



Visual semiotic analysis of Nusantara cultural elements in the *Aniwayang Desa Timun* animation opening song

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Abstract.

This study is motivated by concerns over the erosion of local cultural values among Indonesian youth due to the massive influx of foreign popular culture. Meanwhile, Aniwayang Studio has successfully adapted traditional *wayang* culture into a contemporary medium of animation. This innovative success is validated by significant global achievements, including appearances at the World Osaka Expo 2025 and the Kineko International Children's Film Festival in Japan, alongside recognition and support from the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. Employing a qualitative descriptive method and the Charles Sanders Peirce semiotic approach the research seeks to understand how the studio adapts *wayang* and Nusantara culture by analyzing the visual and auditory signs within the animation. Data were collected through observation and documentation of the "Opening Song" episode of Serial Desa Timun. The findings indicate that the visual design, including the two-dimensional profiled characters, batik motifs, and a limited black color palette on a cream-brown background, effectively function as icons and indices of traditional *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet) theater. The appearance of various objects, along with the use of gamelan music acts as a strong index and symbol of Nusantara cultural heritage. The analysis suggests that the animation recontextualizes traditional *wayang* elements into a modern, accessible, and culturally rich format. The study concludes that this innovative approach positions "Aniwayang" as a good reference for cultural preservation, evidenced by its significant achievements. This research serves as a globally recognized case study for understanding how to revitalize cultural identity through digital media.

Keywords: Animation, Cultural Preservation, Wayang, Semiotics

Introduction

In the era of globalization, the cultural wealth of the Indonesian archipelago faces significant challenges. The massive penetration of foreign popular culture, such as Japanese anime and Korean K-pop, has caused a shift in interests and the potential erosion of local cultural values, particularly among Indonesia's younger generation. This phenomenon calls for innovative approaches to maintain the relevance of ancestral heritage. Traditional shadow puppet theater (*wayang kulit*) represents one of Indonesia's most treasured cultural legacies; however, it is currently experiencing a serious decline in public interest. In this context, the creative industry, particularly animated film emerges as an innovative solution to bridge cultural gaps and reintroduce traditional heritage such as *wayang* to contemporary audiences (Setiaji, 2017; Wicaksono & Wardhana, 2024).

As a response to these challenges, a significant breakthrough has emerged in Indonesian animation: *Aniwayang Desa Timun*. Daud Nugraha, the studio founder, introduced the slogan "Japan has anime, Indonesia has aniwayang," reflecting an aspiration to establish an authentic national

animation identity (Fahas, 2024). This project, published on YouTube, serves as a tangible and globally recognized example of successful cultural preservation through media innovation. The achievements attained by Aniwayang Studio demonstrate that their approach holds both urgency and global relevance. These achievements include:

1. **World Osaka Expo 2025:** The Desa Timun children's wayang performance became a focal point of Indonesia's cultural diplomacy (Sofia, 2025).
2. **Kineko International Children's Film Festival:** Participation in Tokyo, featuring live Japanese dubbing sessions (The Cucumber Village [Desa Timun], 2024).
3. **Government support,** such as collaboration with Indonesiana. TV under the Ministry of Education and Culture (Fahas, 2024).

This further highlights the importance of preserving culture through creative innovation. Such animation not only serves as entertainment but also acts as a digital cultural artifact that actively participates in the dialogue of cultural preservation through innovation and contemporary visual styles (Mariska, 2021; Arsana, 2023).

With these significant achievements as context, this research employs the semiotic approach of Charles Sanders Peirce to examine how Indonesian cultural elements are represented by Aniwayang Studio and how innovation is implemented in its cultural preservation efforts. The semiotic approach is a powerful tool for deconstructing and interpreting the meanings behind visual signs and symbols (Saidi, 2020). This method enables researchers to analyze how various visual elements—such as form, color, and metaphor—work together to produce coherent meanings within the context of animation (Yunus & Aswar, 2024). Sobur (2016) states that semiotics can be used to examine various media, including comics, cartoons, caricatures, and music.

