UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

CREATA 2026

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on CREATIVE PRACTICES in FILM, THEATRE and ANIMATION

Theme

Innovation, Culture, and Collaboration in the CREATIVE ARTS

PROCEEDINGS

3rd & 4th FEBRUARY 2026

HYBRID | Online & Physical

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA | Fakulti Filem, Teater dan Animasi

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA | Institut Seni Kreatif Nusantara

Visual Adaptation of Dayak Ngaju Mythology and Ornamentation into Fantasy-Styled Character Illustrations for Card Games

[1] Ajeng Tita Negoro, [2]* Samuel Gandang Gunanto, [3] Nurhadi Nurhadi, [4] Akhmad Syaiful Anwar and [5] Ginanjar Setyo Nugroho

[1] Department of Visual Communication Design, Telkom University Purwokerto, Indonesia
ajeng.tita@ittelkom-pwt.ac.id

[2] Department of Animation, Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta, Indonesia
gandang@isi.ac.id

[3] Department of Animation, Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta, Indonesia
hadi@isi.ac.id

[4] Department of Animation, Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta, Indonesia
anwar@isi.ac.id

[5] Department of Animation, Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta, Indonesia
ginanjar@isi.ac.id

Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

The visual elements of the Dayak Ngaju tribe, ranging from traditional weapons such as the *Mandau* and *Talawang*, sacred tattoo motifs, to traditional house architecture, hold tremendous potential for adaptation into the modern creative industry. This research focuses on the visual adaptation process of Dayak Ngaju mythological elements and ornamentation into character illustrations for high-fantasy Trading Card Games (TCG). The creative process employs Digital Painting techniques with a semi-realist cartoon visual style to align with the preferences of teenage audiences and current gaming industry standards. This study explores the integration of authentic cultural attributes with imaginative elements to visualize legendary figures such as *Bawi Kuwu*, *Raja Jata*, and *Sangiang*, along with other mythological creatures. The design stages include visual cultural reference studies, thumbnail sketching, rough coloring, and final rendering. The design results demonstrate that the integration of traditional ornamentation with fantasy visual styles can create characters that are unique, dynamic, and possess a strong cultural identity without losing their original essence.

Keywords: *Visual Adaptation, Digital Painting, Fantasy Illustration, Dayak Ngaju Ornamentation, Character Design.*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a nation rich in ethnic diversity and culture, where this cultural richness and uniqueness can serve as fascinating research subjects to be developed and preserved from being lost to time. One tribe that possesses profound cultural wealth and mythology is the Dayak Ngaju (*Ot Danum*) tribe in Central Kalimantan. This tribe holds strong beliefs in *Ranying Hatalla Langit* as the Creator and firmly upholds *Tetek Tatum* as their origin story and life guidance (Riwut, 2003).

The Dayak Ngaju tribe is known for its beautiful art, which includes decorative patterns of *Batang Garing*, traditional weapons like the *Mandau* and *Talawang*, and tattoos that have deep meanings (Larasati et al., 2014). The symbol of *Batang Garing*, or the Tree of Life, is believed to represent the *Kaharingan* religion and *Ranying Hatalla Langit* as the source of all life, symbolizing the balance between humans and their fellow beings, nature, and God (Mirim, 2018).

However, the visual elements and mythological narratives of Dayak Ngaju are gradually eroding and becoming less familiar to younger generations amid the onslaught of modernization and the dominance of foreign media (Maunati, 2006). Therefore, creative approaches are needed to preserve and introduce this visual wealth. Trading Card Games (TCG) were chosen as the primary medium due to their strong appeal among teenagers and adults as both a hobby and international competition (Marshall et al., 2010). Character illustrations in TCGs serve as the main attraction and are capable of conveying powerful narratives.

The focus of this research is on the visual adaptation process of Dayak Ngaju mythological elements and ornamentation into high-fantasy character illustrations that align with teenage market preferences. The use of attractive and relevant visual styles is key to ensuring this TCG can be accepted by the target audience and effectively transfer cultural values through modern aesthetics.

The use of TCG media to introduce Dayak Ngaju folklore with a fantasy genre also represents an effort to maintain and preserve local culture from being eroded by foreign influences. The objective of this research is to design visual assets and TCG character illustrations by adapting Dayak Ngaju tribe mythology into a high-fantasy style using Digital Painting techniques, thereby producing visual media that are unique, engaging, and culturally identifiable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Visual Concept and Design Techniques

The applied visual concept is a semi-realist cartoon style with a high-fantasy genre. This style selection is based on analysis results concluding that it best suits the preferences of the target audience (teenagers and card game hobby enthusiasts) and modern gaming industry standards.

