



Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts

**A Comparative Study on the Visual Styles of Kelantan and Shaanxi
Shadow Puppets**

Cheng Xiaochun

**Doctor of Philosophy
2025**

DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL WORK

This declaration is made on the **FIRST** day of **MAY** year **2025**

Student's Declaration:

I **CHENG XIAOCHUN, 19010077, FACULTY OF APPLIED AND CREATIVE ARTS** hereby declare that the work entitled, **A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE VISUAL STYLES OF KELANTAN AND SHAANXI SHADOW PUPPETS** is my original work. I have not copied from any other students' work or from any other sources with the exception where due reference or acknowledgement is made explicitly in the text, nor has any part of the work been written for me by another person.



Date submitted **1 May 2025**

CHENG XIAOCHUN, 19010077

Supervisor's Declaration:

I, **DR MUSDI BIN HAJI SHANAT**, hereby certify that the work entitled, **A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE VISUAL STYLES OF KELANTAN AND SHAANXI SHADOW PUPPETS** was prepared by the aforementioned or above mentioned student, and was submitted to the "FACULTY" as a * ~~partial~~/full fulfillment for the conferment of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**, and the aforementioned work, to the best of my knowledge, is the said student's work



Prof. Dr Musdi Hj. Shanat
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

Received for examination by: **P R O F . D R M U S D I B I N H A J I**
S H A N A T Date: **1 May, 2025**

I declare this Project/Thesis is classified as (Please tick (√)):

CONFIDENTIAL (Contains confidential information under the Official Secret Act 1972)*

RESTRICTED (Contains restricted information as specified by the organisation where research was done)*

OPEN ACCESS

I declare this Project/Thesis is to be submitted to the Centre for Academic Information Services and uploaded into UNIMAS Institutional Repository (UNIMAS IR).


Validation Project/ Thesis

I hereby duly affirmed with free consent and willingness declared that this said Project/Thesis shall be placed officially in the Centre for Academic Information Services with the abide interest and rights as follows:

- This Project/Thesis is the sole legal property of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS).
- The Centre for Academic Information Services has the lawful right to make copies of the Project/Thesis for academic and research purposes only and not for other purposes.
- The Centre for Academic Information Services has the lawful right to digitize the content to be uploaded into Local Content Database.
- The Centre for Academic Information Services has the lawful right to make copies of the Project/Thesis if required for use by other parties for academic purposes or by other Higher Learning Institutes.
- No dispute or any claim shall arise from the student himself / herself neither a third party on this Project/Thesis once it becomes the sole property of UNIMAS.
- This Project/Thesis or any material, data and information related to it shall not be distributed, published or disclosed to any party by the student himself/herself without first obtaining approval from UNIMAS.



Student's signature _____
(**CHENG XIAOCHUN**)
1 MAY 2025



Prof. Dr Musdi Hj. Shanat
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

Supervisor's signature
(**PROF. DR MUSDI BIN HAJI SHANAT**)
1 MAY 2025

Current Address: **D/A Prof. Dr Musdi Shanat, Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, UNIMAS, 93400 Kota Samarahan, SARAWAK**

Notes: * If the Project/Thesis is **CONFIDENTIAL** or **RESTRICTED**, please attach together as annexure a letter from the organisation with the date of restriction indicated, and the reasons for the confidentiality and restriction.

[The instrument was prepared by The Centre for Academic Information Services]

A Comparative Study on the Visual Styles of Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow
Puppets

Cheng Xiaochun

A thesis submitted

In fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

(Arts Management)

Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

2025

DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Except where due acknowledgements have been made, the work is that of the author alone. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.



.....

Signature

Name: Cheng Xiaochun

Matric No.: 19010077

Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Date : May, 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis has been accomplished with the invaluable support and encouragement from numerous individuals, including my supervisor, friends, and family. As I conclude this academic endeavour, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to the completion of this thesis, providing me with an unforgettable experience.

Foremost, I extend my deepest appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Dr. Musdi bin Hj Shanat. Without his guidance, support, and encouragement, the accomplishment of this work would have been an insurmountable challenge. Despite his responsibilities as the dean, he consistently offered valuable insights, and through our discussions, I gained a wealth of knowledge.