The opening song is selected as the sample for this research, as an opening song in an animated series serves as a primary representational element that encapsulates the work's overall visual and thematic identity (Nazaré, 2023; Adinata & Irfan, 2022). Bass, as cited in Krasner (2013), defines the opening song as a way to “set the mood and metaphorically convey the essence of a film's narrative”.

The literature review reveals that studies on wayang, its adaptation to modern media, and semiotics across various media constitute a rich body of existing research. Specifically, prior studies relevant to this paper can be clustered into five main categories. First, research has demonstrated that adapting wayang into modern media is an effective cultural preservation strategy, such as through board game design (Farosa & Irfansyah, 2023; Setiaji, 2017). Second, existing literature includes semiotic studies specifically applied to wayang or its cultural elements (Natsir et al., 2021; Wicaksono & Wardhana, 2024). Third, the domain of semiotic analysis in animation more broadly has been explored to interpret visual and narrative signs (Adinata & Irfan, 2022; Difitrian & Saleh, 2024; Putra et al., 2023). Fourth, several studies have focused on character design principles for children's animation audiences (Arsana, 2023; Nadya & Santoso, 2021; Feriana et al., 2022; Aurelia & Zulkarnain, 2023). Finally, numerous qualitative studies aim to interpret meanings in various forms of visual narrative media (Agung et al., 2021; Cahyani et al., 2021; Halim & Yulius, 2023; Octaviani, 2022).

While these studies provide a strong theoretical foundation, this research aims to fill an existing gap by focusing on a unique case study of cultural preservation innovation in animation that has achieved global recognition, analyzed through the semiotic lens of Charles Sanders Peirce. This research is expected to serve as a valuable reference for animators seeking to effectively preserve Nusantara culture through modern media, which constitutes the novel contribution of this study.

Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with a semiotic approach. As explained in the introduction, the scope of this research is limited to the opening song of the Desa Timun series, as the opening song serves as the primary representation of an animated series. Data were collected through

documentation and observation of the video “OPENING SONG Serial Desa Timun” on the Aniwayang Desa Timun YouTube channel. The researcher extracts several scene clips from the “OPENING SONG Serial Desa Timun” episode for analysis. Each scene containing similar Nusantara (Indonesian archipelago) visual and auditory elements is represented by the most representative clip. Therefore, this study does not conduct a scene-by-scene analysis.

The analysis of the selected clips is divided into five aspects: cinematography, characters, setting, objects and activities, and background music. Data analysis is conducted using Charles Sanders Peirce’s triadic semiotic approach, which divides signs into three main elements: Representamen, Object, and Interpretant (Saidi, 2020; Mudjiyanto & Nur, 2013).

1. **Representamen:** the sign itself, such as an image, color, or sound.
2. **Object:** the entity represented by the sign.
3. **Interpretant:** the meaning constructed in the mind of the receiver.

Furthermore, after analyzing the representamen, object, and interpretant of each visual and auditory element in the selected clips, this study classifies the identified signs into the three fundamental trichotomies of Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotics, with the second trichotomy serving as the central analytical framework:

1. First Trichotomy (classification based on the sign [Representamen] in itself). This includes Qualisign, a quality or mere possibility of feeling derived from the sign (e.g., a specific color or tone); Sinsign, an actual existing instance of the sign (e.g., the video itself); and Legisign, a general law or convention that governs the sign (e.g., a conceptual rule).
2. Second Trichotomy (classification based on the relation to the Object). This trichotomy serves as the central focus of the analysis and classifies signs according to how they relate to their referents (Objects). It includes Icon, a sign that resembles its object; Index, a sign that has a causal or existential relationship with its object; and Symbol, a sign whose meaning is determined by social or cultural convention (Saidi, 2020; Putra et al., 2023).
3. Third Trichotomy (classification based on the relation to the Interpretant). This trichotomy classifies signs according to the type of meaning or effect they generate in the mind of the interpreter. It includes Rheme, a sign expressing possibility or potentiality (often functioning as a predicate or term); Dicent, a sign indicating actual existence (functioning as a proposition or statement); and Argument, a sign representing logical inference, typically forming a conclusion.

