and 2000s times. Taking objects of two comics, Pandji Tengkorak (1968) as the representative of the late Indonesian comic action age and Raibarong (2016) as a representative of modern Indonesian action comics leads to several conclusions, such as:



1. Indonesian comics, except for the ancient comics, got a lot of influence from foreign comics, for example from American comics, European comics, comic Chinese and Japanese comics.
2. Indonesian comic went through a long period ; ranging from the prehistoric, ancient comics, comic strip in the chinese newspaper, the emergence of American comic's imitation, the rise of Wayang comic and a variety of locally-themed comics, until the rise of comic book influenced by Japanese comics.
3. The change of Indonesian action comic style seen on Pandji Tengkorak (1968) and Raibarong (2016) is in their drawing style. Pandji Tengkorak uses realistic style. Meanwhile Raibarong uses cartoon style from Asian comics, especially from Japan.
4. The characterization of the main characters are different. Pandji Tengkorak for example, is described as a male figure who acts like in the real world. Raibarong is described as more comical figure.
5. The influence of Japanese storytelling is seen in Raibarong. Comic Raibarong using sequences with more panels, making the story more flexible and does not use a lengthy narrative. This is different the storytelling of Pandji Tengkorak which panels are accompanied by some narratives to explain the content of the story.
6. The style differences which occurred in the past and present comic action that can be observed from the comparison is due to the differences in trends in each era, thus affecting the style of images that can be "replicated" by each comic. Internal factors affecting both preferred author's comic style are the similar penchant for reading action comics. The difference between the authors are the difference in time and media in doing comics.

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