Next, I would like to thank my friends who provided unwavering support throughout this thesis journey. Special appreciation goes to Dr. Boey Tek Soon, Mr. Khoo Cheng Aik, Shadow play master Mr. Wang Biao and Mr. Yang Yi, Tok Dlang Eyo Hock Seng, and Mohd Jufry Yusoff. I am truly grateful for the collaborative efforts and the enriching experiences shared with each of them.

My sincere gratitude to the Centre for Graduate Studies, for the advice and support given during my period of study in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

Finally, I would like to thank the management of the Universiti Malaysia Sarawak for making it possible for me to complete my studies here in Sarawak.

ABSTRACT

This research aims to compare the shadow puppets in Kelantan, Malaysia and Shaanxi, China by providing new insights into the preservation and development of this traditional art form through cross-cultural comparative analyses using qualitative and inductive methods along with elements and principles of design, Iconography, Cultural Anthropology, and Gestalt theory. The objectives of this research are to (1) analyse the visual style variations in shadow puppets from these two regions, (2) investigate how social and cultural influences the shadow puppets in these two regions and (3) explore ways of emphasizing cultural identity in a globalized context. The research unfolds in four phases. First, is the historical and cultural review which explores the craftsmanship, performance, carving techniques, stage settings, and storytelling styles. Followed by an examination of the visual elements and design principles in both regions, analysing changes in styles, investigating societal and cultural influences, and exploring approaches emphasizing cultural identity in the context of globalization. Contributions encompassed innovative research methods revealing influences on visual styles, with findings highlighting disparities in cultural contexts, carving techniques, visual styles, and cultural influences between Kelantan and Shaanxi. The study underscored cultural diversity preservation, advocating augmented and virtual reality use, and adapting traditional visual art to contemporary contexts. It offers key insights into visual styles, diversity preservation, and interdisciplinary research. Recommendations suggest exploring intangible cultural heritage conservation and expanding research methods to understand cultural differences in traditional art.

Keywords: Kelantan's shadow puppet, Shaanxi's shadow puppet, Shadow plays, Iconography, Visual style

Kajian Perbandingan Gaya Visual Boneka Bayangan Kelantan dan Shaanxi

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan wayang kulit di Kelantan, Malaysia dan Shaanxi, China melalui analisis perbandingan silang budaya dengan menggunakan kaedah kualitatif dan induktif berserta elemen dan prinsip rekaan, Ikonografi, Antropologi Budaya, dan teori Gestalt. Objektif penyelidikan ini adalah untuk (1) menganalisis variasi gaya visual dalam wayang kulit dari kedua-dua wilayah, (2) mengenalpasti bagaimana sosial dan budaya mempengaruhi rekaan wayang kulit di kedua-dua wilayah dan (3) meneroka cara untuk mengketengahkan identiti budaya dalam konteks globali. Penyelidikan dijalankan dalam empat fasa. Fasa pertama adalah melalui tinjauan sejarah dan budaya yang meneroka penghasilan seni kraf wayang kulit, persembahan, teknik, ukiran, penyediaan pentas, dan gaya penceritaan. Sumbangan penyelidikan ini merangkumi kaedah penyelidikan inovatif yang mendedahkan pengaruh pada gaya visual, dengan penemuan menyerlahkan perbezaan dalam konteks budaya, teknik ukiran, gaya visual dan pengaruh budaya antara Kelantan dan Shaanxi. Kajian itu menekankan pemeliharaan kepelbagaian budaya, menyokong penggunaan realiti tambahan dan maya, serta menyesuaikan seni visual tradisional kepada konteks kontemporari. Ia menawarkan pandangan utama ke dalam gaya visual, pemeliharaan kepelbagaian dan penyelidikan antara disiplin. Kajian ini mencadangkan penerokaan pemuliharaan warisan budaya tidak ketara dan meluaskan kaedah penyelidikan untuk memahami perbezaan budaya dalam seni tradisional.

