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Representations of Heroism in the Cinematography of the Animated Film *Panji Tengkorak* Using Roland Barthes's Semiotic Approach

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Abstract

Heroism in a film is not only portrayed through the characters' actions but it also constructed through a system of signs that shape specific meanings. The film *Panji Tengkorak* (2025) presents heroic figures through powerful visuals, utilizing gestures and a narrative that tends to be complex. Research on meaning and representation in film has been extensively conducted using Roland Barthes's semiotic approach as well as other visual studies. However, studies on Indonesian animated films that integrate cinematographic elements as a visual sign system with Roland Barthes's semiotic approach remain relatively limited. This study aims to analyze the visual representation of the character Panji through cinematographic and semiotic approaches. The research employs a descriptive qualitative method, analyzing the visual elements that collectively contribute to constructing the impression of heroism in the character, as well as applying Roland Barthes's semiotic theory to dissect the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth. The results show that Panji's heroism is constructed not only through heroic actions but also through camera angles, visual composition, body gestures, lighting, color palettes, and specific symbols that build meaning at the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth. From a semiotic perspective, the portrayal of Panji which is far from glamorous is a visual form that gives rise to the myth of the solitary warrior. This study demonstrates that cinematography functions as a system of signs that actively shapes the representation of heroism.

Keywords: Animation, Cinematography, Heroism, *Panji Tengkorak*, Semiotics

INTRODUCTION

Film is an audio-visual communication medium capable of influencing the cognitive processes of its audience (Sinta & Fathoni, 2023). Animated films are a form of audio-visual media that combine narrative, visual, and audio elements to convey a story and create an emotional experience for the audience. Unlike live-action films, every visual element in animated films is deliberately designed from character design, image composition, lighting, and color to camera movement so that every visual detail has the potential to function as a sign system that conveys specific meanings. Therefore, animated films are no longer viewed merely as a form of entertainment but also as a medium of representation that embodies cultural values, ideologies, and constructions of identity.

In recent years, the Indonesian animated film industry has shown increasingly significant development, both in terms of visual quality and the diversity of themes explored. One work that has drawn attention is Panji Tengkorak (2025), an animated film adapted from a classic comic by Hans Jalandra. This film is particularly interesting to study because it presents a heroic figure through powerful and dramatic visuals. Heroism in a film is not only portrayed through a character's actions but is also constructed through a system of signs that shape specific meanings. The representation of heroism in this film is built not only through the narrative but also through cinematographic techniques such as camera angles, composition, lighting, and framing, which visually emphasize the heroic character.

To understand the meaning embedded in these visuals, this study employs Roland Barthes's semiotic approach, which analyzes signs through three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth (Barthes, 1972). In film studies, cinematography serves as a visual element that shapes meaning through the arrangement of camera angles, composition, and lighting, which influence the audience's perception of characters and situations

(Bordwell & Thompson, 2013). Various studies indicate that cinematographic elements can function as strategic visual tools for conveying emotions, narratives, and ideological meanings in films.

Various previous studies have examined the significance of cinematography in film. A study by Yuli et al. (2025) focused on visual techniques used to construct representations of social class differences and power relations among characters, while Bobby and Yosef (2020) analyzed the role of camera angles in shaping audience perception. On the other hand, Nurul Utami (2025) used Roland Barthes's semiotic theory to uncover social criticism of the legal system in the media. In general, previous research

on cinematography confirms that visual composition and camera angles play a crucial role in shaping viewers' perceptions of the characters and events depicted. Meanwhile, Roland Barthes's semiotic approach is widely used to uncover the meanings embedded in the visual representations of a work.

Based on previous research, the study of cinematography and semiotics has been treated as two separate approaches. In reality, however, the visual elements in animation are the result of deliberate creative design and play a crucial role in shaping character identity and conveying messages to the audience. Every image composition, camera angle, lighting, body gesture, and visual symbol displayed has the potential to function as a sign system that produces meaning on various levels. Furthermore, visuals can foster an emotional connection between the work and the audience, thereby strengthening the process of interpreting the conveyed message (Septiana et al., 2024). Given these circumstances, this study aims to address a research gap by examining how cinematographic elements function as visual signs in constructing representations of heroism in the animated film Panji Tengkorak through Roland Barthes's semiotic approach. The urgency of this study lies in the importance of understanding how visual language in film not only functions as an aesthetic element but also

plays a role in shaping the construction of meaning and social imagination regarding the figure of the hero, particularly among the younger generation.

