

Character Design for A Motion Comic from Textual Classical Malay Narratives Discursive Descriptions: Creativity in an Islamic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

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Characters in classical Malay textual narratives are predominantly complemented by descriptive qualities of their personalities with atypical portrayals of the physique which are not accentuated by any illustrations. Visual adaptation of the characters for new presentation would require artists to illustrate from the discursive descriptions for character design. Most contemporary references on drawing for character design emphasize the physical or exoteric ascriptions rather than the harmony between inspiration and spiritual or the esoteric perceptions. Although such references encourage novice artists to learn and search for inspiration (ilham), which involves the inner self in the thinking process, the latter is hardly explored, especially through the Islamic perspective. Research has shown that creativity is a skill that can be learned. This article provides a conceptual value to the field of character design for motion comics from an Islamic perspective through content analysis of classical Malay textual narratives and the meanings from various chapters in the Holy Quran which include a range of elements in creativity. It is established that Islam promotes creativity through certain practices, including using the heart or qalb which is also known as the seat of the al-'aql or intellect, and practising tafakkur, or immersing the self in deep contemplation, as suggested in the Quran.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The conceptual work space of creativity is immeasurable that it stretches beyond the real to the unreal and the possible crossing the impossible. Research in creative thinking has evolved beyond the domains of philosophy, theology, psychology, psychiatry, and neurology to specialised fields such as education and arts. In his much earlier writing, Rothenberg (1976) suggested that the innate unique capacity of an individual which facilitates in the production of a masterpiece, a *magnum opus* or great scientific discoveries and inventions, has contributed to the increase interests in research on creative thinking. Regardless of the various theories exist on creativity and the creative thinking process, the ultimate outcome of the process is to produce something that is new and valuable (Rothenberg, 2011). Inspirations that come to the creative minds may emanate from the unseen, unconscious sources, and giftedness though there have been various researchers that study how creativity can be taught as a skill (Robinson & Aronica, 2013).

Meanwhile, in many of its verses, the Holy Quran does not only mention thinking in hundreds of its verses but also poses thought-provoking questions that invoke readers to think and analyse any ideas and creations whether seen or unseen; thus, emboldening readers to connect the esoteric with the exoteric meanings. As shown in the verses of QS Al-Baqarah 2:164 and QS Āli-‘Imrān 3:190 – 191, the Holy Quran invites readers to reflect, observe, and be creative. Creative thinking can be a commonly expected or surprisingly unexpected act either conscious or unconscious that is initiated from the external limits of the bodies to the curiously inner-self. Through creative thinking, one can view the ordinary physical world which may have personal and individual interpretations that are inventive or revolutionary; hence, creativity allows us to view our perceptions of the significant world over something unfamiliar. Hence, to illustrate for motion comics, particularly for character design, the artist has to construct and refine concepts towards creating and presenting new ideas and meanings.

Therefore, this paper attempts to provide a notional value to the field of character design in the motion comic “*Liga Pendekar vs Dukun Lintah*” (Figure 1) through an Islamic perspective which contains the spectrum of elements in creative thinking skills.



Figure 1: *Liga Pendekar vs Dukun Lintah*

2. VISUAL ADAPTATIONS

2.1 Discursive Textual Classical Malay Narratives

Many South East Asian (SEA) classical textual narratives have been re-presented into visual sequential narratives. The narratives are entrenched in their traditional beliefs, while the characters in the stories are perpetually illuminated with its cultural resplendence (Manaf, Hamzah, & Abidin, 2021). Similar to the *sastera Melayu klasik* or classical Malay textual narratives, they are usually unaccompanied by any visual images are the texts appended by any illustrations. Characters in the narratives are mostly complemented with descriptive qualities of their personalities with atypical portrayals of the physique. Thus, requiring the artist to illustrate the characters in obscurity by leveraging the abstruse textual descriptions for character design when adapting these classics in the form of visual narratives through motion comics.