Result and Discussion

The analysis of the opening song of “Serial Desa Timun” shows that most visual and auditory elements were deliberately designed as signs to communicate Nusantara cultural elements, particularly those of wayang performance, while adapting certain aspects to align with contemporary visual trends. The following section presents the results of Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotic analysis of Nusantara cultural elements identified in the visual and auditory components of the opening song.

Cinematography

The cinematography aspects discussed in this section include overall framing techniques (background, framing, shot effects, and color palette choices), as well as camera angles and camera movement. Across all clips in the opening song video, the representamen indicate that each scene consistently employs a beige–brown background and framing, fabric-like texture effects, and a bright spotlight effect at the center of the frame, surrounded by darker shading along the edges of the screen. In addition, the color choices used for both settings and characters consistently rely on a black color palette.

Most camera angles are presented from an eye-level perspective, predominantly using wide shots with several close-ups. No shots are captured from frog-level or bird’s-eye viewpoints, nor does

the animation employ panning techniques. Figure 1 illustrates an example of the cinematography used in the Desa Timun animation.

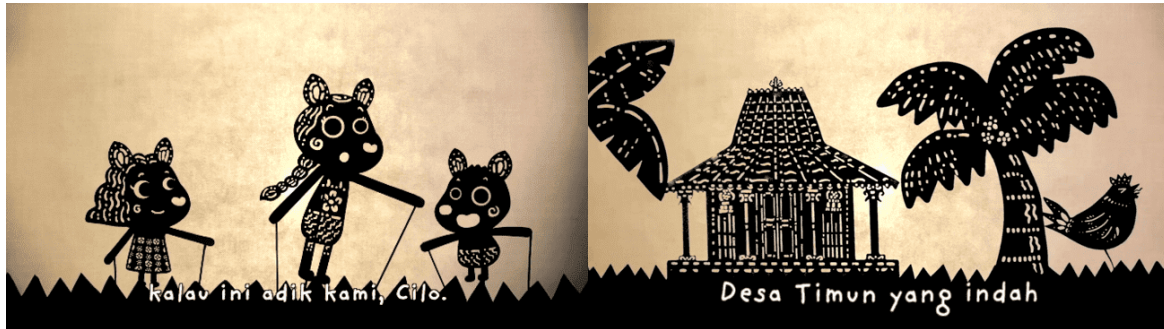


Figure 1. Representamen of Cinematography

Source: Documentation from The Cucumber Village (Desa Timun) YouTube channel, 2024



Figure 2. Wayang kulit (Shadow Puppet) performance

Source: The Jakarta Post, 2019

This representamen corresponds to the object-sign of shadow puppetry (*wayang kulit*), particularly the projection of character and environmental shadows onto the *kelir*—the white screen used in wayang performances, illuminated from behind to cast shadows. The choice of camera angles, combined with the absence of panning techniques, further emphasizes the characteristic “flatness” of wayang kulit staging, as traditional performances are typically viewed from an eye-level perspective against the *kelir*, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Meanwhile, the use of occasional close-up shots preserves Desa Timun’s identity as an animated work rather than a literal reproduction of traditional wayang. The relationship between the representamen and the object ultimately gives rise to the interpretant: the adaptation and recontextualization of the traditional wayang kulit performance atmosphere within modern media.