Kata kunci: *Wayang kulit Kelantan, Wayang kulit Shaanxi, persembahan wayang kulit, ikonograf, gaya visual*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
<i>ABSTRAK</i>	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Overview	1
1.2 Research Background	2
1.3 Problem Statement	5
1.4 Research Questions	6
1.5 Research Objectives	7
1.5.1 General Objective	7
1.5.2 Specific Objectives	7
1.6 Scope of the Study	8
1.7 Limitation of Study	10
1.8 Significance of Study	11

1.9	Structure of Thesis	12
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW		14
2.1	Overview of Shadow Play	14
2.2	Origin of Shadow Play	16
2.2.1	Turkish Shadow Play	17
2.2.2	Indian Shadow Play	19
2.2.3	Malaysian and Indonesian Shadow Play	20
2.2.4	Chinese Shadow Play	21
2.3	Cultural Tradition of Shadow Play	23
2.3.1	Cultural Tradition of Malaysian Shadow Play	24
2.3.2	Cultural Tradition of Chinese Shadow Play	26
2.4	Religious Context of Shadow Play	28
2.4.1	The Influence of Animism on Kelantan Shadow Play	28
2.4.2	The Influence of Hinduism on Kelantan Shadow Play	30
2.4.3	Religious context of Chinese shadow play	31
2.4.4	Comparison of Religious Context and Cultural Tradition	32
2.5	Shadow Play in Contemporary Society	34
2.6	Theoretical Framework	37
2.6.1	Cultural Anthropology	38
2.6.2	Iconography	39

2.6.3	Elements and Principles of Arts	40
2.6.4	Gestalt Theory	40
2.7	Chapter Summary	41
CHAPTER 3	METHODOLOGY	43
3.1	Overview	43
3.2	Qualitative Research in The Research	45
3.3	Research Plan	47
3.3.1	Phase One: Reviewing the History of Shadow Play in Malaysia and China	48
3.3.2	Phase Two: Sampling Technique and Data Sources	49
3.3.3	The Sampling Technique	50
3.3.4	Data Sources	51
3.3.5	Phase Three: Comparative Study	54
3.3.6	Phase Four: Application of Shadow Puppets Visual Styles	55
3.4	Research Approach	57
3.4.1	Library-based Study	57
3.4.2	Observation	58
3.4.3	Interview	60
3.4.4	Case Study	64
3.4.5	Comparative Study	65
3.5	Chapter Summary	67

CHAPTER 4	DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION	69
4.1	Overview	69
4.2	Craftsmanship of Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	70
4.2.1	Craftsmanship of Kelantan Shadow Puppets	70
4.2.2	Craftsmanship of Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	73
4.2.3	Comparative Analysis of Shadow Craftsmanship in the Two Regions	76
4.3	Shadow Play Performance of Kelantan and Shaanxi	78
4.3.1	Shadow Play Performance of Kelantan	78
4.3.2	Shadow Play Performance of Shaanxi	83
4.3.3	Comparative Analysis of the Shadow Play Performance in the Two Regions	85
4.4	Visual Elements in Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	86
4.4.1	The Screening Process	87
4.4.2	Extraction of Key Visual Elements	93
4.4.3	Classification of Visual Elements in Shadow Puppets	94
4.4.4	Line	95
4.4.5	Shape	99
4.4.6	Colour	103
4.4.7	Space	111

4.4.8	Comparative Analysis of Visual Elements in Shadow Puppets of Two Regions	114
4.5	Gestalt Theory & Principles of Design in Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	115
4.5.1	Categories of Principles of Design	116
4.5.2	Gestalt Theory Applied in the Principles of Design of Shadow Puppets in Two Regions	117
4.5.3	Similarity and Proximity	119
4.5.4	Continuity and Repetition	121
4.5.5	Law of Closure	123
4.5.6	Figure - Ground	126
4.5.7	Symmetry and Balance	129
4.5.8	Law of Common Fate	130
4.6	Visual Style of Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	131
4.6.1	Features of the Figure	133
4.6.2	Multi-angle Perspective	136
4.6.3	Characteristics of the Pattern	140
4.7	Cultural Anthropology and the Socio-Cultural Context of Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Play	142
4.7.1	Cultural Anthropology in the Visual Style Research	143

