

## Visual Language of Angling Dharma Relief at Jago Temple

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### ABSTRACT

The relief panels depicting the Angling Dharma story on the Jago Temple offer a valuable resource for researchers, similar to the Kresnayana story reliefs in Prambanan. These reliefs serve as visual narratives, conveying the Angling Dharma epic. The sculptors meticulously selected key scenes from the text, translating them into captivating visuals and arranging them within individual panels. These panels, when assembled, form a cohesive narrative of the Angling Dharma story. In a modern context, this sequence of panels resembles a movie, unfolding the story through a series of images. To encompass the entirety of the narrative within the confines of the relief's surface, the sculptors employed a distinct drawing method known as the "space-time-flat" system. This approach differs significantly from modern Western artistic conventions. The unfamiliar style can pose challenges in interpreting the depicted scenes.

This research proposes a descriptive and qualitative analysis of the "space-time-flat" method used in the Angling Dharma reliefs. By delving into this unique drawing system, the study aims to glean valuable insights that can be applied in the creation of various visual media. The analysis can shed light on artistic practices that predate the arrival of Western drawing techniques with their emphasis on naturalism, perspective, and single-moment depiction.

Keywords: Angling Dharma Relief, space-time-flat, Jago Temple.

### INTRODUCTION

The realm of visual arts, encompassing diverse media such as photography, painting, advertising, film, and animation, has largely adopted a single dominant approach, often referred to as the "naturalist-perspective-moment opname (NPM)" system. This method, rooted in Western artistic traditions, gained

prominence during the Renaissance era and subsequently spread globally during the colonial period (Munazil et al., 2022). Its influence was further amplified with the advent of photography and the camera. The pervasiveness of NPM has led to its widespread acceptance as the *de facto* standard for visual representation, including in Indonesia. Unfortunately, this has resulted in a tendency to overlook alternative drawing methods, leading to a narrowed perspective in artistic expression. Indonesian society has become accustomed to viewing imagery from a single vantage point, a limitation inherent in the NPM system. This one-dimensional approach, akin to a still photograph, restricts the visual narrative, capturing only what is visible to the naked eye and effectively eliminating the dimension of time.

In contrast to this prevalent approach, our ancestors in 9th-century Java employed a distinct drawing system, predating the widespread adoption of NPM. This indigenous method, known as the "space-time-flat (RWD)" system, served as the foundation for their visual representation, a legacy that has largely been forgotten amidst the dominance of NPM. As introduced by Tabrani, the RWD system exhibits remarkable capabilities in depicting multiple events simultaneously while showcasing a powerful character design approach (Tabrani, 2018). This very system was skillfully employed by our ancestors in the creation of the Angling Dharma reliefs at Jago Temple.

Jago Temple in East Java, Indonesia, houses a significant work of art: the Angling Dharma reliefs. These sculptures hold a special place in the realm of visual language. They are intricately carved narratives, part of the temple's grand design. One of the most famous reliefs depict scenes from the Angling Dharma story, a Javanese literary tradition that follows the adventures of Angling Dharma (Hunter, 2000). By examining the figures' poses, clothing, and accessories, viewers can glean cultural nuances and story themes. The relief panels likely follow a sequential order, allowing viewers to piece together the story as they move between the temple wall. These carvings, depicting the tale of Angling Dharma, utilize the "space-time-flat (RWD)" drawing system. This method allows the sculptors to defy limitations of time and space, integrating multiple scenes within each panel. The

figures and elements are cleverly arranged to convey a dynamic flow of events, making the story understandable even without a single fixed perspective (Galeswangi et al., 2022).

To fully appreciate the narrative power of the Angling Dharma reliefs, it is essential to transcend the limitations imposed by the NPM system. By adopting a more open-minded approach, we can delve into the intricacies of the RWD method, recognizing its ability to capture the essence of time and movement within a static visual representation. This exploration will not only enrich our understanding of Javanese artistic heritage but also broaden our perspectives on visual storytelling and the diverse possibilities of artistic expression (Octaviani, 2022). In conclusion, the Angling Dharma reliefs serve as a valuable repository of knowledge, offering insights into a remarkable drawing system that predates the dominance of NPM. By embracing the RWD method and its unique narrative capabilities, we can expand our artistic horizons and foster a deeper appreciation for the rich cultural heritage of Indonesia.