A review on prior and existing literature on character design for comics and animation have brought to the deduction of the views that; firstly, most contemporary references emphasize the physical or exoteric ascription rather than the harmony between inspiration and spiritual or the esoteric perceptions. Accordingly, in a much earlier examination by Lioi (2009), it was discovered that a substantial number of references, including online media and printed references, as well as scholarly literature, had focused more on the technicalities of character design. This is primarily evident, as many books on the making of renown comics and animation by either comic artists, publishers or production companies and studios such as those by Anderson, Cady-Lee, and Mengert (2019), Kurtti (2020), and Dimartino and Konietzko (2020), emphasize on matters of anatomy, client's brief, and the technicalities towards the final product.

Secondly, although these references for animation encourage novice artists on learning and searching (or re-searching) for inspiration which also involves the inner-self in the thinking process, the latter is hardly ever being shared or explored in writing especially through the Islamic perspective. Artists would retreat in empirical and rational invocation for inspiration detaching from the unconscious creative inner-self. It is implied by Jung (2015) that the artist's inner creative process can be described as superior introverted thinking with intuition which may also be augmented with unconscious facts. This can be reflected in the Islamic view through *tafakkur* which is to think deeply that is directed to problem solving through utilizing anticipated and available information guided by deep inward contemplation in the essence of the unseen inspiration (*ilham*) (Jalam Badi & Mustapha Tajdin, 2009; Sidek Baba, 2017).

3. METHODOLOGY: A MOTION COMIC - RE-PRESENTING CHARACTERS FROM DISCURSIVE NARRATIVES

The motion comic '*Liga Pendekar vs Dukun Lintah*' (Abdullah, 2022) retains the eight main characters; namely, *Hang Tuah*, *Badang*, *Tanggung*, *Kebayan*, *Orang Minyak*, *Kelembai*, *Awang Kenit*, and *Malim Deman*. The characters *Hang Tuah* and *Badang* are present in the prominent classical Malay text '*Sulalat al-Salatin ya'ni Perteturan Segala Raja-Raja*' or '*Sejarah Melayu*' which is also known as '*Genealogy of Kings*' or '*The Malay Annals*' (Tun Seri Lanang, 1997; Tun Seri Lanang, 2019; Tun Seri Lanang, 2020). Meanwhile, the character *Malim Deman* is adapted from the classical text '*Hikayat Malim Deman*' (Pawang Ana & Raja Haji Yahya, 1984). Through content analysis of the references mentioned, only the character

design of *'Hang Tuah' (Pak Tua)*, *Badang*, and *Malim Deman* are included in the discussions of the present paper.

The following sections will further discuss the act of contemplation and the evaluation of thoughts as implied in the Islamic perspective through content analysis of the meanings in various chapters from the Al-Quran that are essential for a creative person. This should be able to spark off the inspiration or *ilham* that is indispensable in developing a character design. Consequently, the paper will delve into visualising the discursive textual narratives of the selected three characters in the character design. The interpretation process is described in Figure 2.

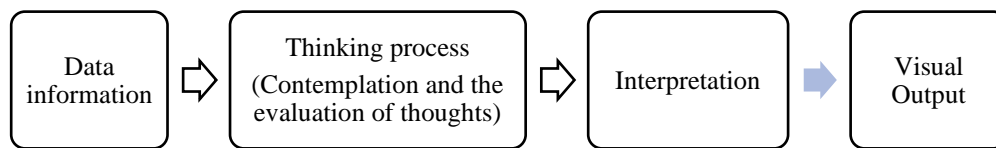


Figure 2: Conceptual framework of content analysis

4. DISCUSSIONS: INTROSPECTION AND CREATIVITY

A creative person would ruminate on his or her subject and field because creative ideas usually emerge gradually and may extend over the course of time. It has been suggested to consider that spiritual conviction could enhance the artist's introspection and creativity (Hui, He, & Wong, 2019). Creativity can be a distinctive, unprecedented, and a bewildering process; however, it has been revealed by various researchers that creative thinking is a skill that can be taught and trained. There have been many programs designed for training people to think with better means both creatively and critically including Edward de Bono's six thinking hats which is developed from the progression of the Cognitive Research Trust (CoRT), *Isaksen and Treffinger's Creative Problem-Solving Program*, Covington, and team's *Productive Thinking Program*, and Harvard Project Zero, (Sternberg, 2019). Accordingly, such programs also indicated that knowledge garnered from various disciplines and experience opens up for newfound and ground-breaking thought. When this is followed with cognition, contemplation, and the evaluation of thought or reasoning, it would transpire the manifestation and burgeoning of newfound and ground-breaking creativity.

