Designing Digital Illustrations Depicting the Meaning of Javanese Script as a form of Cultural Introduction

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ABSTRACT: *The Javanese Hanacaraka script is a cultural heritage rich in philosophical and spiritual value, although understanding and appreciation for Javanese script has declined over time, particularly among younger generations. This study aims to design a digital illustration work that could be utilized as an educational instrument to visually and attractively introduce the meaning of the Hanacaraka script. The method used was digital illustration design, with the meaning of the Javanese script depicted using a qualitative descriptive approach, with stages of data collection including literature studies, exploratory studies, and existing studies, followed by design conceptualization and digitalization of the work. This study created two digital illustration pieces titled "Ha Na Ca Ra Ka" and "Pa Dha Ja Ya Nya" that depict the meaning of humans as God's messengers and the importance of maintaining a balance between worldly life and the afterlife. This digital depiction is believed to be an effective tool for the younger generation to understand the meaning of Javanese writing and to pique their interest in studying and maintaining the script. This study demonstrates the possibilities for using digital visual media in local culture education in the modern era.*

KEYWORDS *- Javanese Script, Digital Illustration, Hanacaraka, Culture, Media*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Javanese *Hanacaraka* script is a cultural heritage of profound philosophical and historical significance for the Javanese people. However, in the modern era, comprehension and appreciation for this script have declined, particularly among the younger generation. Currently, education about the *Hanacaraka* script is limited to local Javanese language textbooks, which may not provide an extensive understanding of its meaning and cultural significance. As a result, an innovative technique is required to improve the effectiveness of introducing and teaching the Javanese script to the community, ensuring the long-term viability of this cultural asset.

Previous works have explored the philosophical values of the *Hanacaraka* script and its significance in Javanese culture. According to Nur Awalin (2017) the story of Aji Saka, the primary figure in the *Hanacaraka* script's history, portrays humans' struggle between good and evil. Kurniawan, Saputra, and Yulia (2021) assert that however, that *Hanacaraka* is more than just a writing system; it is also a sign of cultural identity that must be conserved. However, studying Javanese script remains less appealing to the younger generation since the delivery method is less relevant to the advancement of digital technology.

As the digitization period progressed, digital graphics emerged as a useful medium for conveying cultural information more interestingly and understandably. Designing digital images that depict the significance

of the *Hanacaraka* script can be a more dynamic and engaging teaching tool for the community, particularly among the millennial generation. Digital illustrations enable more flexible design exploration and can be easily shared across multiple digital media. Furthermore, pictures play a vital role in clarifying, beautifying, and engaging the target audience's attention, making them more interested in learning and understanding the *Hanacaraka* script (Husna, Sudiani, and Ariesta 2019).

The purpose of this digital illustration effort is to promote the preservation of Javanese script culture through unique digital graphics that convey the meaning of the Javanese *Hanacaraka* script to the general public. The primary target audience for the media is teenagers aged 16 to 25. The main contribution of this article is the discussion of how to design digital illustrations as a medium for cultural education. This essay combines art and culture through digital illustration, graphically introducing Javanese script and explaining its noble characteristics. It is believed that this approach will promote appreciation for the *Hanacaraka* script and inspire the younger generation's ingenuity in conserving Javanese culture in this modern age.

The novelty of this research stems from the use of a digital illustration concept that has never been designed by other illustrators, so this illustration is expected to enrich the visual appearance while also increasing the effectiveness of communication in the context of media introduction to Javanese script with this concept. This digital illustration technique enables designers to generate artwork that can be quickly modified, reproduced, formatted, and sized to make it more understandable to the intended audience.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

II.1 Digital Illustration

Digital illustration is an essential element in visual communication design. Digital illustration is a drawing method that makes use of digital tools and software. This is consistent with the opinions voiced in prior studies by Lembang, et.al (2022). Digital illustrations are generated on devices such as computers, laptops, or tablets utilizing graphic design software. In making digital illustrations, of course, supporting devices are needed, namely graphic tablets, tablets, mice, cellphones, and computers with applications that support illustration design.