The relief would have served as more than just a static artwork; it would have been an interactive experience for viewers, who would have engaged with the relief by walking around it, observing its details, and possibly even interpreting its narrative through oral storytelling or performances (Fiji et al., 2021). As a historical artifact, the Angling Dharma relief provides valuable insights into the socio-cultural milieu of ancient Java, including aspects such as courtly life, religious beliefs, and artistic practices. Despite the extensive research on Javanese art and the Angling Dharma reliefs themselves, the intricacies of the RWD drawing system remain largely unexplored. This lack of understanding underscores the significance of delving into the RWD method, as it holds the key to unlocking the profound visual language employed by the Javanese sculptors. By unraveling the mysteries of the RWD system, we can not only gain a deeper appreciation for the artistic prowess of our ancestors but also broaden our understanding of visual storytelling and its ability to transcend the limitations of time and space. This exploration will serve as a bridge connecting the past, present, and future, ensuring that the rich cultural heritage of Java is preserved and celebrated for generations to come. By analyzing

the reliefs' composition, iconography, and narrative structure, we can shed light on the underlying principles and techniques employed by the sculptors. This investigation will not only enrich our understanding of Javanese artistic traditions but also contribute to the broader discourse on visual language and its diverse expressions across cultures.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The Angling Dharma reliefs, gracing the walls of Jago Temple in East Java, Indonesia, stand as a testament to the mastery of the "space-time-flat (RWD)" drawing system, a unique artistic approach that defies the constraints of time and space. To unravel the intricacies of this visual language and unlock its profound meaning, this research used literature review methods. This qualitative approach allows for an in-depth examination of the Angling Dharma reliefs, enabling researchers to meticulously analyze their composition, iconography, and narrative structure. Through this rigorous analysis, we can decipher the underlying principles and techniques employed by the Javanese sculptors, gaining a deeper understanding of their artistic intentions and the cultural context in which these reliefs were created.

This research falls within the realm of visual arts studies, prompting the author to adopt a visual arts approach centered on the modes of representation (how objects are depicted) and expression (how depicted objects are arranged within the pictorial plane). This visual arts approach serves as the foundation for analyzing narrative elements within the imagery. As a visual arts study, this paper endeavors to address the enigma of the drawing method employed in the Angling Dharma reliefs, thereby facilitating an understanding of contemporary drawing practices in relation to their historical predecessors. The adoption of visual arts theory is anticipated to streamline the analysis process, enhance comprehension of the research object, and effectively delimit the scope of the inquiry (Sugiyono, 2019).

Literature study to support this research serves a variety of goals, including description, comprehension, and explanation. Identifying suitable sources was

once thought to be an important contribution, even before internet databases, full-text search, and AI-based search tools became available (Hennink et al., 2020). In this research, the secondary data sources come from paper summaries, national and international journals from the Google Scholar website, Garuda Portal, and ScienceDirect, e-books, and other relevant reputable sources.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Candi Jago**

The Jago Temple is adorned with numerous relief stories from Hindu and Buddhist teachings. The carved tale relief is read using prescriptive reading, which involves turning the relief counterclockwise or shaking the temple posture. At the first level, the lower side of the north begins in the northwest, with a relief of the Tantri or Fable story, followed by the Angling Dharma story, which concludes in the northeast corner. The story of Kunjarakarna comes from this way, and it is instructional in Buddhist literature until the second level on the south side. On the second level, reliefs depicting Parthayajna and Arjunawiwaha tales may be found on the south side wall beginning at the southwest corner, which have suffered damage in large numbers. Numerous reliefs depicting the Kresnayana tale may also be seen on the upper portion of the temple. Each relief tale has a deep educational value and is incredibly harmonic when taken as a whole (Fiji et al., 2021).

