Transitions of Videography in Shadow Puppetry

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Abstract

Shadow puppetry (*wayang kulit*) is one of the Indonesian cultural treasures of which typical characteristics are different from other nations. As a performing art which is enjoyed as if a movie theater in western culture, it is actually a form of Indonesian theatre that has existed since the past hundred years, i.e. earlier than years of western movie development. The present research aims at finding out the transition forms of shadow puppetry which can serve as basis of typical Indonesian motion pictures. It indicates that shadow puppetry displays a series of scenes presenting a story and inter-scene transitions. These transitions function as constraints, connectors, and synchronizers between one scene and the others to form a story that can be enjoyed by spectators. Transitions in shadow puppetry are various in forms. A puppeteer (*dalang*) has different style from the others in performing the inter-scene transition by overshadowing figures, by using *gunungan* dances, by inserting *gunungan*, by sneaking to *gunungan*, by using *gada* kick, and by using *gunungan kerawangan*.

Keywords: transitions, shadow puppetry, videography, and gunungan

1. Introduction

As audiovisual technology is increasingly sophisticated and easier to use, it is expected that consumers can maximize the utilization of technology. Technology of film and television program productions allows directors and cameramen to maximize the use of camera and editing software. During shooting sessions, a cameraman directs his camera on an object with particular techniques, such as close up, medium close up, etc. Camera angles influence a sense of art as an expression of an aesthetic value. Thus, the responsibility to monitor transitions in the different camera angles lies with not only cameramen, but also producers and directors.

Many books discuss shooting and video editing in postproduction session. However, some of the shooting and framing stated in the books tend to refer to western way of thinking. Western hegemony in shooting, therefore, has dominated paradigms of our cameramen. Tabrani (2005), in his book entitled *Bahasa Rupa*, states that Indonesian cinematography has been influenced by western culture, and therefore Indonesian films and soap operas are defined as: enlightenment (in a patronizing manner), entertainment (with lack of contents), art (which is uncommunicative), education (which is boring); whereas in fact, shadow puppetry own all of the aspects with interesting and communicative characteristics.

If we consider the history of Indonesian civilization through temples, the story of *Ramayana* carved in the reliefs of Prambanan and Borobudur temples is interesting to study. In the reliefs, the panels do not only depict the story but they also contain moving images with real film framing. According Tabrani (2005) that characters in the temple reliefs and *wayang beber* (scroll performance) are not merely still pictures, but indeed motion pictures with such television/film technological concepts as dissolve, mix, wipe, insert, flashback, flashforward, etc. Camera technology was not known at that time.

Stories told by *dalang* (puppeteer) during shadow puppetry are also an early form of motion pictures which meet the rules regarding televisions or films. The moving images of cut-out figures behind screen give wonderful impression of the motion to the spectators. Zooming and dissolve are applied when the *dalang* brings *wayang* (cut-out figure) close to *blencong* (a light source), creating a zoom-in before the *wayang* finally disappears. These scenes come into sight when the *dalang* performs *bedholan* (the ways the *dalang* pulls up the puppets from the banana steam-the media to stick the puppets), including *bedholan jejer* (to indicate the ending of a scene), *bedholan kayon* (to indicate the beginning of the scene), *bedholan kedhatonan* (to indicate the innerpalace scene, the meeting of the king and queen) and *budhalan* (to indicate troop departure scene). Natural and

normal motions are obtained when rays of the *blencong* on *wayang* attached to the *kelir* (a white cloth screen) serve as establishing shot. Therefore, the *dalang*'s shadow puppetry with spectators watching from behind the *kelir* is considered as the real traditional Indonesian movie theatre.

Elements of cinematography the shadow puppetry has are potential subjects that have not been worked on serving as a reference to development of visual effect content in editing and video technologies. Furthermore, the *wayang* has been designed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity from Indonesia in 2008. The *wayang*, therefore, should remain and be developed in every single aspects of society life, including in the field of televisions/films. One of efforts is to utilize it as a visual effect, particularly as videographic transition. In this research, the researchers attempt to find out how the motions in shadow puppetry can be used as a reference for video transition model in video editing software.