The technique employed in visual production is Digital Painting, utilizing hardware such as Pen Tablets and primary software including Adobe Photoshop CC and PaintTool SAI. This process encompasses stages of thumbnail sketching, rough coloring, and detailed rendering to produce high-quality illustrations.

Adaptation of Mythology into Character Design

The visualization process begins with identifying mythological figures from Dayak Ngaju folklore (Iper, 2009). These figures are then interpreted into fantasy visual attributes:

1. **Bawi Kuwu (The Secluded Maiden):** Visualized with strong Nature attributes, wearing attire that represents the natural beauty of Kalimantan.
2. **Jata (Water Deity/Crocodile King):** Adapted as a character leading the water faction. His illustration combines human form with crocodile scales and the Mandau weapon, reflecting his power and origins in the Rungan River.
3. **Sangiang (Sky Deity):** Depicted as a spiritual leader (Ruler) with golden ornamentation and sky symbols, consistent with his position as the ruler of the upper realm in Dayak Ngaju beliefs (Riwut, 2003).

Integration of Ornamentation and Cultural Symbolism

Traditional Dayak Ngaju ornamentation is integrated in detail into character designs and game assets to maintain cultural identity (Wijono, 1998):

1. **Batang Garing:** Used as the primary element in the Logotype and back card design to represent the Tree of Life philosophy of the Dayak tribe.
2. **Weapons and Attributes:** The Mandau, Talawang, and Lunju (spear) are accurately depicted as primary weapons, yet given fantasy visual effects (such as auras or magical elements) to align with the high-fantasy genre.
3. **Attribute Icons:** Card type icons (Nature, Fighter, Ruler, Shaman) are designed by incorporating distinctive Kalimantan symbols, such as the Nature icon featuring the Hornbill bird.

CONCLUSION

This research successfully concludes that the visual adaptation of Dayak Ngaju tribe mythology and ornamentation into fantasy-styled character illustrations for TCG represents an effective Visual Communication Design strategy. Through Digital Painting techniques and semi-realist cartoon style, rich traditional cultural elements (as found in collections of Dayak Ngaju folklore) (Iper, 2009) can be transformed into visual assets that are attractive, modern, and competitive in the TCG market (Marshall et al., 2010).

The integration of ornamentation and symbolism (such as *Batang Garing*) into character and card designs successfully creates a product with a strong cultural identity. Thus, this medium is expected to function as a preservation tool that attracts younger generations to learn about the visual heritage and narratives of the Dayak Ngaju tribe.

REFERENCES

Iper, D. (2009). *Cerita Rakyat Daerah Kalimantan Tengah dalam Bahasa Dayak Ngaju – Indonesia 1* [Central Kalimantan Regional Folklore in Dayak Ngaju Language – Indonesia 1]. CV. Anugerah Indah Mandiri.

Larasati, Gladiola R., and Zaini Rais. (2014). Teknik Anyam dan Motif Dayak Ngaju pada Material Kulit untuk Produk Tas [Weaving Techniques and Dayak Ngaju Motifs on Leather Material for Bag Products]. *Craft, vol. 3, no. 1*. https://www.neliti.com/id/publications/242869/teknik-anyam-dan-motif-dayak-ngaju-pada-mate rial-kulit-untuk-produk-tas

Marshall, D., et al. (2010). *Trading Card Game Industry, From the T to the C to the G*. SuperData Research, Inc.

Maunati, Y. (2006). *Identitas Dayak, Komodifikasi dan Politik Kebudayaan* [Dayak Identity, Commodification and Cultural Politics]. LKIS.

Mirim, Sudiman. (2018). Batang Haring: Sebuah Kajian Mitologi, Fungsi dan Makna [Batang Haring: A Study of Mythology, Function and Meaning]. *Jurnal Widya Katambung 9(1), 1-11*. https://ejournal.iahntp.ac.id/index.php/WK/article/view/313

Riwut, N. (2003). *Tjilik Riwut Sanaman Mantikei: Manaser Panatan Tatu Hiang, Menyelami Kekayaan Leluhur* [Tjilik Riwut Sanaman Mantikei: Manaser Panatan Tatu Hiang, Exploring Ancestral Wealth]. Pusaka Lima.

Wijono, A. M. Z. (1998). *Masyarakat Dayak Menatap Hari Esok* [Dayak Society Looking Toward Tomorrow]. Grasindo.