The precise location of Jago Temple is in Jago Hamlet, Tumpang District, Malang Regency, which is 22 kilometers east of Malang City. Because it's in the Overlapping Village, this temple is also known as the Tumpang Temple. It is known as Cungkup by the locals. This temple is actually called Jajaghu, after the Pararaton and Negarakertagama texts. Negarakertagama's fourth chapter 41 describes how Raja Wisnuwardhana, the monarch of Singasari, was a follower of the Shiva Buddhist religion, which is a religious sect that combines Buddhist and Hindu beliefs. This school was constructed roughly 20 kilometers from Candi Jago under the Singasari Kingdom's rule. "majesty" is what Jajaghu, the term for a holy place (D. Wahyudi et al., 2015).



Figure 1. Candi Jago Temple.  
Source: Wardaya, Marina (2023)

Numerous intricately carved relief panels adorn the top room's walls as well as the feet of Jago Temple. There are almost any vacant fields in the story; instead, every one of them is embellished with different embellishments that reveal the background of the departure. Angling Darma, Tantri Kamandaka, Parthayajna, and Kunjarakarna are among the relief levels on the exterior wall. The tale of King Malwapati, who has animal communication abilities, is shown in the Angling Darma sculpture. Tantri Kamandaka, a relief depicting animal legends, is sculpted at Jago Temple among Angling Darma reliefs. Thomas M. Hunter stating that it is accurate to say that there is an Angling Darma story in the reliefs of the Jago temple (Hunter, 2000).

### **The Angling Dhrama Relief at the Jago Temple**

Reliefs, a captivating blend of sculpture and carving, adorn the walls of ancient temples, monuments, and other historical sites, transcending mere decoration to serve as windows into the rich tapestry of Javanese culture and artistic expression. These three-dimensional masterpieces, meticulously crafted

from stone, narrate tales of gods, heroes, and moral lessons, inviting viewers on a journey through the heart of Javanese heritage. Reliefs, whether standalone or part of a larger narrative, are not merely visual delights; they are imbued with profound messages and emotions, etched into the stone by the hands of skilled artisans (Winaya & Munandar, 2021). These intricate carvings, aptly described as "sculpted paintings," come alive under the interplay of light and shadow, revealing their depth and dimension. Stories, myths, legends, and religious themes find their voice in reliefs, transporting observers into the narratives they aim to convey.



Figure 2. Candi Jago Temple Relief.  
Source: Wardaya, Marina (2023)

The beauty of reliefs lies not only in their aesthetic appeal but also in their ability to evoke emotions and inspire reflection. Lines, shapes, colors, textures, and spatial arrangements intertwine to create a symphony of visual expression, reflecting the artist's sentiments and ideas. Reliefs, as expressions of human creativity and ingenuity, stand as testaments to the power of art to transcend boundaries and connect with the human spirit. Beyond their artistic merit, reliefs serve as invaluable historical artifacts, offering insights into the beliefs, values, and social structures of ancient Javanese society (Sjafi'i, 2019). Each panel, meticulously carved into the temple walls, whispers tales of a bygone era, revealing the cultural tapestry that shaped the Javanese identity.

In particular, the reliefs adorning Javanese temples are not mere aesthetic embellishments but rather windows into the cultural and spiritual world of the Javanese people. These intricate carvings, depicting scenes from mythology, history, and everyday life, serve as a repository of knowledge, values, and beliefs, offering a glimpse into the hearts and minds of those who created them. The reliefs of Javanese temples also reflect the syncretic nature of Javanese culture, seamlessly blending indigenous traditions with influences from India and other parts of Asia. This cultural fusion is evident in the iconography, style, and themes depicted in the reliefs, showcasing the adaptability and openness of Javanese society. In essence, reliefs are not just decorative elements; they are tangible expressions of Javanese culture, embodying the artistic mastery, storytelling prowess, and deep-rooted spirituality of the Javanese people. They serve as bridges between the past and the present, reminding us of the enduring legacy of Javanese heritage and the power of art to transcend time and space.