2. Literature Review

In a thesis entitled *Komodifikasi Budaya Tradisional di Televisi: Studi Analisis Wacana Wayang Kritis terhadap Komodifikasi Isi Pagelaran Wayang Kulit Purwa di Televisi Indosiar* (Comodification of Traditional Culture in Television: A Critical Discourse Analysis of *Wayang* towards the Content Commodification of *Purwa* Shadow Puppetry in Indosiar TV Channel) by Ambar Susatyo Murti (2006), it is found out that figures of *wayang* in television tends to deliver concise, brief and entertaining language. Meanwhile, Ranang AS & Taufik Murtono (2010) in their research entitled *Penciptaan Animasi Kartun 2D Digital Berbasis Seni Pertunjukan Tradisi* (The Creation of Traditional Performing Arts based Digital 2D Animation Cartoon) conclude that: a) the visual elements of *wayang kulit* and *wayang beber* with their typical decorations can be applied in the visualization of animated characters and their environment to create imaginative effects; b) the motions of *wayang kulit* contain a motion language which can be utilized as a reference for the motions of animated cartoon film. Furthermore, according Tabrani (2005) that characters in the temple reliefs and *wayang beber* (scroll performance) are not merely still pictures, but indeed motion pictures with such television/film technological concepts.

3. Research Method

The present research belongs to an action research, a type of research design that has been applied in various contexts, including in arts and designs (Gray & Malkins, 2004). Procedures of the action research as proposed by McNiff & Whitehead (2002) are as follows: 1) conducting a review on curent practices, in this case shadow puppetry; 2) identifying potential aspects to develop—motions of wayang kulit which are potential to be transitions in videography; 3) action planning by developing/designing the transitions based on motions of *wayang kulit*; 4) conducting trials by inserting the transitions into software of video editing; 5) monitoring the action by finding out society (video editors) responses towards the produced transitions; 6) modifying plans and reflecting by making improvements of the resulted transitions; 7) evaluating modified action by publishing the findings in academic journal and arranging textbooks; 8) finding out satisfactions on the obtained aspects.

According to Christoper Gordon (1998), four stages in action research include: select a focus, collect data, analyze and interpret data, and take action. The approach utilized in the present research is relevant to the four stages. It consists of review/ data mining, design, and implementation of transition shadow puppetry- based technique in videography. The research had been carried out for 2 years in several stages: 1) review, which was conducted in the first year, and 2) design and implementation in another year.

4. Discussion

4.1. Videographic Aspects in Shadow Puppetry

Wayang kulit (shadow puppetry), a performing art heritage, serves as a national cultural asset which is obligated to be preserved. Numerous philosophical meanings are conveyed in such a performing art as shadow puppetry. Aesthetic aspect in the art of puppetry is interesting for any society, particularly Javanese society. Shadow puppetry, by definition, is an Indonesian cultural product in form of a performing art which projects cut-out figures held between a *kelir* and a *blencong*. It belongs to Javanese traditional art which is crafted from animal hides in such a way that it can be moved by a *dalang* and accompanied by a traditional musical ensemble from Indonesia called *gamelan*.

Audiovisual texts both in television soap operas and films get used to be read using western style. The procedures of the audiotextual reading seem to be similar to those of western visual language text reading. As

cinematographers, we will be able to adopt cultural diversity of Indonesian archipelago appropriately if we explore the visual language in traditional performing arts. We are not required to ignore our own tradition, or otherwise it will be stolen by filmmakers from developed countries to find out alternatives, making us surprised and angry (Tabrani, 2005). Considering that *wayang kulit* serves as an art performed from behind *kelir* and this looks like what is performed on television or film, it displays an art of motion pictures using traditional puppets. If seen from *kelir* in the backside, cinematographic aspects of *wayang kulit* are equal to those of audiovisual spectacles, although the *wayang kulit* is manually performed.

It is interesting to consider transition of shadow motions. When observing from behind the *kelir*, we find that the techniques are usually applied. Seen from distance of object, the techniques are different from those in videography. In videography, a camera enables to zoom in or zoom out an object merely by adjusting its focal length. Meanwhile, in shadow puppetry, *dalang* should either take a way an object from or bring the object closer to a light source to obtain more interesting pictures which do not resemble those resulted from camera lens in videography. The present study seeks to find out such prototype forms as transitions (changes of visibility of pictures) which adopt techniques of puppetry for creative videography.