4.1 Contemplation (*Tafakkur*) and the Evaluation of Thought

Creative thinking requires some forms of profound contemplation, reflection, reckoning and deep comprehension. Levenson and Aldwin (2013) consider that contemplatives are specialists who are transcend towards the transpersonal. The unconscious effectively complements the conscious into transfiguring the imagined into 'reality' with immediacy. It is also recognised that meaning-making pragmatically influences engagement in the creative process and actions among adults (Hui, He, & Wong, 2019). Hence, artists are able to transform experience and manifest their personal creativity as well as give original interpretation and meaning to their artwork. In view of that, character design is a symbiotic process involving different conceptual ideas assembled by the artist in researching relevant materials of references. It is necessary to perform research prior to illustrating character design and later vet the script thoroughly to ensure its authenticity, accuracy, and appropriateness (Rheault, 2020) especially when designing characters with a story that is adapted from any cultural content. Accordingly, it is

necessary to look into the Quranic viewpoint towards using the intellect in deep thinking or contemplating (*tafakkur*).

Respectively, the Holy Quran admonishes its readers to make discerning observations and reasoning of their surroundings. It is imperative that the intellect is to be edified as decreed in the Al-Quran by observing, thinking, and reflecting the signs of The Creator and history of man's experiences. With that, it is indicated by Jamal and Mustapha (2009, p. 3) that contemplation (*tafakkur*) is perceptibly mentioned in the Holy Quran such as in the following verses: QS Al-Baqarah 2: 219, 266; QS Āli 'Imrān 3: 191, QS Al-An'am 6: 50; QS Al-A'raf 7: 176, 184; QS Yūnus: 10: 24; QS Ar-Ra'd 13: 3; QS An-Nahl 16: 11, 44, 69; QS Al-Rūm 30: 8, 21; QS Saba 34: 46; QS Az-Zumar 39: 42; QS Al-Jāthiyah 45: 13; QS Al-Hashr 59: 21, and QS Al-Muddathir 74 : 18. If we observe, ponder and reflect, Ali (1996) believes that we should be able to understand that the verses from the Al-Quran are revelations that illuminate The Creator's "wisdom and goodness" and of the "beautiful handiwork in the material creation of His dealings in history are signs to us".

It needs to be emphasised that creative thinking encourages adaptability in thinking and actions through analysis and evaluation of thought or *al-fikr*. This is in reference to using the *al-'aql* (the Intellect) in QS Yūsuf 12:2, and '*aqiluun*' (عَقِلُون) in QS al-Ra'd 13:4, which are located at the end of the verses, that encourage the act of contemplation (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 1996). The Holy Quran further cultivates probing for its readers through phrases such as (i) *afala ta'qilun* (do you not reason?) (QS Al-Baqarah 2: 44, 76; QS Āli-'Imrān 3: 65; QS Al-An'am 6: 32; QS Al-'Araf 7: 169; QS Yūnus 10: 16; QS Hud 11: 51; QS Yūsuf 12: 109; QS Al-Anbiya' 21: 10, 67; QS Al-Mu'minun 23: 80; QS Al-Qasas 28: 60; QS As-Saffat 37: 138), (ii) *afala tafaqqarun* (so, will you not contemplate?) (QS Al-Baqarah 2:266; QS Al-An'am 6: 50), and (iii) *afala tadabbarun* (do they not consider {with care}?) (QS An-Nisaa 4:82; QS Muhammad 47: 24) (Rosnani Hashim & Wan Mazwati, 2022; Sidek Baba, 2017; Jalam Badi & Mustapha Tajdin , 2009). Correspondingly, verses from the Holy Quran also imply that creative thinking should be viewed alongside critical thinking because they complement one another and should be deliberated in an integrated thought. This is clearly encouraged in the Qur'an for its readers to use their thoroughgoing intellect such as in QS Al-Baqarah 2:164 that describes with graphic descriptions of the natural phenomenon in its harmony. Essentially, each creation has some special and distinct meanings.