4.7.2	Influence of Folk Art Traditions on Shadow Puppets Visual Style in the Two Regions	143
4.7.3	Thai Nora Dance and Kelantan Shadow Puppets	144
4.7.4	Indian, Balinese and Kelantan Shadows Puppets	146
4.7.5	The Stone Carvings and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	147
4.7.6	The Murals and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	149
4.8	A Case Study - Adopting Iconography in the Study of Traditional Folk Art Form	150
4.8.1	Description– Pre-Iconography	152
4.8.2	Analysis - Iconography	153
4.8.3	Interpretation –Iconology	154
4.9	Endeavours to Revitalise Traditional Art Forms in the Modern Era	156
4.9.1	Adapting Traditional Storytelling Characters, and Themes	158
4.9.2	Integrating Shadow Puppet into Contemporary Art	159
4.9.3	Boosting Shadow Play Entertainment by Innovative Technology	161
4.10	Chapter Summary	163
	CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	165
5.1	Overview	165
5.2	Summary of Research	165
5.3	Research Finding	167

5.4	Achieving the Research Objectives	169
5.4.1	Determining Visual Style Variations in Shadow Puppets from Kelantan and Shaanxi	169
5.4.2	Investigating How Social and Cultural Influences Intricately Mold the Visual Style	169
5.4.3	Exploring Ways of Emphasizing Cultural Identity in a Globalized Context	169
5.5	Contributions to the Body of Knowledge	170
5.5.1	Innovative Research Approach to Traditional Visual Art Form	171
5.5.2	Preserving Diversity for the Future	172
5.6	Suggestions for Further Research	173
	REFERENCES	175
	APPENDICES	189

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1.1: Research Questions and Objectives	8
Table 2.1: Comparison of Religious Context and Cultural Tradition	34
Table 3.1: Outline of the Open-ended Questionnaire	62
Table 3.2: Classification of Open-ended Questions for Interview	64
Table 4.1: Comparison of Shadow Puppet Craftsmanship	78
Table 4.2: Comparison of Shadow Play Performance	86
Table 4.3: 15 Samples of Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	88
Table 4.4: 15 Samples of Kelantan Shadow Puppets	91
Table 4.5: Comparison of the visual characteristics of the lines of Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow puppets	98
Table 4.6: Definition of Shape, Motif & Pattern	100
Table 4.7: Shape found on Kelantan Shadow Puppets	101
Table 4.8: Shape found on Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	101
Table 4.9: Colour Analysis of Kelantan ShadowPuppets	105
Table 4.10: Colour Analysis of Shaanxi ShadowPuppets	106
Table 4.11: Analysis on the Proportion of Colours used.	109
Table 4.12: Gestalt Laws of Grouping & the Principles of Design	118

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 2.1: The Four Types of Shadow Play	17
Figure 2.2: Classification of Chinese shadow play	22
Figure 2.3: Digital 3D Puppet Animation	35
Figure 2.4: Wang Biao's Shadow Puppet Museum on Google Art and Culture	36
Figure 2.5: Theoretical framework of the Research	38
Figure 3.1: The Research Plan	48
Figure 3.2: Types of Data in the Research	51
Figure 4.1: The "Locust Teeth" Motif of Siti Dewi	71
Figure 4.2: The Assembly of Kelantan Shadow Puppet	73
Figure 4.3: Interview with Wang Biao	74
Figure 4.4: The Assembly of Shaanxi Shadow Puppet	76
Figure 4.5: A typical shadow play stage in Kelantan in the 1950s	79
Figure 4.6: Interview with Tok Dalang Eyo Hock Seng	81
Figure 4.7: Interview with Tok Dalang Jufry	82
Figure 4.8: The Data Analysis Process Flow	94
Figure 4.9: The Lines used in Kelantan shadow puppets.	96
Figure 4.10: The Lines used in Shaanxi shadow puppets.	97
Figure 4.11: Capture from Rama Shoots Through 40 Palm Trees	108
Figure 4.12: Capture from Heavenly Guards Blessing	108
Figure 4.13: The Head bolt of Caocao (left) and Guanyu (right) from Romance of Three Kingdoms	112
Figure 4.14: A Detailed Pictorial of Siti Dewi	113
Figure 4.15: A Detail Depiction of <i>Lakshmana</i>	113