4.2. Transitions in Shadow Puppetry

From the study on the stories of *Pendawa Boyong* (with Ki Purbo Asmoro as *dalang*) and *Bedhahe Lokapala* (with Ki Manteb Sudarsono as *dalang*), a transition of motions from one scene to the others can be found in the puppetry. One scene and the others are separated or connected by the transition using *gunungan* (a mountain-like puppet). The transition is intended to provide border or connection between the scenes. Both *dalang* have similarities and dissimilarities.

From the first year research on the study of transitions of scenes in Javanese shadow puppetry, particularly those with stories of *Pendawa Boyong* dan *Bedhahe Lokapala*, several transitions are identified:

4.2.1. Transition by Overshadowing Figures

Dialogues of three characters of *wayang* are ended when two figures leave and are accompanied by shadow of *gunungan*. Then, another figure follows them, and again the *gunungan* accompanies and whirls down and finally stops in bottom part of center of screen. The motion of the *gunungan* is continued with puppeteer's mood song (*suluk*), and the *gunungan* continues to accompany *wayang kulit* appearing from *dalang*'s right side to move to both right and left sides and then spins, stops in the center and is held by *wayang*. The transition, as seen in story of *Pendawa Boyong* (2010, video 1 TC: 35:08-36:02), is marked by the presence of the shadow of *gunungan* to indicate the beginning and the end of the scene. Therefore, it produces an extraordinary aesthetic dimension, as well as dramatic and more illusive effects compared to a transition without the *gunungan*.



Figure 1. Transition by Overshadowing Figures (Source: *Pendawa Boyong*, 2010, video 1 TC: 35:08-36:02)

Similar transition is also found in the story of *Bedhahe Lokapala* (2016, video 2 TC: 23:14–23:21). When Wisnungkara is killed by Dasamuka, the *gunungan* appears on the right limit of *kelir*, overshadows, spins, and finally disappears along with Wisnungkara. The presence of the *gunungan* to mark the disappearance of Wisnungkara (vanishing into thin air—moksa). It is a representation of nature (cosmos), a place where all living

things will return.

A rather different transition can be seen from the story of *Pendawa Boyong* (2010, video 9 TC: 30:40-30:47), since the shadow of *gunungan* is given motion through the precise placement of hand-held halogen instruments, resulting in image with zoom-in effect in videography. Having shot by arrow, Srikanthi dies and then *gunungan* from the right side is moved, twirled to the center of *kelir*, zoomed in, and finally Srikanthi disappears in the shadow of *gunungan*. In short, the shadow of *gunungan* enables the cut-out figures to disappear.

Transition in the story of *Bedhahe Lokapala* (2016, video 1 TC: 03:57–04:29) also applies zooming technique, but the *gunungan* used is in the form of *kerawangan*. From the left side of the *kelir* enter small *gunungan* and *wayang*. The *gunungan* overshadows *wayang* to walk to the center and then to the right side of *kelir*, and therefore the *wayang* can be clearly seen. Finally, the *gunungan* vanishes, leaving the *wayang* alone (it is stuck on the right side of kelir, and other *wayang* – Begawan Wisnungkara and Patih Banindra – appear from the left side of the *kelir*).

Transition in the story of *Bedhahe Lokapala* (2016, video 1 TC: 20:56–21:05) differs in motions. The shadow of *gunungan* is combined with interactive motions of the *gunungan* and *wayang*. The *gunungan* appears from the left side, while the *wayang* is from the right side (of which position is blocking the *gunungan*). The *gunungan* is moved to the center of *kelir*, and finally it overshadows the *wayang* and displays the *wayang*'s face on the top of it. Both *wayang* and *gunungan* are then quickly separated; the *wayang* is moved to the right side, while the *gunungan* is moved to the left side (and is rotated), and both face each other, get close, and finally the *gunungan* which is held by *dalang* is thrown by the *wayang*.

4.2.2. Transition by Using Gunungan Dance

Gunungan in the middle of the screen goes up, spins, falls slowly and rises again with *mentul-mentul* (bouncing back and forth) motions, goes up, gets wider, goes down quickly and twirls, gets wider and banks to the right, then puppet (Duryudana) appears from the right side (as if greeting puppets) as set in the story of *Pendawa Boyong* (2010) in video 1 TC: 20:25- 26:07. Transition of *gunungan* motion is the introductory movement for *wayang* appearance in the following scene.