Cultural background has a huge impact on visual art. Within the walls of the Jago temple are two groups of narrative reliefs that are derived from teachings from Buddhism and Hinduism (Afida, et al, 2014). Adorned on the walls of Jago Temple in East Java, Indonesia, the Angling Dharma reliefs stand as a testament to the intricate interplay between literature and sculpture. These captivating carvings, rooted in the rich tapestry of Javanese literary traditions, narrate the epic tale of Angling Dharma, a ruler blessed with the extraordinary ability to converse with animals. The Angling Dharma story, unlike the Kresnayana narrative depicted on Prambanan Temple's Vishnu Temple, does not trace its origins to a single, definitive literary source. Instead, it draws upon a vibrant oral tradition, passed down through generations, weaving together elements of folklore, mythology, and moral teachings (Purwanto, 2005). This fluidity of the narrative is reflected in the reliefs' dynamic composition, seamlessly blending multiple scenes within each panel, defying the constraints of time and space.

The alleviation stories of Tantri Kamandaka, Kunjarakarna stories, and Angling Dharma stories all represent the teachings of the Buddha. Javanese culture continues to enjoy the tale of Angling Dharma, which has been adapted into an electronic cinema series that airs on private television. The sculptors of the Angling Dharma reliefs, known as "taksaka," were not merely artisans translating a fixed

text into stone. They were storytellers in their own right, interpreting the oral tradition and infusing it with their artistic vision. Through their masterful craftsmanship, they breathed life into the characters, imbuing them with emotions, expressions, and gestures that resonate with viewers across time.

The Angling Dharma narrative, as depicted on Jago Temple's reliefs, serves as a moral compass, guiding viewers through a journey of virtue, justice, and the importance of respecting all living beings. King Angling Dharma's ability to communicate with animals symbolizes his deep connection to nature and his understanding of the interconnectedness of all life. In contrast to the Kresnayana reliefs, which primarily focus on a single romantic narrative, the Angling Dharma reliefs encompass a broader spectrum of themes, encompassing moral lessons, societal values, and the delicate balance between humans and the natural world. This thematic richness reflects the depth and diversity of Javanese culture and its enduring emphasis on harmony and spiritual enlightenment. The moral lesson of the Angling Dharma narrative is as follows: 1) do not put an end to crimes that have been committed or will be committed; 2) all misdeeds will be punished and will not be accepted by the gods; 3) gratitude for others' support and repaying even the most precious things; 4) if you want to give kindness, you don't need to show yourself; and 5) loyalty and honesty towards their life partner (Sidyawati & Anggriani, 2021).

The relief of Angling Dharma relief is carved on leg I starting from the southwest corner (facing south) and ending at the northeast corner of leg I. This relief was created during the reign of King Kertanegara. The Angling Dharma relief at Candi Jago consists of eight panels depicting various scenes in the Angling Dharma story. The Angling Dharma relief of Candi Jago is not described as completely as in the story of the Angling Dharma text. However, through the details of the reliefs and the story as a whole, this story can be recognized and tells a summary of the Angling Dharma story (D. Wahyudi et al., 2021). The eight Angling Dharma relief scenes are preceded by a story divider in the form of a triangular plant monument. The first circle contains flowers, the second contains medallions and the third contains libraries. The initial display of the Angling Dharma story below is the beginning of the Angling Dharma story which is immortalized in the form of reliefs at Jago Temple.