Digital illustrations are used to enhance the visual appeal while also increasing the effectiveness of communication in a variety of scenarios. This study aims to encourage or promote education on the meaning of the Javanese script *Hanacaraka*. This digital illustration technique enables designers to generate pieces of art that are easily editable, reproducible, and format and size adjustable. Digital illustration learning is predicted to excite students' imaginations, resulting in increased originality in their work (Sanmorino, Gustriansyah, and Puspasari 2023).

The process of making digital illustrations begins with the creation of original conceptions and sketches, followed by the creation of lines and details, then coloring and adding effects, and lastly the refinement and finalization stage. The benefits of digital illustrations in visual communication design include the ability to change colors, sizes, and other aspects without having to start over. This enables quick and efficient changes to different needs and formats. Second, digital illustrations enable the development of high-quality, exact artwork. Digital tools allow complete control over details and lines, resulting in clear and sharp illustrations. Third, digital graphics are easy to duplicate and disseminate in a variety of formats and platforms. Digital artwork can be utilized to create printed items, websites, social media, and applications without sacrificing quality. In line with previous research which states that digital illustration books aim to be an effective medium for obtaining information about related information that can be accessed anytime and anywhere through digital e-book media (Aprianota and Aditia 2020)

The process of creating digital illustrations is often faster and more cost-efficient than traditional methods. The use of design software allows designers to work more efficiently and avoid additional costs for physical materials and tools. Digital media is not easily damaged and is easy to repair (Kurniawan, Saputra, and Yulia 2021). In the context of education and presentation, digital illustrations can be used to generate more engaging and understandable educational materials. This is what inspired academics to create digital illustrations. The researchers expect that the finished work will be engaging and help the audience understand the meaning or information included in the Javanese *Hanacaraka* script.

II.2 Values and Meanings of Javanese Script Culture

The Javanese *Hanacaraka* script has a deep philosophical connotation and has been studied extensively. According to Nurhayati and Abdurrahman (2018), the lack of public attention to the use of Javanese script in modern visual communication media is concerning because, without preservation efforts, this script risks being understood only by preservationists or regional script observers in the future.

Ekowati (2012), argues that Javanese script is both a writing system and a symbol of Javanese civilization, reflecting values of life and divinity. *Hanacaraka* illustrates how humans in this universe are equipped with *ca* (concept), *ra* (emotion), and *ka* (intention). The capacity to manage thoughts, emotions, and wants.

Kurniawan, et.al (2021) underlined that each script in *Hanacaraka* represents significant moral and spiritual values relating to human life. Humans are genuinely God's creations, with all the potential they possess. As a result, humans might act or act to meet their needs in accordance with God's plan.

According to Nur Awalin (2017), Javanese script not only functions as a writing tool for Javanese people but also becomes a symbol of understanding the concept of divinity where in the Javanese spiritual tradition, this script reflects the processing of feelings and inner experiences that emphasize aspects of spirituality through various spiritual practices. Humans cannot sawala, namely avoiding or avoiding their destiny, meaning that humans must be willing to carry out, accept, and carry out God's will.

Ethnolinguistic research reveals that language and culture are inextricably linked, with *Hanacaraka* serving as not simply a writing system but also a reflection of Javanese beliefs, history, and identity (Dian Ikawati Susilo and Indira 2022). Humans must accept everything that God has ordained and banned. Although humans are granted the right to conduct themselves freely, they must strive to conquer it.

Furthermore, each letter in *Hanacaraka* represents the spiritual side and the path of human life. "Ha" symbolizes the existence of humans as God's creatures, "Na" symbolizes hope for divine light, "Ca" describes the purpose of life that leads to God, and "Ra" represents true love that arises from conscience. "Ka" symbolizes human desire that should be directed towards the welfare of nature and others.

The *Hanacaraka* script is more than just a writing system; it reflects life values and serves as a moral compass for the Javanese people. The digital illustration technique to expose this script in the modern day is a deliberate step to ensure that the cultural values included within it are known and appreciated by the next generation. The use of technology in the depiction of this script is projected to raise public awareness and respect for the Javanese cultural legacy, which is rich in philosophical meaning.

III.   METHOD

The research method employed is a qualitative descriptive research-based design method with a literature review and exploratory investigation. In this study, the process will be divided into three stages: data collecting, design ideation, and digitalization or illustration development. The initial step is data collection. The

data used in digital illustration design is gathered through literature reviews, exploratory investigations, and existing studies.