In the story of *Pendawa Boyong* (2010, video 2 TC: 33:40- 34:11), *gunungan* appears from the right side, spins to the middle of the scene and finally goes down, stops for a moment, and then makes multiple twirls, stops at the bottom and spins and goes up. Afterwards, it is pegged into *debog*². It, then, goes up and spins on the right side of the screen and finally it is put on the right limit of *debog*, together with the other *gunungan*. This *gunungan* dance functions as inter-scene transition with various rhymes of *gunungan* motions. In this transitional process, single motion of *gunungan* dominates in the scene with various motions (*meliuk*/swaying, going up, falling, and spinning) showing transition from one scene to the following scene. Similar transition of *gunungan* dance also appears in video 6 TC: 17:53-17:58, in which, once battle scene ends, *gunungan* twirls while goes up and down in the middle, and finally it is put on the right part of *debog*, and this is continued with Semar Petruk Gareng scene. However, the motion duration is quite short. *Gunungan* motion indicates various rhymes, and therefore this inter-scene transition is highly attractive to be seen by spectators.



Figure 2. The Transition by Using Single *Gunungan* Dance (Source: *Pendawa Boyong*, 2010, video 9 TC: 22:56-23:00)

² Banana-tree log used as puppet rack.

Transitional motion of *gunungan* dance also appears in other *dalang*'s performance, Ki Manteb Sudarsono, with the story of *Bedhahe Lokapala* (2016. video 1 TC: 49:25–49:27), in which *gunungan* moves (shaking and waving) from the right part of *kelir* to bottom left part, goes back to the right part of *kelir*, spins and goes down to disappear. Similarly, this sort of motion happens in the scene of video 1 TC: 14:10–14:13. Here, *gunungan* comes from the right part, moves to the middle and then to the left, and goes up, twirls, and finally vanishes. This motion occurs after *Jejer* scene.

A rather different transition of *gunungan* dance is found in video 9 TC: 31:42–32:24, in which *gunungan* sways slowly accompanied with the *dalang's* naration. While telling a story about how Bambang Aswotomo beats up Banowati, *dalang* pulls out *gunungan* at the right side, which then spins and goes to the middle part of *kelir*, stops for a while, and then moves to the middle and disappears. *Gunungan* later appears again from the right part, moves to the middle part and disappears at the left part. The motions are repeated four times while *dalang* narrates the story. The motion of *gunungan* dance provides visual illustration to *dalang's* naration about a story (*lakon*) that he is telling.

Transition in the story of *Bedhahe Lokapala* in video 2 TC: 20:39–20:49 is rather different from those of other *gunungan* dancing, in which two *gunungans* are performed. From the left part of *kelir*, a small *gunungan* appears and goes up, and at the same time, *wayang* appears and directly gets closer to the other *wayang* staying behind *gunungan*. Afterwards, both hurl to the left part of *kelir* and *gunungan* twirls, and finally they disappear. After a few seconds, *wayang* appears on *kelir*, at this time, alone. The motion indicates that *gunungan* plays a role in introducing *wayang* in the scene.

Transitional motion realized by a dance of two *gunungans* is also found in video 1 TC: 17:58–18:05, but the rhyme is faster. Two *gunungans* come from the right part of *kelir* and then move to the left and to the middle part, and then fall, go up and spin. Afterwards, they meet on the upper part and go down, and they are put in *debog* to stop for a while. Then, after being pulled out, they go to the upper part and move to the right and the left of *kelir* respectively, twirl, overshadow, and disappear. The motions are quick and dynamic, and this indicates the appearance of puppet in the next scene with its dynamic motions (*solah*, way of acting or movement of the body.).