The Al-Quran has clearly provided descriptions of the various creations and the history of man's experience through the different degrees of its verses from the 114 *surahs*. It is highlighted by Ali (1996) that if a person is to study on nature and give thought to the processes, they would be able to recognize The Creator's wisdom and "benign providence in making the processes of nature subserve man's use and refined life" (p. 639). Hence, the readers are encouraged to use their higher intelligence and study the creations with careful reasoning for deeper understanding. Such provision is revealed in the verses of QS Al-Nahl 16:11-12.

5. KNOWLEDGE (*'ILM*) AND INSPIRATION (*ILHAM*)

Knowledge is retained in the faculty of memory and holds distinctive roles with the attribution of various characteristics and qualities. It is conceptually abstract and does not appertain to the physical world (Bolisani & Bratianu, 2018). Nevertheless, Audi (2011) asserted that it is important to have a significantly grounded and justified belief so that the typical matters discerned are substantiated on the same basis that it is known. It was also prompted that

knowledge or matters that are stored in the memory may wither or are difficult to retrieve, or remain unchanged. Some knowledge stored in the memory is either instinctive or ingrained and we could generate memories of occurrences as recollections that can act as inspirations in order to simulate the future or in this matter, creating works of art. Artists are able to demonstrate continuity by maintaining fundamental anchoring of knowledge learnt, acquired, and stored in the memory.

Knowledge may also be described as a body of experience, appropriate information, and skilled insights or potentials. De Jong and Furgeson-Hessler (1996) implied that it serves as the foundation in evaluating and incorporating new experiences and novel information. The researchers further suggested two levels of knowledge, namely; surface-level knowledge and deep-level knowledge. The surface-level knowledge lacks critical evaluation and judgement. Its characteristics include imitation, repetition, or replicating through trial and error. Meanwhile, the deep-level knowledge is consummately processed by means of comprehension and abstraction. Judgement and evaluation are then rendered with granularity and structured to be retained in the memory and can be purposefully efficient when used. Hence, knowledge is dynamically processed in relation to the space and time continuum but good judgement requires not only a collection of experience but also some form of wisdom (*al-hikmah*) which is much deliberated in the Islamic view towards the acquisition of knowledge.

The Arabic verb *awhā* means ‘revealed’ which derives from the noun *wahy* and they are radiated throughout the Al-Quran in various shades of meanings. One of the meanings include ‘inspiration’ or *ilham* that is terminologically used in reference to God inspiring man with concepts and ideas, or guiding and directing His creations. In QS An-Nahl 16:68, Allah swt inspired (*awhā*) the bee to build its hives in hills, trees, and other habitations. According to Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1996), “*awhā* (أَوْحَى) ordinarily means inspiration, the Message put into the mind or heart by Allah” (p. 654). This is illuminated in other verses of the Al-Quran including QS Tāhā 20:38 and QS QS Al-Qaṣaṣ 28:7 When God granted inspiration to Prophet Musa a.s mother (*Umm Musa*) in a time of persecution and to save him from being exterminated by the Pharaoh’s command. In this sense, inspiration (*ilham*) can be considered as a divine grace. As art is seen as a mean of expressing one’s devotion to God; hence, the concept of inspiration is formidably connected to the idea of spiritual inspiration as affirmed in QS Al-Najm 53:10; (10) *So did (Allah) convey the inspiration to His Servant – (conveyed) what He (meant) to convey.*

The divine inspiration draws out the artist’s innermost thought and feelings transcending language and culture. The creative inspiration or intuition that is believed to come from God, The *Al-Khaliq* (الْخَالِقِ), The Creator, enables artists to produce work of arts that are not only beautiful but also meaningful and has that pleasing effect to the physical eyes and the spiritual eyes of the *qalb*.

5.1 Knowledge (*‘Ilm*) and Inspiration (*Ilham*) for Character Design

Knowledge (*‘ilm*) according to Ali (1996) is the “power of judgement in discerning the value of truth and acquaintance with previous revelations” (p. 1000). Various verses in the Al-Quran revealed that God bestowed the prophets with knowledge that even the angels do not have. In QS Al-Baqarah 2:31-33, the verses revealed that God taught Prophet Adam a.s. the names of things. From QS Al-Anbiyā’ 21:74 and 79, God inspired and provided Prophet Lūt and Prophet Sulaimān with the right judgement and knowledge of matters. Similarly, QS Al-Naml 27:15 and 16 also revealed that God had bestowed Prophet Dāwūd with knowledge favoured upon

him. These verses are among many others in the Al-Quran which indicate God's goodness and erudition are manifested in man's heart (*qalb*) also known as the seat of the intellect (*al-'aql*).

