

## THE RECONTEXTUALIZATION OF PARANG RUSAK BARONG BATIK INTO ANIMATED CHARACTERS

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### ABSTRACT

Recontextualization is a process of adaptation that seeks to revitalize traditional concepts within a modern framework, enhancing their accessibility and relevance to contemporary audiences. By adapting cultural artifacts into new forms, this approach contributes to the sustained vitality of valuable traditions. This research focuses on Parang Rusak Barong batik, a royal batik motif from the Yogyakarta Palace (Keraton Yogyakarta) classified as *batik larangan*, or restricted batik. This batik is exclusively reserved for the Sultan and is not permitted to be worn by the general public. While aesthetically significant, the motif's cultural value risks diminishing due to its limited public exposure. To address this concern, this study proposes a recontextualization of the Parang Rusak Barong batik motif into an animated character, aiming to engage broader audiences, particularly younger generations. This character design will feature in Mira and the Batik Fairy episode 2, this animation will explore the meaning and proper usage of Parang Rusak Barong batik. This research employs a qualitative method combining observation and literature review to examine how traditional batik visual elements can be translated into animated character design. The character design method was carried out by determining the art style spectrum, writing the character's background story, creating a moodboard, and producing the character design. The resulting character, Wasis, is intended to embody the cultural essence of Parang Rusak Barong in a contemporary, relatable format.

**Keywords:** animated character, batik larangan, parang rusak barong batik, recontextualization

### ABSTRAK

**Rekontekstualisasi Motif Batik Parang Rusak Barong ke dalam Karakter Animasi.** Rekontekstualisasi merupakan proses adaptasi yang bertujuan untuk menghidupkan kembali konsep tradisional dalam kerangka modern, sehingga meningkatkan aksesibilitas dan relevansinya bagi khalayak kontemporer. Dengan mengadaptasi artefak budaya ke dalam bentuk baru, pendekatan ini berkontribusi pada kelestarian tradisi-tradisi berharga. Penelitian ini berfokus pada batik Parang Rusak Barong, salah satu motif batik larangan dari Keraton Yogyakarta yang secara eksklusif diperuntukkan bagi Sultan dan tidak diizinkan dikenakan oleh masyarakat umum. Meskipun memiliki nilai estetika yang tinggi, nilai budaya motif ini berisiko mengalami kemunduran akibat keterbatasan eksposur kepada publik. Untuk mengatasi permasalahan tersebut, penelitian ini mengajukan upaya rekontekstualisasi motif Parang Rusak Barong ke dalam bentuk karakter animasi, dengan tujuan menjangkau audiens yang lebih luas, khususnya generasi muda. Karakter ini akan ditampilkan dalam episode kedua animasi *Mira and the Batik Fairy*, yang mengeksplorasi makna serta penggunaan yang tepat dari batik Parang Rusak Barong. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan kombinasi observasi dan studi pustaka untuk mengkaji bagaimana elemen visual batik tradisional dapat diterjemahkan ke dalam desain karakter animasi. Metode perancangan karakter dilakukan melalui penentuan spektrum gaya visual, penulisan latar belakang karakter, pembuatan moodboard, dan produksi desain karakter. Karakter yang dihasilkan bernama *Wasis*, dianggap dapat mewujudkan esensi budaya batik Parang Rusak Barong dalam format yang kontemporer dan mudah diterima oleh generasi masa kini.

**Kata kunci:** karakter animasi, batik larangan, batik Parang Rusak Barong, rekontekstualisasi

## INTRODUCTION

Batik Parang Rusak Barong is not just any batik motif, but it is also a symbol of leadership and responsibility of Sultan, deeply rooted in the traditions of the Yogyakarta Palace (*Keraton Yogyakarta*). This batik reserved exclusively for the Sultan, thus, this motif embodies a sense of reverence and exclusivity. Sultan Hamengku Buwono VIII himself established the rules restricting the use of this pattern, making them part of the *batik larangan* (restricted batik) which is batik patterns that is forbidden for common/ general use (Kusrianto, 2013).

However, this exclusivity comes with a cost. As it remains distanced from everyday life, the public grows less connected to its beauty and significance. Without active efforts to bridge this gap, the cultural values carried by Batik Parang Rusak Barong risk fading into obscurity. This is especially true among younger generations, who may perceive batik as something outdated or irrelevant to modern life.