### **Visual Language-Based Analysis of the Relief**

Accurate recognition is the starting point for visual language interactions. Visual language theory was used to analyze and interpret the relief's ornamentation in the Angling Dharma. Because the images on the Jago Temple reliefs are portrayed as a whole and have the qualities of an image styled using the Space-Time-Flat (RWD) system, this theory is used. These pictures are taken at different times, distances, and viewpoints. These pictures combine to create a sequence with a time dimension. The sequence may include scenarios where multiple things are moving in both space and time. In the domain of visual language, the relief is composed of expressions and images, or wimba (akin to grammar in spoken language). Wimba consists of the picture object, or the content of the wimba, and the method by which the item is shown, or the wimba technique. Expression planning is the process of arranging wimba into a cohesive unit to create a narrative in the image (Humrotin, 2015). It's crucial to comprehend the wimba that emerge in Candi Jago's Angling Dharma reliefs before deriving themes based on them. The "isi wimba" (content of the image) depicted within each panel of the Angling Dharma reliefs cannot be separated from the "cara wimba" (method of representation) and "tata ungkapan" (compositional rules). The "cara wimba" refers to the specific techniques employed to portray each image in a way that allows it to communicate effectively. The "tata ungkapan," on the other hand, encompasses the set of rules that govern the arrangement of these images within the pictorial space, ensuring that they collectively convey a cohesive message. The sculptors of the Angling Dharma reliefs, known as "taksaka," employed a blend of traditional Javanese techniques (sistem RWD) and more naturalistic elements, reflecting the artistic sensibilities of their time. While the sistem RWD provided a structured approach to depicting figures and scenes, the naturalistic elements infused the reliefs with a sense of realism and immediacy, making them more relatable to viewers. The relationship between form and content in the Angling Dharma reliefs was shaped by both internal and external factors. Internally, the sculptors drew upon the artistic traditions and skills passed down through generations, ensuring continuity and adherence to established norms. Externally, they were influenced by the rich cultural milieu of their time, particularly the

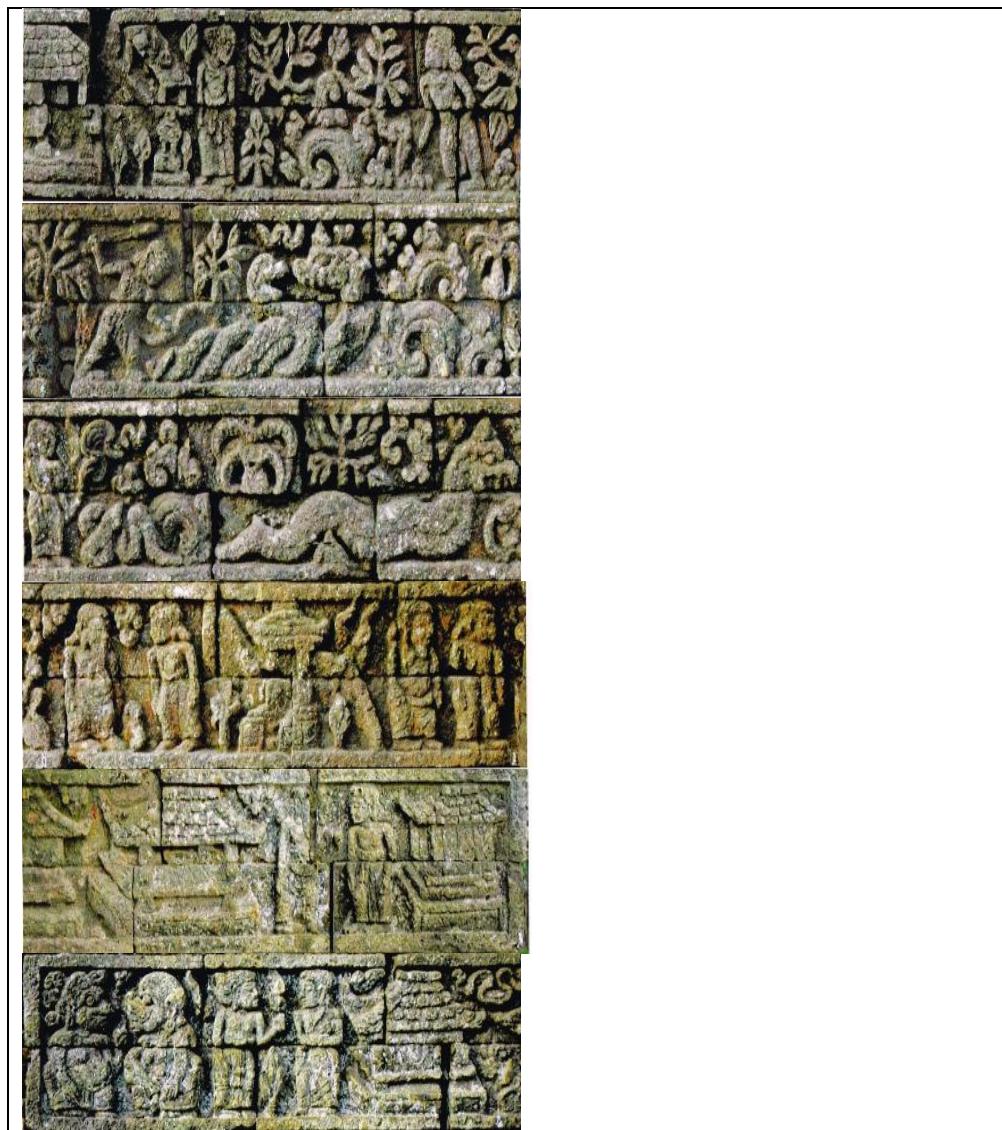
prevailing Hindu religious beliefs and the literary works that served as the source material for the reliefs (D. Y. Wahyudi et al., 2021).