Artistic creations would typically present exquisite details but with camouflaged meanings or metaphorically articulated. The works of art transmit the artists' intents, the concealed inferences, and underlying principles, so those who are interested must engage their attention to ponder and explore. Classical Malay textual narratives are works of art that are copiously composed metaphors and often with equivocally profound details. The narratives may perceptibly condense several meanings that impel the readers to engage their attention in deep thoughts. A critical mind is also multi-dimensional as it observes, contemplates, reflects, analyses, synthesise, evaluates, and makes criterion-based judgement about all information that entered the mind (Rosnani Hashim & Wan Mazwati, 2022). Hence, works of art invite others to create a profound connection through extended thought.

Although the mind is physically influenced by what is seen, heard, or smelt from its worldly surrounding, it is however free from the elements spiritually; a realm that is unrestricted of time and space. With that, the ideas come to the artist by intuition to which Al-Ghazali describes as "inspiration spring up in the mind unconveyed through any sense-channel" (Al-Ghazali, 2021). Ali (1996) upheld that work of arts that are praiseworthy should be "... those which emanate from minds steeped in the Faith, which try to carry out in life that fine sentiments they express in their artistic work", and the objective of the creation is not endeavoured towards self-glorification or the effusive praises from others. This is imperative according to Ali (1996) if "one who wishes to become a supreme artist, not only in technique but in spirit and essentials". Successively, the merging of knowledge and strong conviction in Faith become the essence bypassing consciousness that transpire inspiration (*ilham*) which is the impetus for perception and action for an artist to seamlessly draw.

5.2 The Heart (Qalb) – The Seat of the Intellect

The heart (*qalb*) is mentioned more than a hundred times and deliberated extensively in the Holy Quran with reference to its physical and spiritual substance. Islamic philosophers and theologians have written extensively about the heart and its importance to human spirituality and knowledge. Being considered as the seat of the intellect, the heart is also the epicentre of consciousness, the emotion, and the spiritual (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 1996). In studying the works of the great philosopher Al-Ghazali, Osman Bakar (1998) identified that the *Hujjat al-Islām* (Proof of Islam) views that the heart (*qalb*) holds the sight of the inward realities just like the bodily eyes that sees the physical world. According to Al-Ghazali (2010), the heart, like a mirror, is potentially capable of reflecting the true nature of all things and thus recognising them. There are three factors for this recognition: First, the intellect or heart in which the image of the specific nature of things exists is like the mirror; second, the intelligence or specific nature of the thing recognised is like the object reflected in the mirror; third, the intelligence or representation of the thing recognised in the heart is like the representation of the image in the mirror.

Al-Ghazali also implies that man can have the mirror of his heart polished and shined by acts of obedience so that it reflects the image of the true reality. The heart of man has two kinds of knowledge: the intellectual and the religious. Likewise, knowledge of arts in the Islamic perspective does not only consider the peripheral values but it should be complemented with the inward. Importantly, art is also a revenue to demonstrate one's devotion to God; thus, art

creators may imbue their creations with spiritual themes or symbols. In this sense, the artists acknowledge that the inspirations emanate from The Divine Source so, they characteristically express their gratefulness to God, The *المُصَوِّر* (*Al-Musawwir*) or The Bestower of Forms, The Fashioner, and The Shaper of Unique Beauty.

6. RE-IMAGINING TEXT TO VISUAL

Traditional classical Malay textual narratives are crafted faithfully close to its people's heritage and customs. The narratives do not revel in glorifying discrete personal ideals or giving individual flattery in fulsomeness to the characters that appear in the stories. It was highlighted by Hamid (2017) that the textual classical Malay narratives also are not reinforced with illustrations that could provide substantial background knowledge to its readers that they may benefit from having. Although legendary characters in classical Malay narratives are illustriously described and oft-discursive in the stories, the physical descriptions are only given in fringes, revealing discretely the physical description that is more often than not would be supplemented with metonymy.