To address this, adaptation emerges as a powerful tool. By reimagining this motif in new and engaging ways, its rich history and meaning can be shared with wider audiences. Adaptation, however, is more than just transferring an artifact from its traditional form to a digital medium (reformatting). Hutcheon (2013) describes adaptation as an activity that goes beyond mere transposition into “transmedia or transcode,” where traditional ideas are reimagined in ways that feel fresh and relevant. While the primary goal of transposition is to make a work easier to distribute, consume, and archive, adaptation seeks to breathe new life into the original material, allowing it to resonate with contemporary audiences.

Adaptation is a powerful way to preserve culture, as it helps carry the meanings and values of traditional artifacts into new contexts,

ensuring they remain relevant and appreciated. When adapting an artifact across media, the chosen medium plays a crucial role in shaping how the reinterpretation and recontextualization unfold. As Mitchell, quoted in Hutcheon (2013), says that the medium does not lie between sender and receiver, it includes and constitutes them. In other words, the new target medium, influences not only the presentation but also the message itself, as each medium has its unique characteristics and demands.

This study, for example, focuses on the recontextualization the Parang Rusak Barong batik motif as a character for 2D animation. This medium, known for its vibrant visuals and straightforward coloring techniques, is ideal for engaging young audiences. However, since 2D animation requires characters to be redrawn repeatedly to create movement, the design process must prioritize simplicity and efficiency. This approach would differ significantly if the mediums were comics or live-action films, where intricate details, textures, and complex coloring or rendering.

Before starting the design process, Hutcheon (2013) emphasizes the importance of understanding the context, whether visual, auditory, movement-related, narrative structure, and the underlying meaning of the original artifact. In this case, it is crucial to first delve into the philosophical meaning behind the Parang Rusak Barong batik from Yogyakarta. Only after gaining a thorough understanding of the batik’s symbolism and cultural significance can the adaptation process move forward to the stages of reinterpretation and recontextualization.

The reinterpretation process involves identifying and refining the meanings to be preserved and those that need to be adjusted to align with the target audience. It is essential for an adapter to understand the intended audience

for the adaptation, as the audience plays a critical role in shaping how an adaptation is conceptualized and executed. As Hutcheon (2013) emphasizes, knowing audiences bring different information to their interpretations of adaptations.

The final stage, recontextualization, involves designing a new medium (form) while retaining the essential meaning (idea) identified during the reinterpretation process. This step ensures that the core values of the original artifact are preserved in a way that resonates with the intended audience.

According to Kusrianto (2013), the term *parang* in batik *parang* originates from the word *pereng* or *lereng*, which refers to a slope or a diagonal/ tilted land structure caused by differences in elevation. The Batik Parang Rusak Barong motif was initially created by Panembahan Senopati, the first king of Mataram. The ornamental elements in the Parang Rusak Barong motif are stylized forms derived from various natural shapes, such as birds, waves, and whirlpools. These elements are distilled

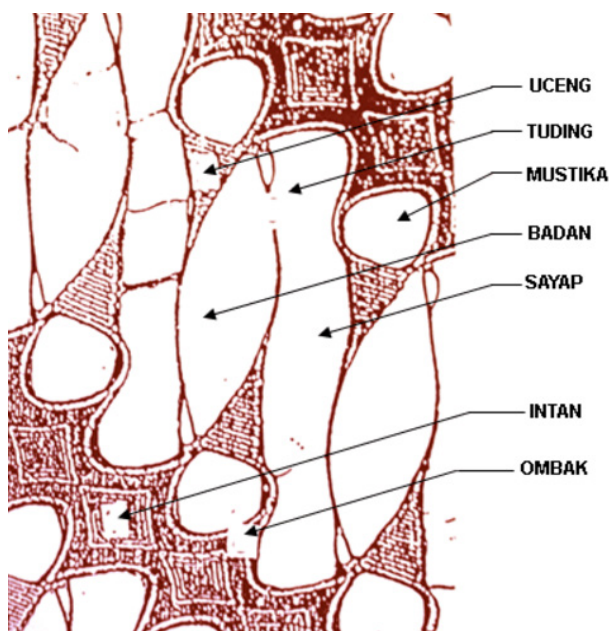


Figure 1. Batik Parang Rusak Barong  
(<https://www.goodnewsfromindonesia.id/2016/03/28/makna-batik-parang-yang-tak-sembarangan>, 2024)



Figure 2. Stylization of Bird Motifs in Parang Rusak Barong Batik  
(Kusrianto, 2013)

into diamond-like shapes known as *intan*, *blumbangan*, or *mlinjon* in Javanese, reflecting the intricate cultural and artistic significance of the motif.

