



Transformation of *wayang kulit purwa 'limbuk cangik'* in social media platforms

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KEYWORDS

Limbuk Cangik
Trnsformation
Innovation
Wayang Kulit

ABSTRACT

The transformation of digital technology plays a crucial role in altering the medium through which various messages are delivered in modern society. In Javanese shadow puppet performances, or Pakeliran, there has been a transformation that impacts the development of the art form itself. Pakeliran refers to traditional Javanese shadow puppet theater, which combines elements of puppetry, music, and storytelling, often featuring moral and philosophical narratives. In the context of Pakeliran, there has been a shift in the form of limbuk cangik content on YouTube, which reflects changes in audience preferences and interests, as well as adjustments made by content creators. The transformation of the traditional limbuk cangik puppet over time is an interesting phenomenon that demonstrates how culture and entertainment evolve. While still honoring their roots, limbuk cangik performances in conventional Pakeliran continue to adapt in order to remain relevant in the modern era. This paper examines the innovation that occurred by comparing the conventional version of wayang limbuk cangik with the digital version available online. A qualitative approach is employed to analyze the shift in iconographic meaning within wayang limbuk cangik. The iconography method was selected because it effectively represents the meaning of limbuk cangik in digital media, reflecting cultural and social changes, as well as adaptations to contemporary times. The conclusion of this paper is that the transformation of limbuk cangik reflects the adaptation and innovation within traditional performing arts, ensuring their relevance in the modern age. Despite maintaining their traditional roots, limbuk cangik performances continue to evolve to meet the demands of changing times.

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1. Introduction

The media has led individuals into a space that allows them to interact with each other. The internet, for example, has created a virtual space where we can engage interactively, which is commonly referred to as cyberspace (Hak et al. 2017). As an abstract space, the interactions that take place in cyberspace are symbolic. This is perhaps the key difference between cyberspace and physical social spaces. In physical social spaces, we engage in direct, physical contact, while in cyberspace, our interactions are mediated through symbolic forms—represented as audio, visual, audio-visual texts, or even through chat on social media platforms.



This shift in interaction is particularly relevant when discussing the digital transformation of traditional art forms, such as the Purwo shadow puppets. In cyberspace, the performance and representation of Purwo shadow puppetry, which once relied on physical presence, have taken on new forms, altering the way audiences experience and engage with these cultural practices. Thus, the transformation of traditional Purwo puppetry in the digital realm exemplifies how cultural forms adapt to modern modes of interaction and communication in cyberspace (Hak et al. 2017). It is no surprise that, with the development of technology, many people have shifted away from traditional habits such as reading newspapers, listening to songs, and watching television. These habits have evolved due to technological advancements that enable new innovations, which in turn create shifts in cultural practices and consumption. YouTube, as a digital platform, has become a key mediator between content creators and audiences, allowing creators to showcase homemade content while audiences can choose what they wish to view, according to their preferences. This shift is particularly significant for Javanese cultural practices, including *wayang kulit purwo* (shadow puppetry). The emergence of *wayang* content on YouTube reflects a digital transformation in how traditional performances, like *limbuk cangik*, are accessed and experienced by modern audiences. While the essence of *wayang* remains rooted in its traditional form, digital platforms like YouTube enable content creators to adapt *limbuk cangik* performances to contemporary preferences, allowing the art form to reach a broader audience and evolve in response to the changing demands of cultural consumption.

Wayang kulit purwo, according to Soewarlan, is not only a means of preserving tradition, but also plays a vital role in supporting human life and daily activities (Santosa 2019). Traditionally, *wayang* performances on the island of Java feature flat puppets made from animal skin, which are intricately designed and raised during performances. The presentation of *wayang* combines multiple art forms, including role-playing, sound, speech, literature, painting, sculpture, and symbolic representation. One of the most significant aspects of *wayang kulit purwo* is the artist's skill in bringing the characters to life in a way that captivates the audience (Pramulia 2022). However, the advent of digital media, particularly platforms like YouTube, has fundamentally altered the presentation and perception of *wayang*. Digital media allows for the adaptation of *wayang* performances, including *limbuk cangik*, to be experienced in new formats that are not constrained by the traditional physical space of the puppet theater. In these digital adaptations, the puppets and stories can be re-imagined with digital animation, sound effects, and interactive elements, allowing for more dynamic engagement with the audience. This transformation shifts how the audience perceives *wayang*, moving from a traditional, passive viewing experience to a more immersive and flexible interaction, where cultural narratives are tailored to modern tastes and technological possibilities.