The film *Panji Tengkorak* was chosen as the

subject of this study because it presents a representation of heroism that differs from the conventional construction of heroes in Indonesian animation. The character of Panji is not portrayed as an ideal, flawless hero, but rather as a character shaped by trauma, loss, vengeance, and complex moral conflicts. This character construction is reinforced through various cinematographic elements, such as the use of camera angles, lighting, and composition, which consistently establish the main character as a hero. Furthermore, as a film adapted from the legendary comic by Hans Jalandra, *Panji Tengkorak* presents cultural values, a narrative of heroism, and the potential for visual meaning that can be analyzed through a semiotic approach.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive-interpretive methods. This approach is used to focus the research on the interpretation of visual signs in film. The descriptive method was chosen to systematically describe the cinematographic elements present within a frame, while the interpretive approach is

used to analyze the meaning of these signs using Roland Barthes's semiotic theory, which distinguishes between denotation, connotation, and myth.

This study focuses on the deconstruction of the character Panji in the animated film *Panji Tengkorak* (2025), where the character is positioned as the central subject of study to examine the integration of cinematographic and semiotic aspects into modern animation aesthetics. The units of analysis include frames representing the main character in heroic situations or moments of conflict. The analysis delves deeply into visual elements, particularly

camera angles, shot size, lighting, and visual composition, which collectively play a role in constructing the impression of heroism in the character.

Data analysis was conducted using Roland Barthes's theory of semiotics, which was chosen for its ability to interpret the meaning of signs in film. This theory distinguishes between denotation, connotation, and myth. At the denotative stage, the analysis involves objectively describing what appears on screen, such as camera position, color, the direction of light, image composition, and character expressions. The connotative stage focuses on the meanings embedded within these visual elements, for example, how a low-angle shot conveys a sense of power, or how dim lighting can evoke a dramatic atmosphere. Furthermore, the mythical stage is used to identify broader ideological constructions, specifically how this sequence of visual signs coalesces to form an image of heroism as a powerful figure in the audience's imagination.

This study employs purposive sampling, in which specific frames are selected based on predetermined criteria. The analysis process involves repeatedly watching the animated film *Panji Tengkorak* to identify visual elements within the frames, selecting frames based on their relevance to the theme of heroism, identifying cinematographic elements in each selected frame, and analyzing the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings constructed within those frames. This process, this study seeks to examine how the film's visual language shapes the figure of the hero in the audience's imagination.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The animated film *Panji Tengkorak* is a work deeply rooted in Indonesian cultural values, adapted from the legendary comic created by Hans Jalandra, which was first published in 1968. This adaptation not only brings the classic narrative back to life in a more modern visual medium but also strives to preserve the essence of the story, which is rich in

historical and cultural significance. This animated film tells the story of Panji's journey against the backdrop of a dark life. Panji is portrayed as possessing martial arts skills, particularly in the art of silat, which is a key aspect in shaping his identity as a warrior.

At first, Panji was just a simple warrior living a quiet life with his wife. However, his life changed drastically when a group of bandits attacked and took his wife's life, leaving Panji in deep grief and despair. This event became a turning point that shaped Panji's character, especially when he took a skull from his wife's grave and wore it as both a symbol and a testament to the vengeance he carried. As the story unfolds, Panji becomes involved in a pursuit of a bandit who stole a sacred artifact, leading him into increasingly complex conflicts. This pursuit is not merely a personal mission but evolves into a conflict involving broader interests, including a rivalry between two kingdoms. This situation indirectly reopens the wounds of Panji's past. After going through

various events, Panji briefly believed that he had successfully avenged the death of his beloved. This belief drove him to end his life in the hope of reuniting with his wife in the afterlife. However, this intention could not be realized because Panji was instead ensnared by a black magic curse that bound both his body and soul.