Transition of three *gunungan* dance are commonly viewed in the opening scene of *wayang* performance, for example, transition in the story of *Bedhahe Lokapala* (2016, video 1 TC: 03:03–03:51). Two *gunungans* vertically line up in the midle of *kelir*, and the puppeteer pull them out and move them to the upper part (both *gunungans* bank to the right and move to the middle/center part of *kelir*), diagonally and then vertically. Finally, in the central part appears small *gunungan*. Both *gunungans* above spin, and then fly back to the middle of *kelir*, covering the small *gunungan*. The three *gunungans* move to the upper part, once arriving, small *gunungan* vanishes, and two large *gunungans* remain. Later, puppets come from the right limit (blocking *gunungan*) and two *gunungans* greet. *wayang* (in the middle) and two *gunungans* move from the right to the left part of *kelir*, and finally *wayang* disappears, leaving the *gunungans*. The *gunungans* then fly back to the middle of *kelir*, and finally vanish to the right and the left part of *kelir*. That *Gara-Gara* is the special opening scene of *wayang kulit* performance presented by Ki Manteb Soedarsono.



Figure 3. The Transition Motion by Using Twin Gunungan Dance (Source: *Pendawa Boyong*, 2010, video 1 TC: 29:16- 29:19)

The motion of twin *gunungan* dance as a transition can also be viewed in the performance with the story of *Pendawa Boyong* (2010, video 1 TC: 29:16- 29:19). Two crossed *gunungans* move to opposite directions, to the right and to the left, spin three times, and then both land on the right and the left of *dalang*. This type of transition provides dramatic effect with the shadow of two *gunungans*, zooming in and out, on *kelir*.

4.2.3. Transition by Inserting Gunungan



Figure 4. The Transition by Inserting *Gunungan* (Source: *Pendawa Boyong*, 2010, video 4 rev TC: 08:48–09:00)

In the story of *Pendawa Boyong* (2010, video 4 rev TC: 08:48–09:00), it is obvious that two *wayang* characters, Duryudono and Banowati, sit, facing each other. One *wayang* character (Banowati) moves to the left and then goes back to the right, and once she arrives at the right part, *gunungan* comes, overshadows, and spins. When the *gunungan* is in the middle, she kicks it until vanished, and then she sits at her original position. The transition with *gunungan* insert appears in the middle of characters engaging in a dialogue. The transition is an inter-dialogue intervener in *wayang* dialogue (*jagongan*), and *gunungan* is a part of the *jagongan*.

In general, transition with *gunungan* insert in *wayang* performance appears in epilogue, as in *Pendawa Boyong* (2010, video 9 TC: 40:13 - 40:31). Several puppets stand in a line and face each other; *gunungan* appears from the right part and then spins. In the middle of *kelir*, it twirls, goes down, stops for a while, and then moves to the upper part while spinning, goes down and finally the curtain falls (*tancep kayon*) in the middle of puppets lining up and facing each other, and this indicates the end of the performance.

4.2.4. Transition by Sneaking behind the Gunungan

In story of *Pendawa Boyong* (2010, video rev TC: 19:39-19:41), a transition in which a cut-out figure sneaks behind the *gunungan*; when Banowati runs for being chased by Bambang Aswotomo, the right *gunungan* spins around at the right *kelir*, and she hides in the shadow of *gunungan*. Then, she disappears. The similar motion appears in video 6 TC: 17:36-17:40 in a scene after Werkudoro puts Sengkuni in a crocodile's mouth (Kurupati's incarnation), the *gunungan* on the right side of the *kelir* moves and spins to the left to where Kurupati is. When covered by the shadow of *gunungan*, Kurupati disappears from the *kelir*.



Figure 5. The Transition by Sneaking to the *Gunungan* (Source: Pendawa Boyong, 2010, video 9 TC: 22:29-22:53)

The transition also appears in video 9 TC: 22:29-22:53 in which the *gunungan* on the right side of *kelir* is removed and then moved to the right side of the *kelir*. When Bambang Aswotomo's arrow is shot, the *gunungan* spins and bends. Then, the bend is passed by Bambang Aswotomo, Prabu Kartomarmo, and Sengkuni while they are running.

The scene transition in video 9 TC: 25:55-26:06 appears to be different because the *gunungan* functions not only as the place the *wayang* disappears, but also as the media to hide, sneak, and play "hide and seek". The scene shows that the *gunungan* on the right side moves to the left while spinning. Then, from the left sneaks Bambang Aswotomo under the *gunungan*; he disappears, reappears, looks about repeatedly, slides to the right side of the *kelir* and finally disappears.