Figure 4.16: The Sarong of Siti Dewi	120
Figure 4.17: The Design Elements of Sarong of Siti Dewi	120
Figure 4.18: The Fascinating Colour of <i>Maharaja Wana</i>	121
Figure 4.19: The Character named <i>Jinn</i> from the Epic Tale of <i>Ramayana</i>	122
Figure 4.20: Examples of Frieze Patterns and The Block Patterns	123
Figure 4.21: The Head of <i>Sun Wukong</i> (Monkey King)	124
Figure 4.22: A Supernatural Being	125
Figure 4.23: The Confined Pattern on the Monkey King's Costume	126
Figure 4.24: "Birds and Fish" by Maurice Escher in 1960, the Dutch Tile Museum in Otero	127
Figure 4.25: The Part of <i>Guanyu</i> 's Head	128
Figure 4.26: The Scenery Board	129
Figure 4.27: Kelantan Shadow Puppet Jentayu Showing Strong Principles of Symmetry and Balance	130
Figure 4.28 : Shaanxi Shadow Puppet, <i>Lei Zhenshi</i> (deity)	131
Figure 4.29: The Body Proportions of Shadow Puppet	134
Figure 4.30: The Simplified Outline of Shadow Puppets showing their Articulated Parts	136
Figure 4.31: Multi-angle Perspective Applied in the Construct of Shadow Puppets	138
Figure 4.32: Comparison of the Kelantan Shadow Puppet with an Egyptian Tomb Painting	139
Figure 4.33: The Comparison of <i>Nora</i> 's Costume and Kelantan's Shadow Puppet Styling	146
Figure 4.34: Comparison of Visual Styles in Indian, Kelantan and Javanese Shadow Puppets	147
Figure 4.35: A Stylistic Comparison between the Stone Carving and the Shadow Puppet of China	148
Figure 4.36: Comparison of the strokes and colors of the murals and shadow scenes of the <i>Yongle</i> Palace	150

Figure 4.37: Seri Rama	152
Figure 4.38: <i>Siri Rama's</i> feet	156
Figure 4.39: Works of Fusion WK	159
Figure 4.40: Gallery of Fusion WK	159
Figure 4.41: Continuum-Generation by Generation Exhibition	160
Figure 4.42: Shadow Play Interactive Game Experience on Site	162
Figure 4.43: Interactive Wayang Kulit 360 °Experience Project	162

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This research explores the visual styles of shadow puppets in Kelantan, Malaysia, and Shaanxi, China, with a focus on exploring the nuanced artistic expressions shaped by distinct cultural backgrounds. The analysis unfolds within the dual framework of comparative research and specific thematic exploration, aiming to reveal the rich artistic tapestry encapsulated in the traditional art form of shadow puppets in these two regions.

The visual styles of shadow puppets, such as form, colour, pattern, and ornamentation, are highly rich. Serving as a folklore culture in miniature, shadow puppets provide a unique lens for comprehending the cultural influences and aesthetic preferences of both regions. This research employs a cross-cultural comparative research approach, integrating inductive and comparative analyses and drawing on theoretical perspectives from design, cultural anthropology, and iconography. The primary goal is to uncover the unique artistic characteristics across diverse cultural contexts via shadow puppets in Kelantan and Shaanxi. Special attention is devoted to exploring how these visual styles integrate with modern culture and cutting-edge technology, as well as how they contribute to the establishment of cultural identity through the recognition of national visual symbols in the era of globalization—an unexplored field in academia, especially in arts and culture.

The study commences with a comprehensive literature review to establish a holistic understanding of the traditions and developments in shadow play in the selected two regions. Subsequently, a detailed analysis of the visual elements, including making

techniques, performance styles, and visual aesthetics, were conducted. This exploration spans from specific visual elements to the application of design principles, aiming to delve into the similarities and differences in visual characteristics. Concurrently, through an iconographic case study, an investigation into cultural influences, religious aspects, and the impact of other art forms would unfold, shedding light on how these factors manifest in the visual expressions of shadow puppets.