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive-interpretive method. The analysis was conducted by applying Roland Barthes's theory of semiotics to examine the meanings embedded in the denotative, connotative, and mythical levels that emerge through cinematographic elements. The research focuses on the representation of heroism constructed through camera angles, shot size, lighting, and visual composition. Data was obtained through observation by repeatedly watching the animated film *Panji Tengkorak*, documentation in the form of screenshots of selected frames, and a literature review to strengthen the theoretical foundation. Through



Figure 1. The *Panji Tengkorak* Animated Film 00:15:20

The frame in Figure 1 shows a male character (Panji) standing in the center with both hands raised, while debris is scattered around him. This scene uses a low angle, with a very long shot to show all the elements and environmental

conditions within the frame. The lighting comes from the front, creating a dramatic effect that accentuates the shadows on Panji's body and enhances the emotional atmosphere, while utilizing the rule of thirds composition to reinforce the sense of spatial depth within the frame. The surrounding space is kept relatively empty, creating a sense of solitude. The

movement of the scattered debris also serves as a visual element that reinforces the narrative while symbolizing the destruction experienced by Panji.

On a denotative level, the scene in Figure 1 depicts a visual composition in a black-and-white color scheme featuring a human subject wearing simple clothing with wraps around the arms and legs. The subject, Panji, is depicted standing upright with both arms raised and curved above his head, fingers spread, and both feet serving as a base. The Panji's face faces forward with an expression that appears sad and tense. The background shows debris

surrounding the main subject, supported by elements resembling mist or smoke rising from the lower surface.

Symbolically, the use of monochromatic colors serves as a visual cue that the scene depicts a flashback or a memory of the past. This color choice not only distinguishes the temporal dimension and the narrative flow but also creates a darker emotional tone. The body gesture of raising both hands also conveys a blend of frustration, anger, and sadness. The presence of ruins and smoke surrounding the subject carries a connotative significance regarding the destructive impact of a conflict. Lighting focused on the Panji in the darkness suggests hope or an entity that persists amidst ruin, creating an image of a hero experiencing the lowest point in their narrative journey.

Within Roland Barthes's semiotic framework, this visualization constructs a myth

psychological dimensions. This indicates that heroism in **Panji Tengkorak** is portrayed as a transformative process rooted in loss and suffering, resulting in amore complex heroic figure and reinforcing Panji's image as a resilient hero.

about a hero's emotional journey. In many heroic narratives, the protagonist is often depicted as experiencing loss or suffering before ultimately reaching a point of character transformation. This scene reinforces the myth that a hero is portrayed as an entity who remains standing tall even as the world around him has collapsed. A warrior's true strength is tested not when he conquers his enemies, but when he is able to face his own despair.

The analysis reveals that Panji's heroism is not built solely through heroic deeds, but also through traumatic experiences that serve as the moral foundation for all his actions. The use of flashbacks demonstrates that cinematography serves not only to advance the plot but also to construct the characters'

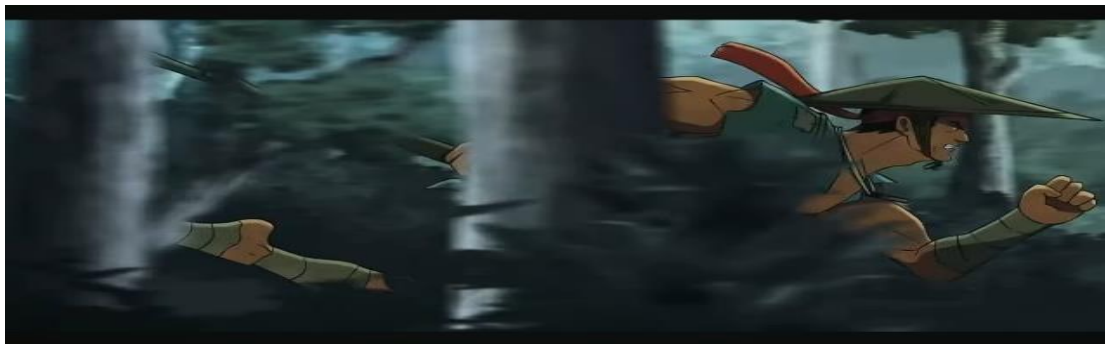


Figure 2. The *Panji Tengkorak* Animated Film 00:18:28

Figure 2 depicts Panji rushing to the scene of a bandit attack on the local community. In