Data was collected through literature studies, in which researchers examine the philosophy, cultural values, and history of many sources that explore regional scripts, including Javanese script. Furthermore, data collecting is done through exploratory research, which tries to gain a thorough grasp of the concepts and meanings inherent in existing illustration works. During this process, researchers not only study and analyze visual references from many sources but also actively engage in visual exploration by creating sketches or scribbles as a sort of personal interpretation of the works observed.

This activity is an important aspect of the idea-creation process because it allows researchers to integrate ideas and impressions gleaned from literature reviews and visual observations into early visual forms. Although it has not yet reached the final design stage, this exploration gives a solid conceptual framework as well as an overview of the direction and content of the digital illustration work that will be created. Furthermore, the process of creating the work is aided by a review of existing works, specifically, relevant illustration works used as comparative materials and references in formulating a visual approach and conveying meaning that is appropriate for the context of the researchers' ideas.

The second stage involves design conceptualization. During this stage, the illustration concept used in the design was exploration. This stage comprises Design Trend Analysis, Determination of Illustration Style, and Making Initial Sketches. The design trend analysis was carried out by researchers by adjusting visual elements with current design trends so that illustrations are more attractive to the younger generation. Researchers selected an illustration style that aligns with the *Hanacaraka* script and represents the values of the Javanese script, while also being easily accepted by the audience. The initial sketching process was then completed by assembling the graphic composition while keeping visual balance and aesthetic appeal in mind.

The final stage was digitalization. After determining the design concept, the digitization process is carried out in the following steps: picking software, creating line art from the drawing, rendering, and modifying the format and media. Software is chosen using a graphic design application, and researchers use the Procreate tool to create high-quality illustrations. The line art stage involves drawing clear lines from previously created sketches, which serve as the fundamental basis for this illustration. The shading step adds detail to the artwork by creating the illusion of lighting, shadows, and depth of volume. Format and Media Adjustment: Researchers alter the illustration format so that it can be used in a variety of digital platforms, such as social media and journal articles, which are tailored to the demands of the researchers. This method is expected to produce digital illustration works that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also instructive in nature, allowing the meaning of the *Hanacaraka* script to be more widely understood.
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IV.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

IV.1 Analysis of Existing Studies

The following is an explanation of the findings from the examination of the philosophical significance of the Javanese *Hanacaraka* script, which was compiled using existing studies from various literature sources and previous research results. This table solely includes the meanings of each word segmentation in the Javanese *Hanacaraka* script.

The Meaning of Javanese *Hanacaraka* Script

Sumber	Ha Na Ca Ra Ka	Da Ta Sa Wa La	Pa Dha Ja Ya Nya	Ma ga Ba Ta Nga
Ekowati (2012)	Humans are God's messengers on	There is no escape from destiny.	Victory in the world and the	Stay away from God's prohibitions

	earth.		hereafter.	and always remember death.
Kurniawan, Saputra, and Yulia (2021)	Humans are God's creation, full of potential.	Humans can meet their requirements according to God's plan.	Humans have positive traits.	Humans have negative characteristics.
Nur Awalin (2017)	Humans live according to God's will, trust God, and fulfill their responsibilities as God's messengers.	Living a life devoted to God's destiny and will.	Padha, namely the inner self is reflected through actions. Jaya is winning or excelling in a sporty manner.	Surrender to nature, despite being given the option to avoid it.
Dian Ikawati Susilo and Indira (2022)	The living messenger demonstrates the existence of a creator (God), humans (creation), and the tasks assigned by God to humans.	When the call comes, humans can't run away.	The inner self of a person is in accordance with his actions.	Always strive to live life while surrendering to the nature that has been determined.

Table 1: Explanation of the meaning of the Javanese *Hanacaraka* script

The Javanese *Hanacaraka* script incorporates philosophical values regarding human existence, interactions with God, and life's challenges, as evidenced by the four sources presented in Table 1. This interpretation sees humans not only as physical creatures but also as spiritual creatures carrying out a purpose from the Creator. Humans, as spiritual creatures, must accept their God-given nature and live lives of noble character.