Through a comprehensive examination of visual styles and cultural influences, this research aims to provide valuable comparative insights into the traditional arts of Kelantan and Shaanxi, offering both theoretical and practical revelations for cultural heritage preservation. The ultimate objective is to propose viable solutions for the purpose of safeguarding cultural diversity, enhancing cultural identity, and mitigating cultural erosion in the era of cultural globalization.

1.2 Research Background

The research background of this study is not only concerned with the challenges of traditional arts in the context of globalization, but also pays special attention to shadow puppet as a marginalized traditional visual art form.

In today's wave of globalization, traditional folk art is facing both new opportunities and unprecedented challenges in the face of its uniqueness and cultural values (Anufrieva et al., 2015). With the evolution of social structures and values, as well as the rise of modern technology and entertainment culture, the survival and development of traditional art forms have become increasingly complex. According to Lufkin (2016), in the last century, the conflict between modern culture and traditional folk art has become a prominent focus. The rapid globalization of modern entertainment has exacerbated the

conflict. Traditional arts uphold a long history, deep cultural connotations, and social identity, while modern entertainment focuses on novelty, excitement and rapid dissemination. The collision between the two creates a cultural tension that makes traditional art appear more marginal in the modern entertainment-dominated era.

The increase in global cultural interaction has led to the interpretation and influence of visual styles across cultures. Rodil et al., (2012) provided an example of a young Western designer who accepted the challenge to work with local designers and active collaborators from traditional villages, together with community members (elders and youth) to design a 3D graphics visualization of a small village in Southern Africa. This is a brilliant example of cultural interaction. This cultural exchange may also lead to the loss and integration of traditional visual elements, posing a potential threat to the identity of traditional art forms. Against this background, we need to have a deep understanding of the impact of globalization on traditional art forms, especially the challenges posed in terms of visual expression and cultural heritage.

Kozbelt (2016) and Eijck (2012) stated that changes in socio-cultural factors have a profound impact on the visual expression of traditional art, and changes in religion, social structures and values could all cause visual styles to evolve within traditional art forms. An in-depth understanding of how these socio-cultural factors affect the visual expression of traditional art is essential to ensure that traditional art maintains its fundamental identity as it evolves. This also makes it necessary for researchers to explore the ways in which these underlying cultural changes shape traditional art forms in their studies.

Traditional arts need to find new ways to maintain their appeal and attract the attention of younger generation. This study explores how we can breathe new life into

traditional art and make it better suited to the needs of modern society, through the integration of virtual reality and augmented reality technologies, as well as the combination of contemporary narrative techniques and installation art. In this broader research context, our focus on traditional art becomes clearer. This fusion of technology and tradition can not only stimulate artistic innovation but also meet the expectations of contemporary audiences for diversity and interactivity.

At the international level, according to the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, Nov 2, 2001), inheritance and development are regarded as the main tasks of the preservation of cultural diversity whereby the international community has begun to pay attention to the preservation of shadow theatre as a cultural heritage. UNESCO has listed shadow puppetry of five countries as the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, namely Indonesia and Cambodia in 2008, Turkey in 2009, Syrian Arab Republic in 2018, and China. Chinese shadow puppetry has been added on to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity in 2011 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, n.d.), which reflects the international recognition of this traditional art. While in Malaysia, a scholar from the Universiti Kuala Lumpur Malaysian Institute of Information Technology (UniKL, n.d.) received a grant from UNESCO to digitally preserve Malaysian shadow play puppetry or the *Wayang kulit*, which was also listed as the National Intangible Heritage of Malaysia in 2007 (*Jabatan Warisan Negara*, Nov 6, 2023). The Tourism and Culture Minister at the time, Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz told reporters after the launch of the “Wayang Kulit Nusantara: Symbolism Behind the Screen” exhibition at the National Museum in 2016 that Malaysia's *Wayang kulit*, has its own distinct characteristics.