this frame, Panji is positioned at the center of the frame using a tracking shot, where the camera

moves sideways to follow the moving subject to keep him in focus. Panji's movement is visualized through a long shot to capture the full range of his body's motor coordination within a wide spatial context. An eye-level perspective is chosen to ensure that every transition in the character's movement is clearly visible and synchronized with the natural human eye level. Compositionally, this scene employs the foreground framing technique by utilizing tree elements to create spatial depth. The subject's placement follows the rule of thirds, positioning the character along the right axis of the frame to provide an imaginary space that emphasizes the direction of movement. The use of blur in the foreground serves as a cinematic aesthetic to focus the audience's attention on the main character's actions.

When viewed directly, the visual elements

in Figure 2 depict Panji wearing green clothing and a distinctive cap-shaped head covering. Panji is depicted leaning forward with his legs raised, which literally signifies the act of running quickly. In the foreground, there is a dark brown vertical object with a rough texture identified as a tree trunk, as well as green foliage that appears blurred. The background shows a repetition of similar elements that form a forest ecosystem.

In a contextual sense, the character's extremely leaning body posture, combined with the motion blur effect in the foreground, does not merely represent physical movement but conveys a state of intense pressure. This visual suggests a strong urge, inner tension, and a situation demanding a swift response. Meanwhile, the use of foreground framing through the element of trees creates an impression of indirect surveillance, placing the viewer in the position of a silent observer witnessing a crucial action in the wilderness. This composition underscores an atmosphere that is not entirely safe, where the wilderness serves as a symbol of ongoing threats and conflict.

Within Barthes's mythological

framework, the figure of Panji is represented as the manifestation of the myth of the 'solitary warrior', a heroic figure who relies not on formal institutions, but on inner and physical strength amidst the wild. The presence of a dense, dimly lit forest setting reinforces the myth of nature as both a space of initiation and a proving ground for a warrior's prowess. Through this visual construction, the image functions ideologically to normalize the collective perception that a traditional hero or warrior must be a formidable figure, at one with nature, and possessing speed that transcends the limits of ordinary humans.

Visual representation in that scene

conveys heroic values, specifically when Panji decides to immediately head to the scene of the conflict, reflecting his readiness, courage, and resilience in the face of a dangerous situation. Through dynamic visual movement, the film constructs the image of a hero who does not hesitate to act when faced with a threat, making resilience and courage in the face of danger one of the heroic values inherent

in Panji's character. The findings in this scene reinforce the argument that appropriate camera movement techniques also play an active role in shaping the representation of Panji's heroism.



Figure 3. The *Panji Tengkorak* Animated Film 00:18:30

In Figure 3, Panji leaps into action to assist in the battle against a group of bandits, affirming his heroic role in the visual narrative. Panji is depicted with a dynamic, forward-leaning posture, his right hand gripping the sword with full force, complemented by a facial expression that reflects tension and focus. In terms of cinematography, the character Panji is placed in the center of the frame to make him the focal point of the scene, with the camera angle at eye level, and using a medium long shot to focus the viewer's gaze on his upper body movements. The lighting used tends to darken the location depicted in the frame, dominated by dark green and brown tones, reinforcing the sense of realism and tension.

At the first level of meaning, Figure 3 depicts a man wearing traditional clothing and a conical headdress. The figure is situated in a dense forest, standing with a hunched posture while holding a staff in his hand. Visually, his facial expression conveys tension, marked by a slightly open mouth and a gaze fixed straight ahead. Additionally, there is a significant element in the form of an arrow embedded in the Panji's chest.

On a connotative level, the Panji's forward-leaning body posture can be interpreted as a representation of both a defiant attitude and an effort to survive the conflict he is facing. The presence of an arrow embedded in the Panji's chest is not merely interpreted as a physical wound, but also hints at supernatural abilities, particularly mastery of black magic that allows Panji to endure without feeling the normal effects of the wound as ordinary humans do. On the other hand, the dark forest backdrop can be interpreted as a representation of obstacles, threats, or trials that must be overcome. Overall, this scene represents a state of intense resistance, in which Panji relies on the power of black magic as his primary resource to withstand the pressure.