Currently, one of the reasons why *wayang* is less popular is due to the increasing influence of global media and entertainment, which has introduced alternative forms of cultural expression. For example, the widespread availability of Western films, video games, and digital content on platforms like YouTube has shifted audience attention away from traditional art forms such as *wayang*. As a result, younger generations, in particular, are more inclined to engage with these modern forms of entertainment, leading to a marginalization of *wayang* in mainstream cultural consumption. This shift is not just a matter of preference, but also a consequence of the evolving digital landscape, where the immediacy and interactivity of modern media often overshadow the more passive and ritualistic experience of traditional *wayang* performances. Additionally, the traditional presentation of *wayang* is often confined to specific settings, such as a stage performance late at night, which limits its accessibility and makes it difficult for people to enjoy *wayang* during their free time. This paper explores the transformation of *wayang limbuk cangik* from its conventional form to a digital format, particularly on YouTube. This shift allows for the performance to be viewed anytime and anywhere, and provides a unique opportunity to analyze the differences in media artifacts and presentation styles between traditional and digital formats on the platform.

2. Method

A qualitative approach is employed in this study to examine the shift in iconographic meaning within *wayang limbuk cangik*. Specifically, the iconography method was selected because it enables a detailed interpretation of the visual and symbolic elements of *limbuk cangik* in digital media. This approach is particularly effective in identifying how these visual symbols and motifs evolve in response to shifts in cultural and social demands, as well as how they adapt to modern contexts. Iconography, derived from the Greek words *eikon* (meaning "image") and *graphe* (meaning "writing"), refers to "image-writing," suggesting that images can convey narratives (Panofsky 1955). However, iconographic analysis extends beyond interpreting images to understanding culturally constructed symbols and motifs that hold specific meanings within a particular context. As stated by Wölfflin, to interpret these symbols accurately, one must be familiar with the conventions and shared cultural understandings that shape their meaning (Wölfflin 2009). In this study, data was collected through a comparative analysis of traditional *wayang limbuk cangik* performances and their digital counterparts on platforms like YouTube. The research involved a detailed examination of visual elements such as puppet designs, color schemes, gestures, and the overall narrative structure. These elements were analyzed to uncover shifts in iconography that reflect broader cultural changes. This method of analysis, rooted in art history and semiotics (Chandler 2022), enabled the researcher to uncover how the visual language of *wayang* is recontextualized in the digital era. By combining insights from art history and semiotics, the iconographic approach provides a deeper understanding of how traditional art forms like *wayang* adapt to contemporary media while maintaining their cultural significance.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Limbuk and Cangik: The Story

Limbuk and Cangik are two female characters in shadow puppet shows that often appear in a Limbukan play. Both characters are servants (*abdi dalem*) and loyal friends of the rulers in the kingdom. As classic characters in shadow puppetry, Limbuk and Cangik are often used to convey messages to the public. Their presence is often awaited, as they are usually presented next to female puppet characters as servants. These mother-daughter conversations always invite laughter from the audience, as they are delivered in light and humorous language (Kurniawan et al. 2023). Cangik is an image of a female servant in a royal court, where the king is usually a knight. That's why Cangik was in every knight's court, from Lokapala, Ramayana to Mahabharata. Meanwhile, Limbuk is the daughter of Cangik, a female servant with a thin body. It is not clear who her father is. Limbuk's physical characteristics are fat, honest and loyal. Her appearance is always cheerful and she likes to make jokes, which in today's world is called humor. Like Cangik, her mother, although only a servant, Limbuk also has a broad insight, both in the social and political fields, cultural arts and supernatural matters (Nurjanah, n.d.).