IV.2 Results and Analysis of the work

The process of creating works in this study is based on an analysis of the philosophical and cultural values contained in the Javanese *Hanacaraka* script, through the existing study method that has been carried out. This study created various designs in the form of sketches, which eventually resulted in two digital illustration pieces. This work uses a creative and contextual technique to visualize philosophical meaning.
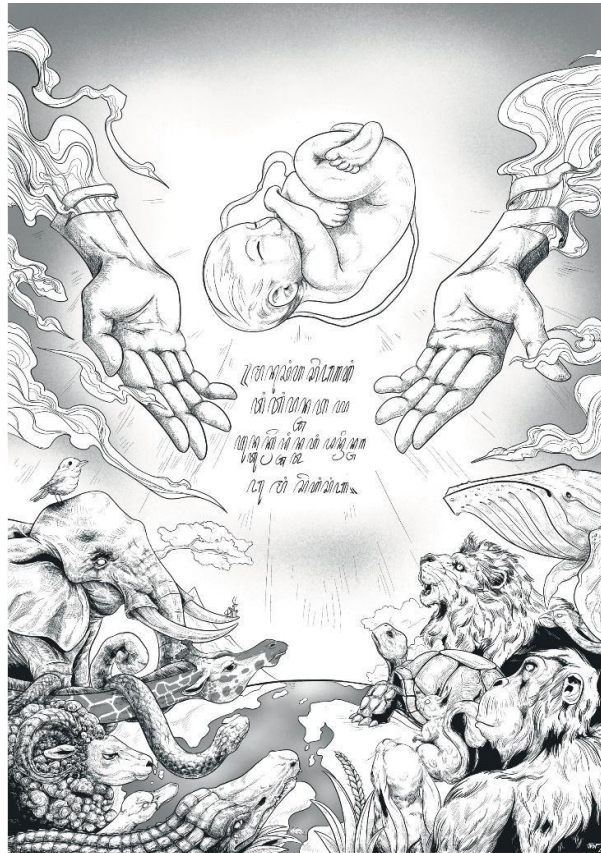
IV.2.1 Artwork 1

Figure 1: Artwork 1 *Ha Na Ca Ra Ka*

Title : *Ha Na Ca Ra Ka*
Size : 42 x 59.4 cm
Technique: digital drawing
Year: 2025

IV.2.1.1 Description of the Work

This image shows a baby figure in a womb-like position, between two outstretched hands from the sky. This image represents the meaning of birth and the beginning of human life, which is the result of divine will. The lower composition displays different animals from diverse ecosystems, such as land, sea, and air, standing on the earth's surface and looking up toward the sky, as if expecting the baby's arrival.

In the middle of the work's composition, there is a text in Javanese script that reads "Humans as a trust in light to love and protect the earth and all its contents." This essay reinforces the basic idea of this book, which is that humans have a moral and spiritual responsibility to love, care for, and protect the earth and all of its contents.