In terms of cultural meaning, this scene constructs a representation of a figure who uses supernatural powers for personal gain. Panji is not only visualized as a warrior but also as an individual who survives and fights out of a drive to protect themselves. This forms the myth of the anti-hero, or in popular culture, someone with extraordinary powers who is immune to injury but does not fully adhere to collective moral values. The use of black magic reinforces the mythological construction of dark powers as a resource for survival.

Thus, Panji's heroism stems not only from ordinary human physical strength but also from supernatural powers derived from black magic. This presents a conception of heroism that differs from that of conventional heroes, as Panji's ability to survive originates from powers

beyond human limits. This demonstrates that the film not only portrays courage but also presents a paradox of heroism: a hero who derives his power from elements that are often viewed negatively from a moral standpoint.

Through this visual construction, the film presents heroism as

resilience and transformation achieved through supernatural powers used for righteous purposes.



Figure 4. The *Panji Tengkorak* Animated Film 00:37:18

The scene in Figure 4 depicts Panji in action as he fights one of the bandits from Wanagetih Temple. Compositionally, the frame in Figure 4 employs a low-angle viewpoint, where the camera is positioned lower than the character's eye level. This angle creates a dramatic effect and conveys the Panji's strength in the midst of a conflict. The framing used is a medium close-up, which focuses the visual on the main character's torso up to the head, and employs the over-the-shoulder technique, where the character's shoulders and arms in the foreground serve as a frame to direct the viewer's gaze toward Panji as the primary subject. The use of a shallow depth of field, which blurs the foreground characters, serves to create a sense of spatial dimension and visual depth, while also providing a voyeuristic experience for the audience, as if they were right in the middle of the action. The framing in Figure 4 utilizes diagonal lines formed by the sword blade and the character's arm, which technically direct the audience's gaze directly toward the point of conflict or the center of the action. The primary focal point is placed on the physical interaction between the weapons, enhanced by lens flare or light sparks. This lighting element serves as a visual accent marking the peak of the action or the climax. The placement of the subject, Panji, on the left side of the frame provides a dynamic balance, prioritizing the flow of movement and the character's expression as the narrative center, supported by high-contrast lighting techniques that emphasize the character's muscle volume and facial contours through sharp shadows.

When viewed directly, the frame in Figure

4 depicts two male figures engaged in an intense physical interaction. In the foreground, the shoulders and arms of a man wearing dark brown arm guards are visible as he parries an attack. In the background, the main subject a man wearing a caping head covering and green clothing is swinging a short sword. Visually, there is a bright yellow spark at the point of contact between the sword and the blocking

object. The shot was taken using an over-the-shoulder technique from a low angle to highlight the intense negative emotional expression.

On a deeper level, the visual elements in Figure 4 convey a sense of confrontation and resilience. Panji's tense expression and crouched posture suggest intense concentration and a serious attitude in the face of danger. The depicted light sparks serve as a connotative marker of a massive physical clash, while also emphasizing a crucial moment in the battle. The use of a low camera angle conveys heroism, showcasing the Panji's strength even while under attack. The use of a cool color palette, such as blue and green, evokes a tense atmosphere and intense emotions.

On a mythical level, the frame in Figure 4 reinforces the myth that true strength does not always come from luxury or magnificent armor, but rather from simplicity as symbolized by the character Panji supported by exceptional martial arts skills. This scene also reproduces the myth that the value of virtue must always be tested through physical conflict against obstacles. This myth serves to legitimize the use of violence in the context of self-defense or upholding the truth by the warrior figure.

In the context of heroism, this scene illustrates that Panji's character is constructed through a visual contradiction between appearance and ability. Visually, Panji is depicted wearing simple clothing and equipment, yet he is able to defeat a numerically superior force. This contrast conveys the message that heroism is not measured by the attributes one wears, but rather by courage, resilience, and the ability to face challenges. Thus, the cinematography not only serves to showcase the combat action but also guides the audience to perceive Panji as a hero who earns his legitimacy through his actions and competence.