In the shadow puppet tradition, Limbuk and Cangik are mother and daughter characters who work as courtiers. They serve the Pandavas and Kuravas. Physically, the character visualization of Limbuk and Cangik looks disproportionate. The figure of Cangik, the mother, is a flirtatious old woman with a long neck, head slightly protruding forward and thin body. When she speaks, her nearby voice is small. Meanwhile, Limbuk, the son, is described as fat and strong. Her behavior is cangik-like, flirtatious and likes to dress up. Limbuk's fat body is a simile for a fat woman. Limbuk's voice sounds like a man's and is a bit gruff. Both are courtiers of His Majesty King Mahadeva Budha of Medhang Kamulan Kingdom. In every *wayang* dialog performed, Limbuk always asks to be married, then Cangik will give long advice (Asmarani 2004). Usually the stories that Limbuk and Cangik tell are news that are viral in the community at the time of the performance. Therefore, the author is interested in *Limbuk cangik's* innovation in the creative industry which is currently being intensified in the wider community. *Limbuk cangik's* innovation using social media platforms is an effort so that *Wayang Limbuk cangik* can survive and meet the needs of the community. *Wayang* innovation

has been carried out by various parties, such as crafters, creators/designers, entrepreneurs, and the government

3.2. Artefact of Limbuk and Cangik in *Wayang* the Shadow Puppet

Discuss The construction of puppets found in *wayang kulit purwa* in the form of limbuk and cangik is as in Fig 1. Limbuk and Cangik can be considered as idols in shadow puppetry. The author assumes that such things are actually the essence or purpose of *wayang kulit* performances in this era as a medium of communication and public entertainment. Therefore, many puppeteers or cultural experts have innovated by making videos of *Limbuk cangik* performances on social media platforms such as Youtube.

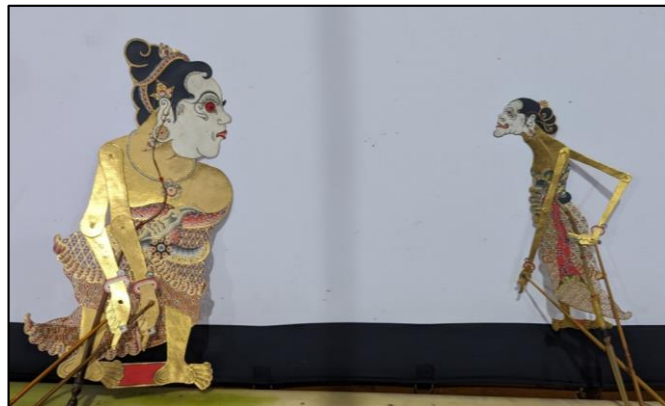


Fig 1. Limbuk and Cangik




3.3. Transformation *Wayang Limbuk cangik* in Digital Media

The development of *limbuk cangik* on Youtube has shifted with algorithm changes, trend changes, need to respond to criticism or environmental changes, the need to adjust the style or topic of content, has experienced innovation and creativity in content creators. In conventional Pakeliran, the media used is when a puppeteer or puppet mover conveys moral, educational, or social criticism messages to the audience through dialog between the puppet characters he plays. That culture is so dynamic that external influences may affect the change of the culture. *Wayang Limbuk cangik* was changed from the conventional to digital. It became what the purpose thw *wayang* made it. Certain types of *wayang* are made to fulfill several purposes (Koesoemadinata 2013), such as: (1) practical purposes, to fulfill theatrical needs such as special puppets for certain scenes; (2) symbolic or implicit messages, where some visual elements of *wayang* are signs ready to convey certain implied meanings to the audience, or certain messages to be conveyed to the audience through the medium of certain visual elements as signs; and (3) aesthetic expression and creative exploration within the boundaries of tradition, which may be based on the need for the performers to demonstrate their skills. In the digital world, the YouTube channel has *Wayang Limbuk cangik* transformed into a new form that has a different purpose from conventional *wayang*. This cultural context is an inseparable part of how the form of Limbuk and Cangik is displayed, and continues to be a form of entertainment for many people. Thus, the forms of *limbuk cangik* in digital media appear in various *wayang*.