IV.2.1.2 Concept and Philosophy

The title "*Ha Na Ca Ra Ka*" refers to the Javanese script, which is philosophically regarded as a "messenger of life". In this context, humans are understood as God's earthly messengers, serving as life protectors and caregivers. The artwork reflects the concept of the human being as a divine representation with the responsibility to coexist in harmony with all other created beings.
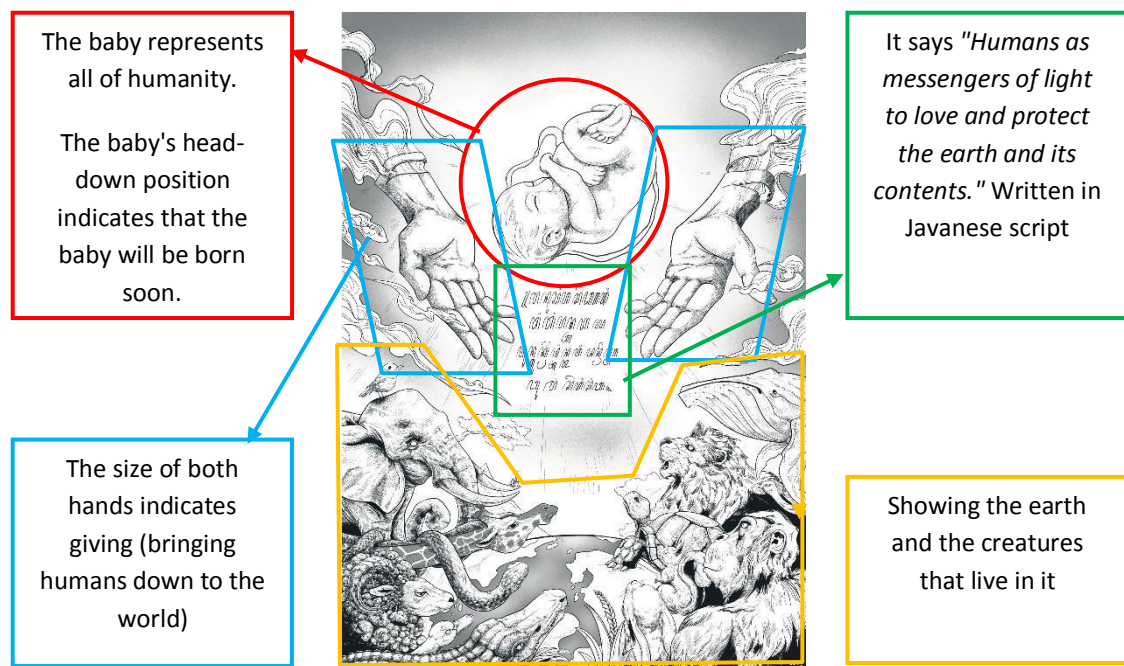
Figure 1.1: Analysis of Artwork 1 *Hanacaraka*
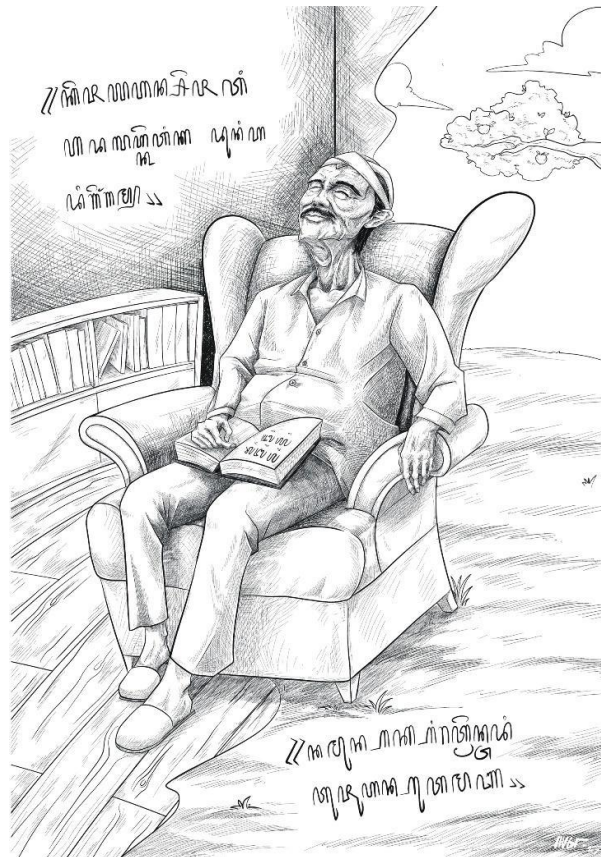
IV.2.2   Artwork 2

Figure 2: Artwork 2 Pa Dha Ja Ya Na

Title: Pa Dha Ja Ya Na
Size: 42 x 59.4 cm
Technique: Digital Drawing
Year: 2025

IV.2.2.1 Description of the Artwork

This artwork depicts an elderly man sitting on a sofa with a serene and pleasant look. This figure is represented by wearing an *udheg* (traditional Javanese headband) and clutching a book, which symbolizes wisdom and deep reflection. The background is separated into two sections: the interior of a house with a bookshelf representing the actual world (worldly), and an open region with natural features that represent the hereafter.