Figure 5. The *Panji Tengkorak* Animated Film 01:10:04

The frame shown in Figure 5 comprehensively employs a centered composition, with the character Panji positioned at the center as the primary visual focal point, creating a pattern of visual convergence from all surrounding elements, including the direction of the attack and the movement patterns of the encircling opponents. The shot employs an extreme long shot with a high-angle viewpoint that approaches a bird's eye

view, providing an objective, wide perspective on the spatial layout and the choreography of the mass battle. A sharp contrast is evident between Panji's active position at the center of the action and the static figures of the enemies lying on the perimeter, semiotically connoting the physical superiority and supernatural power of the main character amidst the chaos. The lighting scheme in this frame adopts a cool, dark color palette, dominated by deep green and grayish blue tones, creating a tense and serious atmosphere, with accent lighting focused on the main action area to emphasize spatial depth and dramatic focus within the battle narrative.

Objectively, the main subject is positioned

centrally at the midpoint of the frame's axis, depicted as a man wearing a wide-brimmed conical head covering (caping) and attire in a

matching color palette. Surrounding this central subject is a group of men in low-crouching positions or kneeling, forming a siege formation. In the perimeter area, there are four additional human figures captured in horizontal positions or lying motionless on the ground. Through a high-angle perspective, one of the weapons is shown leaving a visual trail in the form of a curved red and white line (motion trail).

On a deeper level, the visual elements in Figure 5 carry symbolic meanings that transcend the physical description of the subject, representing a narrative of resilience and strength. The placement of the figure of Panji at the center of the enemy encirclement evokes the concept of the "eye of the storm," a representation of control amidst the chaos that surrounds him. The contrast between the central figure, who remains active, and the figures on the periphery, lying motionless, conveys a connotative meaning of supernatural power a force transcending human limits. The high-angle shot creates a connotative sense of objectivity and positions the viewer as a witness to a heroic event. The red motion trail depicts bloodstains resulting from Panji's attack on one of the bandits, hence the severed hand of the opponent is also shown, while the white curved lines mark the trajectory of the weapon wielded by Panji.

The visual composition of Figure 5

constructs a myth of the 'Lone Knight' deeply rooted in the cultural narratives of the Nusantara. By positioning the figure of Panji as the center of gravity amidst a surrounding

crowd, this frame functions ideologically to naturalize the notion that truth and justice can be upheld absolutely by individual strength. This myth portrays the warrior figure not merely as a fighter, but as a symbol of the guardian of order amidst anarchy, symbolized by the movements of the surrounding enemies.

This finding reinforces research findings that the portrayal of heroism in the animated film *Panji Tengkorak* in this scene is constructed through the visualization of the power imbalance between the main character and the bandits surrounding him. Heroism is shaped not only by the character's victory over his enemies but also through cinematographic strategies that highlight Panji's position as the center of the conflict. The use of a bird's-eye view allows the audience to see the scene in its entirety, thereby making the character's courage stand out even more. This scene reinforces the idea that Panji's identity is shaped by his courage in the face of an escalating conflict and constructs heroism as the ability to persevere, take risks, and confront threats independently even when the chances of success seem slim.

Cinematographically, Figure 6 employs a medium close-up technique focused on the kinetic interaction between the two main subjects to highlight the details of the action. The use of an eye-level perspective in this frame positions the audience on the same plane as the center of the conflict, thereby creating an intimate emotional engagement with the battle. The lighting is arranged through a high-contrast scheme, where the use of glowing purple on the character Panji acts as an artificial key light element that separates the subject from the dark background. The characters are positioned to fill the frame, creating a sense of tightness and urgency, emphasizing that the conflict has reached its climax.

At first glance, the image in Figure 6

depicts a close-range physical interaction between two male figures. The main subject on the left (Panji) is depicted with a tense posture, a facial expression featuring an open mouth and sharply furrowed eyebrows, and both arms positioned in an attacking or defensive stance. Across the main subject's body, there are graphic elements in the form of bright purple



Figure 6. The *Panji Tengkorak* Animated Film 01:25:15

The visualization in Figure 6 depicts the escalating conflict between the characters Panji and Lembugiri as they attempt to reclaim the sacred artifact that has been seized by Candi Wanagetih. In this scene, Panji's supernatural power is represented by a purple aura surrounding his body, which narratively functions as an active magical defense mechanism.

streaks resembling semi-transparent clouds of smoke or energy. On the

right side of the frame, the opposing figure (Lembugiri) appears in a predominantly white and gray color palette, captured in a posture where his body is thrust backward.