4.2.5. Transition by Using Gada Kick



Figure 6. The Transition by Using *Gunungan* Kick (Source: Pendawa Boyong, 2010, video 5 TC: 30:56- 31:38)

Cut-out figure of Kresna enters from the left side of *kelir* while carrying *gada* (mace), while on the right of it stands the *gunungan*. He kicks or beats it in the center of the *kelir*, and it is thrown to the right. He with his *gada* moves from the left to the right while beating. The *gunungan* enters from the right, spins to the center to the left side of the *kelir*, goes back to the center and disappears. Afterwards, Kresna and the *gunungan* enter from the right, move to center, and stops (the narration is then told). Then, the *gunungan* moves to the left, but Kresna stays still. The scene appears in the story of *Pendawa Boyong* ((2010, video 5 TC: 30:56-31:38).

Transition in the form of kicking the *gunungan* can be seen in a scene when Bambang Aswotomo runs for he is chased by Werkudoro. He sneaks and disappears behind the *gunungan* on the left of the *kelir*. Then the

gunungan is stuck in an inclined position on the left side of the *kelir*. After that, Werkudoro and Kresna come and stare at it. The aforementioned transition found in video 9 TC: 35:56-36:10 is a combination of motions of *wayang* and *gunungan*, and therefore the *gunungan* does not come by itself merely as a scene transition. That *gunungan* does not exist as the only transition. It serves as a part of the transition, specifically as an object since it represents a world/universe for Javanese people. The scene demonstrates that humans with their desires are capable of ruling the world and its contents.

4.2.6. Transition by Using Gunungan Kerawangan



Figure 7. The Transition by Using *Gunungan Kerawangan* (Source: *Bedhahe Lokapala*, 2016, video 2 TC: 21:25–21:40)

In the story of *Bedhahe Lokapala* (2016, video 2 TC: 21:25–21:40) appears Wisnungkara standing in the center of the *kelir* and then there come a *gunungan* (*kerawangan*) and a small *wayang* (Wisnu) overshadowing Wisnungkara. Once in a while, Wisnu's face appears clearly. Then, both disappear, leaving Wisnungkara alone. It seems the motion illustrates that the figure is possessed by Wisnu's spirit. The *gunungan kerawangan* serves as the transition of past and future life of Wisnungkara.



Figure 8. The Transition by using *Gunungan Kerawangan* Zooming (Source: *Bedhahe Lokapala*, 2016, video 2 TC: 32:29–32:41)

The transition by using *gunungan kerawangan* also appears in video 2 TC: 32:29–32:41 when Dasamuka is killed by Prabu Danapati, the King of Lokapala. The *gunungan* which presents as *kerawangan* (to represent sky light) overshadows Prabu Danapati and takes him to fly to the sky, forming a big shadow and vanishing into thin air. The *gunungan*'s motions and its shape (*kerawangan*) allow the *gunungan* to serve not only as inter-scene transitions, but also as a medium to describe *moksa* of *wayang* from temporal world to heaven (*nirwana*). *Kerawangan* shape helps visualize the *moksa* concept.

From the study of the transition and movement of puppets in the puppet show, can be found some transition pattern as the chart below.



Chart 1. The pattern of transition (Handriyotopo, 2016)

5. Conclusion

Wayang is a performing art or performance which provides sequences os scenes to form a story and has interscene transitions. The transitions function as constraints, connectors, and synchronizers between one scene and the others to form a story that can be enjoyed by spectators. They provide the spectators with a medium to comprehend the story, arrange the story comprehension, and enjoy the imaginary space of the performance.

Transitions in shadow puppetry have varied forms. A *dalang* has different styles in providing inter-scene transitions in his performance from the others, even when presenting the opening of a scene. The inter-scene transitions comprise empty space/*kelir*, the motions of *gunungan*, cut-out figures, and their motions.

Transitions in shadow puppetry are basically similar to those of modern entertainment, especially films. For that reason, it appears that the inter-scene transitions in the puppetry have some potential to be developed further in transitions in films, and therefore typical Indonesian films may be produced. Both present a story with scene divisions.

Furthermore, the results of this study can be recommended that the transition shadow play can be formulated either pattern, structure, or characteristic, so that it can be adopted / developed in making the transition to the editing of video / film. Transitions in video editing is a space that can be filled by the transition ethnic style in

order to support the peculiarities of Indonesian films.

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