The *uceng*, *tuding*, *badan*, and *sayap* motifs are stylized representations of a bird, each symbolizing the qualities of an ideal leader. The *uceng* motif reflects the ability to communicate effectively, *tuding* represents the capacity to provide guidance to the people, and the body (*badan*) and wings (*sayap*) motifs signify physical strength and mobility, essential traits for leading and supporting the community.



Figure 3. Barong/ Garuda in Parang Rusak Barong batik  
(<https://www.kratonjogja.id/kagungan-dalem/12-motif-batik-larangan-keraton-yogyakarta/>, 2024)

The bird element in this motif symbolizes attributes associated with fire, such as passion and strength, and is juxtaposed with the wave and diamond motifs, which represent the qualities of water for coolness and fluidity. The wave motif conveys the notion that, in the face of numerous challenges, a leader must demonstrate patience, resilience, and wisdom. The diamond (*mlinjon*) shape further embodies the leader's struggle, symbolizing the ability to remain steadfast in the midst of turmoil and to navigate through adversity to achieve their objectives.

The Barong motif in the Parang Rusak Barong batik symbolizes grandeur and strength, as it is a deformation of the Garuda bird, which is the mount of Lord Vishnu (the highest deity in Hinduism). The Garuda also serves as the national emblem of Indonesia, representing the motto "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" (Unity in Diversity).

## METHOD

The research employs a qualitative descriptive method, with data collected through literature review and observation. The adaptation process is grounded in Linda Hutcheon's (2013) adaptation theory, while the character design method follows the framework proposed by Bishop et al. (2020). According to Hutcheon, the adaptation process consists of three stages: 1) Contextualization; 2) Reinterpretation; 3) Recontextualization. According to Bishop et al. (2020) the process of designing character consists of four stages, they are: 1) Determining the Art Style Spectrum; 2) Describing Character Background; 3) Creating a Character's Moodboard; and last 4) Production Phase.

## DISCUSSION

According to Hutcheon (2013), the adaptation process consists of three stages:

1. Observation/ Contextualization – Examining the context of the object to be adapted.
2. Reinterpretation – Analyzing the subtext or meaning of the object being adapted. The researcher begins to reinterpret it to suit the needs of the target audience.
3. Recontextualization – Transforming the subtext of the object into a new form that retains a similar value or meaning to the original.

The adaptation process begins with the contextualization phase. During this phase, the researcher identifies and interprets the symbolic meanings embedded within the Parang Rusak Barong batik. This motif conveys the significance of self-control to develop noble character traits, which are essential for effective leadership. A leader is expected to demonstrate patience, resilience, and wisdom while exercising intelligence and self-regulation in the hard times.

The second phase is analysis and reinterpretation, where the researcher examines the underlying themes and meanings of the Parang Rusak Barong motif. The researcher put three keywords which describing the underlying meanings, they are strength, wisdom, and grandeur or self-control. Symbols such as the bird and the *mlinjon* (diamond-shape) are identified as representative of these qualities and will serve as foundational elements for the recontextualization process in the character designing phase.

The third phase focuses on the recontextualization process, which involves transcode the symbolic meanings of the Parang Rusak Barong motif into a new medium.