In reflecting these signs, the visual elements in Figure 6 connote an emotional climax and the manifestation of destructive

internal power. The use of glowing purple enveloping Panji's body is not merely a color marker but a connotative symbol of a "dark" or "magical" supernatural power, typically associated with transcendent forces in traditional fantasy narratives. The facial expression, with a clenched jaw and sharply furrowed brows, conveys the meaning of erupting anger, reflecting the psychological state of the character under the pressure of intense conflict. The chromatic contrast between Panji's purple and the white figure of Lembugiri results from the infusion of the heirloom's power into his body, while the purple represents a wild and emotional personal power. The presence of dark purple particles scattered between the two subjects symbolically represents Panji's power binding Lembugiri, reinforcing the narrative of a battle that is not merely physical but also a clash of supernatural energies.

At the deepest level, Figure 6 perpetuates the myth that a hero relies not only on physical prowess but also on the legitimacy derived from the power of the occult. The use of the purple aura enveloping Panji serves an ideological purpose by normalizing the idea that reclaiming one's rights often requires the use of black magic as a means of self-defense.

Through these visuals, the film conveys the idea that Panji Tengkorak presents a different conception of heroism from conventional representations. Supernatural powers derived from black magic are not portrayed as symbols of evil, but rather as tools Panji uses to confront threats and reclaim the heirloom that is in everyone's best interest. The use of medium close-ups serves as a cinematographic strategy to reinforce Panji's visual dominance when his supernatural powers begin to manifest. Through the visualization of a magical aura, the cinematography guides the audience to understand that the value of heroism is not solely determined by the origin of a character's powers, but by their purpose, sense of responsibility, and courage in wielding those powers. These findings indicate that heroism in Panji Tengkorak is constructed as a complex

concept, in which supernatural elements, moral conflicts, and the struggle to uphold values are believed to shape the protagonist's identity.

CONCLUSION

Comprehensively, this study concludes that the visual representation of the character Panji is a manifestation of shifts in modern animation aesthetics and the heroic philosophical values of the Nusantara. The strategic use of cinematographic elements, such as high-angle shots to emphasize spatial dominance and extreme long shots to map relationships within large-scale battles, successfully establishes Panji as the narrative's focal point. The aesthetics in this work are built through strategic lighting that consistently supports dramatic action in every narrative. The application of the rule of thirds composition is frequently implemented to enhance the sense of spatial depth, reinforced by eye-level camera angles to create a voyeuristic effect, positioning the audience as observers within the story's space. Technically, the presentation of weapon motion trails plays a crucial role in emphasizing the battle narrative.

From Roland Barthes's semiotic perspective, at the denotative and connotative levels, the character of Panji consistently visualized wearing a cap and simple green attire identifies him as a folk hero. The implementation of a cool color palette, dominated by shades of dark green, gray, blue, and purple, visually succeeds in constructing a gripping action sequence that aligns with the action narrative from the introductory phase onward. In the animated film Panji Tengkorak, the use of these color elements simultaneously produces a myth regarding the hierarchy of power, where contrasting colors serve as consistent visual markers in positioning the character of Panji as the primary focal point amidst the dynamics of battle.

Overall, this study shows that heroism in Indonesian animated films can be constructed through complex visual representations, such as

the character of Panji, who is developed through a process of character transformation, in which courage, resilience, responsibility, and sacrifice are interpreted as core values that continue to evolve as the conflict in the story intensifies, resulting in a construction of heroism that differs from conventional representations of heroes.

Based on these research findings, it is recommended that future researchers conduct a more in-depth exploration of camera movement patterns in a more dynamic manner to analyze how visual rhythm influences the audience's perception of a character's power. Further studies could focus on a comparative analysis of the use of symbolic color palettes in local animation to assess the extent to which local elements can compete with global standards of heroism. Future research is expected to apply the semiotic theories of Charles Sanders Peirce, Ferdinand de Saussure, or others to enrich the research findings from different perspectives.

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