As previously explained, the Angling Dharma reliefs carved in the Jago temple consist of 8 main panels. To understand the storyline, visitors must start reading from the southwest corner relief. The way to read it is to walk around the temple counterclockwise (prasawiya) (D. Wahyudi et al., 2015). The content of the wimba depicted in a relief panel cannot be separated from the wimba method and expression system. The wimba method (the way an object is drawn) is used for a wimba to be able to speak and the expression system is the rules for arranging each wimba (image/object) that is presented in the image area so that it is able to convey a message. These rules apply to typical (traditional) drawing methods using the RWD system as well as modern drawing methods using the NPM system. The RWD system was used by the sculptors, because the NPM drawing system was unknown at that time, even though the depiction of each wimba looked naturalistic. The naturalist depicted on each wimba is intended to be easy to recognize.

Based on this description, it can be concluded that the form and content of the Angling Dharma reliefs cannot be separated. This means that form and content in the process of creating a work of art can complement each other so that everything can be told in one panel. Based on the relationship between the form and content of the reliefs in temple buildings, the sculptors were influenced by internal and external factors. Internal or hereditary factors that influence the sculptors are habits passed down by their ancestors, while external factors such as the cultural environment, in the form of Hindu religious teachings and literature that prevailed at that time. These two influences make the typical drawing method on the Angling Dharma reliefs story very different from the modern drawing method that comes from the West.

Analysis of the Angling Dharma relief was carried out using visual language theory by Tabrani (Tabrani, 2018) to read the ornaments on the relief. This theory is used because the visuals on the Jago Temple reliefs are depicted as a whole, with the characteristics of image styling using the Flat Space-Time (RWD) system. The images were recorded from various angles, distances and times. These images form a sequence that has a time dimension and can consist of scenes with several objects moving in space and time. The elements that form the relief in the context of visual

language are images (wimba) and expressions (similar to grammar in spoken language). Wimba includes the image object, namely the content of the wimba, and the way the object is depicted, namely the wimba method. Expression planning involves efforts to arrange wimba in one unit, which makes the image have a story (Humrotin, 2015). Before understanding and creating motifs based on reliefs, it is important to understand the wimba that appear in the Angling Dharma reliefs of Candi Jago.