Characters

Throughout the clips, three main characters appear, along with one unnamed supporting character. Since this study focuses on Nusantara cultural elements and their adaptation in the Desa Timun animation, this section specifically discusses the shared design patterns and recurring stylistic approaches used in character design throughout the series. The representamen reveals two-dimensional, flat, shadow-like figures with perforated patterns across their bodies. Their arms and torsos are connected by lines extending to the bottom of the screen. The characters’ faces are depicted with round shapes, large heads, large eyes, wide mouths, spiral-shaped holes on their cheeks, and animal-like ears on their heads. These characteristics can be observed in Figure 3.

Additionally, although it does not directly depict a character, one representamen in the video clip is closely related to the reason the main characters possess animal-like ears; however, this aspect is discussed further in the “Objects and Activities” section. Apart from the three main characters, there

is also one supporting character represented as a two-dimensional shadow figure resembling a bird, featuring patterned perforations on its body.

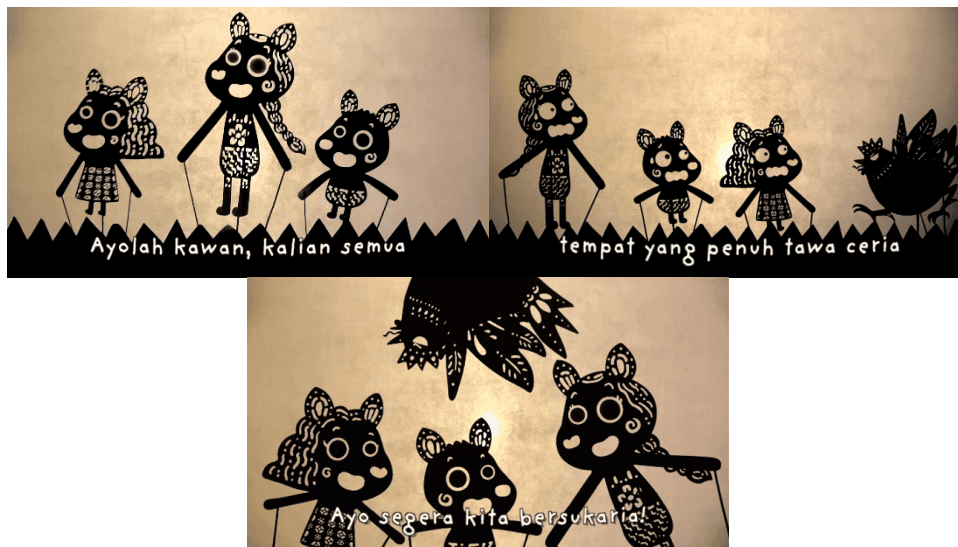


Figure 3. Representamen of flat two dimension character

Source: Documentation from The Cucumber Village (Desa Timun) youtube channel, 2024

These representamen correspond to several object-signs. The perforated two-dimensional shadows refer to wayang kulit puppets with traditional batik motifs, while the connecting lines represent the tuding or cempurit sticks used by the dalang (puppet master) to manipulate the puppets, as shown in Figure 4. The rounded and simplified facial features resemble the Japanese chibi visual style, which, according to Suzuki (2016, as cited in Arsana, 2023), emphasizes “small” and “cute” proportions designed to appeal to children, as illustrated in Figure 5.

The animal-like ears signify anthropomorphized kancil figures, symbolizing cleverness and agility in Indonesian folklore. The kancil is traditionally described as an animal that enjoys eating cucumbers, which directly relates to the title of the animated series. The final representamen depicts a rooster, representing rural Indonesian life. In the opening song, this rooster is portrayed as a character feared by the main protagonists.