6.1 Description Through the Audience or Onlookers Behaviour

It is narrated in the classical texts that *Hang Tuah* was never deceased in the time of the Malaccan Sultanate; instead, he simply vanished and became the chieftain to an indigenous tribe (Harun Mat Piah, 1986). For the purpose of the motion comic "*Liga Pendekar vs Dukun Lintah*" and its prequel "*Liga Pendekar: Perikatan Adiwira*" which was first published in 2008, *Hang Tuah* has been adapted as the character *Pak Tua* (Figure 3: Pak Tua (Hang Tuah)). However, his discursive appeals from available classical narratives are appropriately maintained for the purpose of the character design of the storyline. *Hang Tuah* or in the comic known as *Pak Tua* retains the epitome of a valiant Malay *pendekar*.

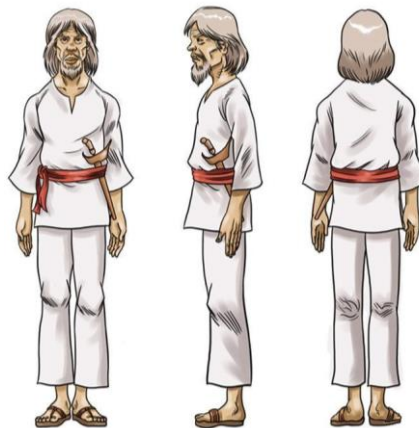


Figure 3: Pak Tua (Hang Tuah)

Prominent characters in classical Malay narratives are also considerably glorified through the atmosphere of the onlookers' infatuated behaviour upon seeing their fetching looks instead of providing distinctive physical attributes. For instance, the striking countenance of the legendary Malay admiral and *pendekar*, *Laksamana Hang Tuah* is described obliquely in the original manuscript and is demonstrated in John Leyden's translation of the 'Malay Annals' (Tun Seri Lanang, 2019, pp. 99-100);

Wherever Hang Tuah came, he also excited the greatest awe by his resolute carriage, and he even excited admiration by his commanding presence in the royal hall of audience. If he entered the market, he excited admiration; if he entered the theatre, he excited admiration; and all the ladies of Java and all the virgins, were enamoured of Hang Tuah. And whenever Hang Tuah was passing, the women would spring from their husbands' arms and wish to go out to see him, and the poets of Java thus mention him in their songs in the Javanese language.

"Uni-suru tangka-pana panylipor saban, Den catan puran dine dunangugi - "

Which signifies;

This is the betel-leaf, come and take it, to allay the sense of love.

It is true we have beheld his form, but love still continues to subsist.

Meanwhile, Prince *Malim Deman* is described to be strikingly pleasing to the eyes of the onlookers beyond any comparison – *"Maka dipandang Nenek Kebayan sangatlah elok rupanya, cahaya muka gilang-gemilang tiadalah dapat ditentang nyata"*; *"Maka sabda Tuan Puteri Bongsu, 'Orang mana itu nenek, yang terlalu amat elok itu, gilang-gemilang cahaya mukanya?'"* (Pawang Ana & Raja Haji Yahya, 1984, p. 22 & 31).

It was further pointed out by Hamid (2017) that descriptions of important characters in the Malay royalty realms and the aristocracy for the most part are stereotypical only to further engender conceptual ideas that the characters have comparable appeals both physically and in personality. For instance, in the *hikayat*, prince *Malim Deman* (Figure 4) is figuratively described as remarkably dashing beyond imagination in his era. The royalty is further physically illuminated in the most metaphorically gleaming descriptions (Pawang Ana & Raja Haji Yahya, 1984, p. 6 & 23);

Sekali digosoknya,

Dua tiga panau tercelik;

Tiga empat panau tercelik:

Hilanglah cahaya matahari,

Timbullah cahaya Malim Deman.