As a form of humor like a traditional puppet show, but also following the times, by using video sharing such as Youtube channels, *Limbuk cangik* still has a symbol of cuteness. Despite the change in media form, traditional cultural elements remain an integral part of *Limbuk cangik*'s creativity in digital media. So if we look at the phenomenon of *Limbuk cangik* today in the transformation of digital media, then we can see that there is a transformation of the phenomenon: (1) *Pakeliran* Surakarta Style (tradition); (2) Additional Accessories on *Wayang Limbuk cangik* Pakeliran Surakarta Style (Artifact); (3) *Limbuk cangik* Dance (Change of Performance/Composition); (4) *Sunggingan Limbuk cangik* (Artifact); (5) *Joget Limbukan*

(Performance/Composition Transfer); (6) Modern Style of *Limbuk cangik* in *Pakeliran* (classical-contemporary); (7) Dance Creation of *Limbuk cangik* (Transfer of Vehicle/Composition); (8) From some of the descriptions above, *Limbuk* and *Cangik* can be explored again to conduct more comprehensive research in exploring *wayang limbuk cangik*.

Table 1. Transformation *Limbuk cangik*

<p><i>Wayang Limbuk cangik</i> in conventional puppetry.</p> <p>The meaning of tradition, revitalization that comes as an initial form of <i>Wayang limbuk cangik</i></p>	 <p>limbuk cangik#wayangkulit YouTube · tukang ndelok wayang · 22 Mar 2023</p>
<p><i>Limbuk cangik</i> is combined with the conversion of audio videos on Youtube.</p> <p>The meaning of tradition reinterpreted in the form of new works</p>	
<p>Symbolic expression of <i>limbuk cangik</i> as an idea in community activities on Youtube.</p> <p>The meaning of tradition that becomes a symbolic expression in a new form through the parade.</p>	<p>Pawai Limbuk Cangik 2019 YouTube · Dinas Kebudayaan Kulon Progo · 25 Jul 2022</p> 

4. Conclusion

The transformation of *wayang limbuk cangik* from its conventional form to its digital counterpart, particularly on platforms like YouTube, has led to significant changes in how this traditional art form is presented and perceived. One of the most noticeable changes is the shift from a live, physical performance in a traditional *Pakeliran* setting to an on-demand digital experience. In conventional *Pakeliran*, the puppeteer conveys moral, educational, or social messages through dialogues between puppet characters. This presentation occurs in a specific time and space, typically in a communal setting, where the audience participates in the experience in a shared environment. However, the digital adaptation on YouTube has broken these temporal and spatial constraints, allowing audiences to access *wayang limbuk cangik* performances at any time and from anywhere, vastly increasing its accessibility. Additionally, the digital transformation has introduced changes in the *wayang's* purpose and presentation. On YouTube, the role of *wayang limbuk cangik* has evolved beyond its traditional functions of

education and moral instruction to include entertainment and creative expression. Content creators on digital platforms often innovate by adapting *wayang* to current trends, responding to audience feedback, and experimenting with new forms, such as incorporating modern music, animation, or even interactive elements that were not present in the traditional performances. This shift in purpose is reflected in the variety of *wayang limbuk cangik* performances available on YouTube, where each presentation can vary greatly in style, theme, and medium, depending on the creator's intent.

The introduction of digital media, particularly YouTube, has also altered the traditional aesthetics of *wayang limbuk cangik*. While conventional *wayang* performances are bound by specific physical materials and techniques, such as the use of leather puppets and manual manipulation, digital *wayang* incorporates elements like digital animation, special effects, and fast-paced editing. These innovations allow for a more dynamic, visually stimulating presentation that appeals to modern sensibilities, particularly younger audiences who are accustomed to the rapid pace and interactivity of digital media. Moreover, the shift to digital platforms has led to the re-contextualization of *wayang limbuk cangik* within contemporary social and cultural contexts. The algorithms of YouTube, along with changing audience preferences, mean that the content must be continually adjusted to remain relevant. This has led to innovations not only in the content but also in how it is packaged and presented, reflecting the cultural shifts that occur in digital spaces. As a result, *wayang limbuk cangik* no longer solely functions as a means of cultural preservation, but has become a form of digital entertainment that can engage global audiences and adapt to ongoing technological and social changes. In conclusion, the transformation of *wayang limbuk cangik* from its conventional form to its digital adaptation on platforms like YouTube illustrates the dynamic nature of culture and art. While the traditional roots of *wayang* are still honored, its digital counterpart represents a reinvention of this cultural heritage that aligns with contemporary media practices, ensuring its continued relevance and appeal in the digital age.

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