<b>Isi Wimba:</b> There are more than scene, scene 1 are in the left and scene 2 in the right. This corresponds to the reading direction counterclockwise.	<b>Tata Ungkap:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows important parts where figures who are considered important are given accents to make them stand out more.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The main character is shown inside perspective (RWD) from head to toe.</li> <li>There are various types of perception used, the perception of buildings as having depth while humans are flat.</li> <li>The main object size is made larger than the original, the person is larger than the building to emphasize the level of importance.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is identification of the space, the location of the events in both scenes so that they can be recognized.</li> <li>Various spaces and times are summarized in one scene, two different places and times are depicted in one panel.</li> <li>The story scene in the left panel is told first and the story continues in the second to third scene to the right.</li> </ol>

Table 1. Angling Dharma Relief Wimba  
 Source: author's documentation (2023)

Wimba is separated into two categories in visual language: wimba contents and wimba procedures. The object being drawn is known as the wimba content, and the drawing technique is known as the wimba method. The motif's decorations meet the requirements of the RWD character, which includes the motif object telling a timeless story, distance variations, and the ability to view the motif image from multiple angles. The components of visual language are the expression system, which functions similarly to spoken language's grammar, and wimba, or

image. Wimba, meanwhile, is made up of Wimba Methods and Wimba Contents. Wimba method refers to how an object is portrayed, whereas wimba content is the subject of the picture. Expression order is a way of arranging wimba in one thing, this expression system is what makes an image have a story (Tabrani, 2018).

The sculptors of the past were able to utilize the depiction space (panels) to be able to tell all the events according to the story. Based on the analysis of the Angling Dharma reliefs at Candi Jago, wimba and the connections between wimba were found which became the basis for creating the motif. Apart from that, it was found that the Angling Dharma reliefs at Jago Temple used internal expressions. This can be seen from the arrangement of the wimba which is arranged in one area so that it can tell a story. The composition of the scenes is also arranged in a balanced and harmonious manner. Wimba is arranged according to the story of the scene and the composition is arranged with the characters made larger and the background smaller. This aims to make the characters stand out more because they are an important part of the story.

Characteristics of RWD in Relief Angling Dharma:

- Simultaneous depiction: This relief depicts various events that occur simultaneously in one space. For example, the Angling Dharma scene in the forest is next to the Setyawati scene in the palace.
- Use of horizontal timeline: This relief uses a horizontal timeline to show the sequence of events. The scenes on the left of the relief represent the beginning of the story, while the scenes on the right represent the end of the story.
- Use of scale: The size of the figures in this relief is not always proportional. Larger figures indicate more important roles in the story. For example, the Angling Dharma is depicted as being as big as a giant to show its strength.

The Angling Dharma relief at Candi Jago is not only a beautiful work of art, but also a clear testament to the artist's skill at that time. The use of the Basic Space-Time (RWD) method in this relief shows the artist's ability to tell a complex and interesting story in a limited space. The use of RWD in the Angling Dharma Relief shows the artist's skill in combining aesthetics and narrative. This technique allows the artist to tell a complex and interesting story in a limited space, and

encourages the viewer to actively engage in the process of interpreting and understanding the message of the relief.

## **CONCLUSION**

The way of drawing space-time-flat (RWD) used by sculptors (taksaka) of the past is a picture, the use of a limited image area can present several events and has the power to tell all scenes in one panel. With a limited image area, the carvers arranged all the wimbas so that everything could fit and be seen clearly. The results of observations on the eight panels analyzed show that the arrangement of each wimba combines several shooting angles and a series of story scenes in one relief panel that forms the whole story. The typical way of drawing using the RWD system in the Angling Dharma story relief, is an illustration that the NPM drawing system from the West is not the only one that applies. Both systems are equally good, if implemented and needed for the present and future. Both can be combined into a new work or style, and can even become a characteristic of Indonesian fine art. Intuitively, consciously or unconsciously, the combination of two drawing systems is actually emerging in many works such as photography, painting, comics, graphic design, film, animation and other visual media. Digital processing using software such as Adobe Photoshop with layered background patterns has given rise to photographic works that combine NPM and RWD drawing methods.

This research examines the unique visual style of the Angling Dharma reliefs on Candi Jago temple. By studying these traditional artistic elements, creators can find inspiration for new works that reflect local identity. The reliefs depict a specific way of drawing RWD, a skill passed down through generations. This artistic legacy should be preserved and serve as a foundation for creating new works in various visual mediums.

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