The character design process outlined by Bishop et al. (2020) involves several key stages:

1. Determining the Art Style Spectrum – The initial step involves establishing the art style spectrum, which may range from stylized to semi-realistic. This decision includes selecting whether to adopt the visual style like Japanese anime or Western cartoons. Both styles exhibit distinct characteristics in terms of proportions, line art, and coloring techniques, making this determination a critical foundation for subsequent stages of the design process.
2. Describing Character Background – This stage focuses on articulating the character's background, informed by keywords derived from the philosophical values embedded within the Parang Rusak Barong batik motif. These keywords serve as a conceptual framework for guiding the design. Researcher used three dimensional of character theory to writing the character background.
3. Creating a moodboard – At this stage, the researcher compiles references to analyze the cultural and visual elements of the Parang Rusak Barong batik, including its historical and philosophical significance. Researcher also compiles references anatomical studies of Javanese physical features are conducted to ensure the character design aligns with cultural and physical accuracy, fostering sensitivity to traditional contexts.
4. Production Phase – This phase encompasses several steps:
  - a. Thumbnail Design: Creating multiple character design alternatives and selecting the one that most effectively embodies the philosophical essence of the Parang Rusak Barong batik.

- b. Pose and Expression Design: Exploring various poses and expressions for the character.
- c. Color Palette Design: Establishing a color palette that harmonizes with the batik motif's meaning and enhances visual coherence.
- d. Finalizing the Character Design: Refining the selected design to produce a polished and culturally resonant character suitable for animation.

By adhering to this structured approach, the character design process ensures that the adaptation of the Parang Rusak Barong motif maintains its cultural authenticity while effectively engaging contemporary audiences.

In this research, the character design process begins with the selection of an appropriate art style, as outlined by Bishop et al. (2020). A semi-realistic style, complemented by cel-shading coloring techniques, was chosen to achieve a balance between realism and stylization, ensuring the visual appeal of the character for the intended audience.

The character's subtext is developed using Egri Lajos's three-dimensional theory of character (as cited in Irawan, 2019). According to this theory, a character is constructed around three core dimensions, they are 1) Physiological dimension: represents the physical attributes of the character; 2) Psychological dimension: represents the emotional traits (both positive or negative) of the character; 3) Sociological dimension: reflects the character's environmental and social context.

Table 1 Three-dimentional of character of Wasis  
(researcher documentation, 2024)

No.	Dimensi 1	Keterangan
1	Physical	Name: Wasis Sex: male Age: 40-45 year olds Height and weight: 177cm/ 65kg Color of hair: light grey Color of eyes: gold yellow Skin: neutral beige Appearance: human-like, has a pair of eagle wings. Wearing black traditional cloth (beskap) with parang rusak barong batik. Wearing a diamond-shape ornament in his forehead
2	Psychological	Personal premise: Nobility arises from a soul capable of controlling desires and showing kindness to those around them. Temperament: low temper, wise, ambivert Attitude towards life: Wasis have a playful sense of humor, very confident, become serious and focus when working Quality: possess exceptional skills in creating batik with the highest quality.
3	Sociological	Occupation: batik fairy from Yogyakarta palace Race: Java Place in community: Wasis holds the highest position in the Yogyakarta Sultanate, he is entrusted with the creating of restricted batik ( <i>batik larangan</i> ) motifs exclusively used by the Sultan.

After completing the three-dimensional characterization of Wasis, the researcher proceeded to collect references for the character's visual design and making character's moodboard. The primary references included depictions of a Javanese male figure dressed in traditional attire, specifically a black *beskap* paired with a knee-length *sarong* featuring the Parang Rusak Barong batik, and black shoes.

The design must contain bird elements inspired by the stylized bird motifs which are present in the Parang Rusak Barong batik. Owl and Java hawk-eagle are chosen to represent the meaning of Parang Rusak Barong batik. The owl, representing intelligence and wisdom, and the Java hawk-eagle, symbolizing strength and resilience, were selected to embody the philosophical values associated with the batik motif. The moodboard for Wasis can be seen in figure 4.

Upon completing the moodboard, the next phase focused on exploring various design concepts for the character Wasis. Among the different explorations, one concept was selected for its ability to effectively encapsulate the philosophical values embedded in the Parang Rusak Barong batik motif.