Figure 4. Motif at wayang kulit with tuding/cempurit stick

Source: Liputan6, 2023

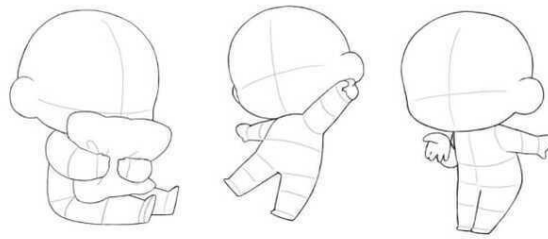


Figure 5. Basic form of the chibi visual art style
Source: howtodrawanime.app, 2025



Figure 6. Kancil or Pelanduk Jawa as representation of Javanese people value
Source: goodnewsfromindonesia, 2021

Altogether, these representamen object relationships signify several interpretants: the *wayang kulit* form as a symbol of Indonesian cultural identity; the *tuding* sticks as markers of traditional wayang performance authenticity; the characters designed in a chibi style as an effort by the *Desa Timun* series to adapt to contemporary aesthetic trends and appeal to a younger audience without losing the essence of cultural heritage; the kancil (figure 6), which traditionally embodies cleverness and agility (Wibowo et al., 2018; Bania & Milawaty, 2019) representing the small stature, intelligence, and liveliness of the main characters; and the rooster, which adds a distinctly rural Indonesian nuance to the series.

Setting

One scene prominently displays the environment setting. The representamen shows a silhouette of a building with patterned perforations and two distinct tree silhouettes alongside the rooster. The objects sign from that representamens are a Joglo house, a banana tree, and a palm tree. These objects signify the interpretant, namely the atmosphere of typical Indonesian villages, as represented by the depiction of traditional Javanese-style houses from Yogyakarta and trees commonly found in rural areas across Indonesia, also a rooster.



Figure 7. Object sign of "Rumah Joglo", banana tree and palm tree
Source: Documentation from The Cucumber Village (Desa Timun) Youtube channel, 2024

Object and Activities

Several scenes feature objects and activities representing elements of Nusantara culture. One clip shows a complex silhouette, curved at the base with a pointed cone on top, moving across the screen with internal cutout shapes resembling two mountains, a house, and trees. Another clip depicts two characters riding a tall cylindrical object as shown in figure 8. As explained earlier, there is one representamen that appears to be closely related to the reason why the main characters have animal-like ears. This representamen is a shadow-puppet object resembling a cucumber, featuring perforations that form the words “Desa Timun” and some traditional script, accompanied by two lines on each side of the cucumber extending toward the top of the screen as shown in figure 9. These representamen refer to object *Gunungan Wayang*, the traditional game *Egrang* and title of the series plus Javanese script. *Gunungan wayang* (figure 10) serve as interpretants of Indonesian cultural heritage (Kusuma et al., 2025) , together with the *Enggrang* (figure 11). The title screen further reinforces the idea that the characters are anthropomorphic representations of the *kancil*, an animal traditionally described as one that likes to eat cucumbers and the series take inspiration from Indonesian cultural heritage.



Figure 8. Object sign of “*Gunungan Wayang*” and “*Egrang*”
Source: Documentation from The Cucumber Village (*Desa Timun*) youtube channel, 2024



Figure 9. Title “*Desa Timun*” with Java script above it
Source: Kompas, 2022



Figure 10. *Gunungan Wayang*
Source: Kompas, 2022



Figure 11. Egrang
Source: Indonesia.go.id, 2019

Background Music

The final aspect to be analyzed is the sound in the opening song video. In this opening song, a *representamen* in the form of traditional musical instruments can be heard as background music and. This *representamen* represents the *object* sign of gamelan instruments and signifies the *interpretant* element namely, the traditional Indonesian musical instruments that reinforces the Nusantara atmosphere within the opening song.