This work has two quotations written in Javanese script. On the left side, it states, " *Kejayaan sejati adalah ketika dunia digenggam*" or "True glory is when the world is held in hand." On the right side, it states, *Namun akhirat menjadi tujuan utamanya*" Or "However, the afterlife is the main goal." These two statements suggest that success in this life is measured not just by material successes, but also by spiritual achievements that lead to eternal satisfaction in the hereafter

IV.2.2.2 Concept and Philosophy

The title "Pa Dha Ja Ya Nya" has a philosophical meaning of "equally victorious" or "win-win". The meaning is taken as an exhortation to succeed in two dimensions of life: the world and the hereafter. The male

figure wearing *udheg* represents spiritual maturity and an extensive understanding of the essence of existence, according to Nur Awalin (2017), a symbolist in Javanese culture.
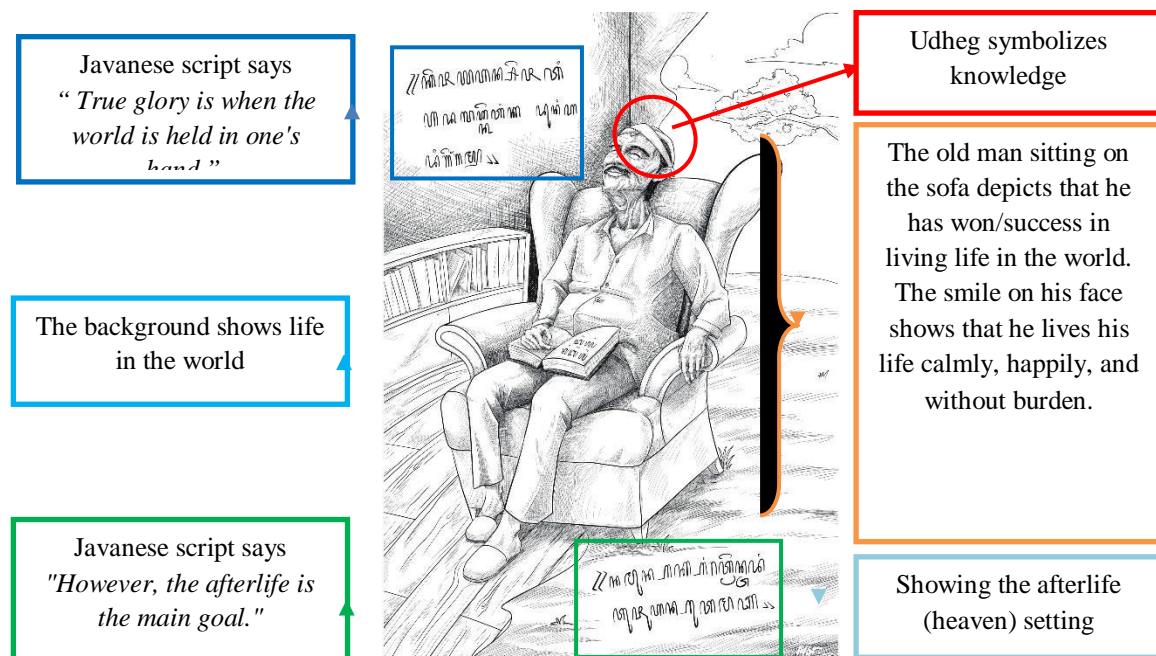

Figure 2.1: Analysis of the artwork 2 Pa Dha Ja Ya Nya

V. CONCLUSION

This work attempts to create digital graphics that convey cultural values as instructional material. Illustration design aims to teach younger generations about local cultural values by describing the meaning of Javanese script. Javanese script which has so far been less popular can be packaged in an attractive and easy-to-understand way through media in the form of digital illustrations. The design process is carried out through the stages of observation, exploration, sketching, digitization, to finalization of the work. The two works produced by the author, first work is entitled "Ha Na Ca Ra Ka" and the title of the second work is "Pa Dha Ja Ya Nya".The Javanese script *Hanacaraka* embodies profound philosophical principles regarding human existence, relationships with God, and life's challenges. The author hopes that by interpreting this work, the audience will be able to connect with the message contained within it, which states that humans are not just physical creatures, but also spiritual beings carrying out a mission from the Creator. Humans must accept their God-given nature and live lives of noble character. The two works produced by the author have represented the spiritual, moral, and social values of Javanese script, while also showing the potential of digital illustration in conveying cultural messages in an interesting, contextual, and adaptive way to the development of the times. Thus, it is hoped that this kind of visual approach can be an inspiration in the development of other cultural educational media.

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