Figure 4. Wasis moodboard  
(personal image, 2024)

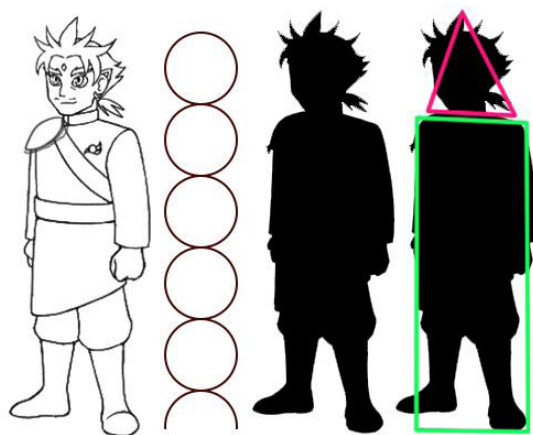


Figure 5. Wasis design concept  
(personal image, 2024)

A flexible triangular shape was chosen for the head and hair to symbolize a leader who is both thoughtful and confident while maintaining an approachable demeanor. This triangular form also draws inspiration from the stylized crests of the owl and the Java hawk-eagle, which are symbolic representations derived from the batik motif. To further convey a sense of reliability and strength, the body silhouette was designed using a square shape. The character's proportions were determined based on a 5 ½ head height scale, ensuring a balanced and aesthetically harmonious design. The sketch of character design (proportion, shape, and silhouette) is illustrated in figure 5.

The next stage involves selecting the key color. The chosen key color scheme is monochromatic (red) with gold accents. The monochromatic palette conveys stability and harmony within the design, while the gold accents add a touch of elegance and sophistication. This key color will be applied during the coloring and rendering process.



Figure 6. Wasis key color  
(personal image, 2024)



Figure 7. Wasis turnaround  
(personal image, 2024)

Wasis hair is designed with a low-saturation yellow (greyish tone) to symbolize his maturity and wisdom. His costume features a dark *beskap* (traditional attire for noblemen in Java) complemented by dark red shoulder armor, while his accessories include a golden sash, ear cuffs shaped like leaves, and a chest brooch that represent nobility, openness, and a willingness to embrace new ideas. The Parang Rusak Barong batik motif conveys his strength and resilience, while a red diamond-shaped forehead ornament symbolizes his intelligence.

Wasis is also depicted with wings resembling those of a Java hawk-eagle, colored brown to reflect his high social standing, grandeur, and respected position as a highest-ranking batik fairy in the Sultanate. His wings can retract or disappear when he is not engaged in the process of creating batik. Figure 7 is the turnaround design of Wasis with his wings retracted.

In addition to form and color exploration, selecting appropriate body language is a critical aspect of character design as it effectively communicates personality traits to the audience. Gestures and body language are key components that influence audience perception and contribute to the depth of a character.

Wasis is characterized as a free-spirited, wise, yet slightly enigmatic figure. Consequently, his gestures are a balanced combination



Figure 8. Poses and expressions of Wasis  
(personal image, 2024)

of open and reserved postures. His facial expressions predominantly convey warmth and approachability, aligning with his humorous disposition. The gestures and expressions of Wasis are depicted in the accompanying illustrations in figure 8.

## CONCLUSION

The recontextualization of the Parang Rusak Barong batik motif into the animated character design of Wasis, highlights the importance of preserving the philosophical values embedded in cultural artifacts. Through a structured adaptation process comprising content/context comprehension, reinterpretation, and recontextualization, the design integrates the core subtexts of strength, intelligence, and self-control derived from the motif.

Strength is symbolized by Wasis square-based body silhouette and huge wings inspired by the Java hawk-eagle, reflecting resilience and nobility. Intelligence is conveyed through the triangular head shape and the placement

of a diamond-shaped (*mlinjon*) motif on the forehead, signifying wisdom and sharp thinking. Self-control and nobility are depicted using traditional black *beskap* attire with gold and red accents, complemented by the Parang Rusak Barong batik cloth as an identity marker of his elevated status as the highest-rank batik spirit.

The design process demonstrates how visual and contextual elements can be thoughtfully recontextualized to create a character that remains true to the artifact's original meaning while appealing to a contemporary audience. This approach does not only preserve the cultural significance of the Parang Rusak Barong batik motif but also introduces it to a wider audience through the medium of 2D animation, tailored for children. This research highlights the role of design as a bridge between tradition and modernity, ensuring cultural heritage remains relevant and accessible across generations.

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