Figure 4: Prince Malim Deman

6.2 Qualifying Ascriptions of Prowess and Personality

There are also indistinct portrayals of the characters in the narratives that only provides qualifying ascriptions of their prowess and good nature. *Badang* (Figure 5) is described to be “exceptionally robust and strong”, an “extremely sturdy warrior” (Tun Seri Lanang, 2020, p. 36 & 40) and his strength was intensified after he consumed the vomit of a demon that he caught that has been eating his catch of the day. *Badang*’s invincibility was further substantiated when even after falling from a tall tree and hit a rock; “The rock was riven, but his head was intact” (Tun Seri Lanang, 2020, p. 38). *Badang* is so mighty that;

One day, His Majesty, Seri Rana Wikrama built a trading vessel. When it was completed even two hundred people could not push it down to the water. But when Badang arrived, he single-handedly launched it and it glided right over to the opposite bank.



Figure 5: Badang

The external image of characters in classical Malay narratives are perfected by their internal essence through the discursive descriptions of their decorum (*adab*) and wisdom (*al-hikmah*). Ali (2007) holds the view that the external image is enriched by the nonpareil inner reality which is its hidden internal essence (*bātin*) and further suggested that the outward form or external image (*zāhir*) functions as an intelligible vessel. Hence, in order to visualize a character in classical Malay narratives in its completeness, one must seek the understanding of its being not only through its outward image or physicality but also its inward qualities or characteristics. This is revealed in the accounts of Prince *Malim Deman* and *Badang*. After barely recognizing *Malim Deman* as a prince of the realm, *Nenek Kebayan* who had helped cleaned the prince after his misfortunate travel adventure was awestruck to see his good looks but she was certainly assured when observing his good mannerism (Pawang Ana & Raja Haji Yahya, 1984, p. 23). Meanwhile, *Badang* demonstrated his sharp perceptiveness when he succeeded in preventing a fight between him and *Bendarang* due to a challenge by their respective kings (Tun Seri Lanang, 2020, pp. 40-43).

In the beautiful passages of QS Al-Mu'minūn 23: 12-14, God's work in the creation of man is described from the innermost process within the silent and concealed womb that man's growth develops until birth. Man is further urged to ponder of its creation in QS 36 Yāsīn 36: 77. Along the growth process, the Al-Quran also mentions that God breathed into the foetus His spirit (QS Al-Hijr 15: 29) to which Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1996) views this as God breathing in to man “the faculty of God-like knowledge and will” (p. 625) or implants His attributes but reminded that

they should be justly ('*adl*) and rightfully used. Hence, art inevitably encourages deep and extended thought. Naturally, an artist who sincerely ponders, observes, and acts in deep contemplation or *tafakkur* may intuitively know his senses as his hands weave through the drawing tools when illustrating for character design even from the embellished discursive textual descriptions. In QS As-Shams 91:8, the word '*ilham*' is terminologically used in reference to when Allah accorded inspiration into man's heart (*qolbu*).

Al-Ghazali has also addressed the idea that man is the image of The Archetype. He relates this to the *al-lawh al-mahfūz* (The Preserved Tablet) in which The Archetype of the world is written on The Tablet. The true nature of things is made known to man by revealing to him what is written there through the reflection of these truths in the mirror of the heart (*qolb*). Hence, creativity can be a serendipitous discovery of something that is novel, useful, and surprising.

7. CONCLUSION

Creating art is like a dream and a vision to be made clear. The perspicuous Quranic text provides access to knowledge and understanding by imbuing the hearts with a firm belief on the articles of faith that also sets the foundation for instructions and emergent skills. The artist focuses on the Arcadian collectedness in contemplation towards achieving God's grace with the hope of attaining the vision of inspiration. Osman Bakar (1998), in viewing Al-Farabi, has indicated that man gains knowledge either through the rational faculty, the imaginative faculty, or sensation. Allah SWT has given man the emergent properties of knowledge that match with the growing human consciousness for the right guidance which is necessary in making art. More comprehensive look into the relationships between divine inspiration (*ilham*) and the heart (*qolb*) with the appropriate practices that kindle creativity in character design is valuable to further encourage artists to exercise the praxis in interpreting and adapting discursive descriptions from classical narratives for character design.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

MAA is the creator and artist of '*liga pendekar*' comic book series who also performed the initial research and introduction, methodology, discussion, and conclusion of the article. HR provides support in the refining of the organisation, analysis and discussions of the article. VZ refines the literature review, discussion, language structure, and line editing of the article. All authors contributed, read and approved the final manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

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