To facilitate clearer understanding, the overall results of the Charles Sanders Peirce semiotic analysis of Nusantara cultural elements in this opening song are presented in the table 1:

Table 1. Summary of Peircean Semiotic Analysis Results in the Opening Song “Desa Timun”

| Representamen | Object | Interpretant | Aspect of Animation |
|--|---|---|---|
| Cinematography with beige color palette and bright lighting in the textured background, with characters shown only in black and eye level camera | Puppet shadows on the <i>kelir</i> (screen) with lamp illumination | The atmosphere of a <i>wayang kulit</i> performance; traditional nuance | Cinematography |
| Flat 2D characters with motifs and patterns | Two-dimensional <i>wayang kulit</i> with carved details and batik ornaments | Indonesian cultural identity; Nusantara artistic heritage | Character (the shared design patterns and recurring stylistic approaches) |
| Characters with simple, small shapes, round base forms, and curved lines | <i>Chibi</i> -style character design | Effort to create works more appealing to children and reflect modern innovation | |
| Supporting lines connected to characters | Puppet movement mechanism by the <i>dalang</i> using <i>cepurit</i> sticks | Connection to performance traditions, authenticity | |
| Animal-like ears on character designs | Anthropomorphism of the <i>kancil</i> animal figure | Represents cleverness and agility of the main characters | |
| Silhouette of buildings and two trees | <i>Joglo</i> house, banana tree, and palm tree | Represents the atmosphere of Indonesian rural villages | Settings |
| Silhouette of square and cone-shaped objects, character activities | <i>Wayang gunungan</i> and <i>egrang</i> (bamboo stilts) | Embodiment of Indonesian culture and heritage | Object and Activity |
| Traditional <i>gamelan</i> music | Traditional Javanese musical instruments | Javanese cultural heritage, authenticity, local atmosphere | Music |

Trichotomy of Signs

After analyzing the elements of *representamen*, *object*, and *interpretant*, the analysis classifies into three trichotomies of Sander Pierce's semiotics. This step aims to review all the identified signs to clearly outline the findings derived from the analysis.

The first trichotomy, the classification of the Sign (Representamen) in itself, is divided as follows:

Qualisign

The colors that appear, the background textures, the central light effect with darkened edges, the selected camera angles, the overall sense of flatness, the way the characters are illustrated and designed, how the objects and settings appears on the screen, and the music that accompanies the opening sequence, all of these function as Qualisigns. They are perceptual qualities received in their raw form, producing particular moods and impressions in the viewer's mind.

Sinsign

The opening video itself, along with the specific clips analyzed in this study, serves as Sinsigns. These represent concrete, factual manifestations of the sign, actual instances that occur within the animation. Provide observable evidence of how cultural elements are presented in this particular sequence.

Legisign

The "Aniwayang" itself serves as the legisign, because it follows a concept system, rule, or convention in how the animation is created to revitalize and recontextualize culture, it is a combination of all the qualisign previously described. It adapts the atmosphere of wayang performances (a legisign himself), along with various cultural objects and traditional music into a modern, child-friendly visual form using the techniques of digital animation (a legisign himself). Despite these modernizations, the series maintains a deliberate sense of flatness that echoes the visual characteristics of traditional *wayang kulit*.

The second trichotomy, the classification by relation to the object, is divided as follows:

Icon

The character design is depicted in a two-dimensional side view and enriched with batik motif details. This visual style serves as an icon that explicitly replicates the visual characteristics of wayang kulit. The simplified physical forms and chibi-style proportions also function as icons, making it easier for young audiences to recognize the characters. The background setting featuring a joglo house with banana and palm trees serves as an icon replicating the atmosphere of Indonesian villages. Additionally, the wayang gunung and egrang act as icons representing elements of Nusantara culture in this opening animation.

Index

The depiction of characters with animal ears serves as an index indicating the anthropomorphic transformation of the kancil, a clever animal figure well-known in Indonesian folklore. The visible lines supporting each character are an index referring to the physical mechanism used by a dalang (puppet master) to manipulate the puppets. The cinematography that employs a limited color palette, such as a beige background with bright light in the center, while the characters and environment appear only as black silhouettes, also functions as an index directly referencing the wayang kulit performance, where puppet shadows are projected onto an illuminated screen (kelir).

Symbol

The batik motifs integrated into the characters' visuals serve as symbols directly associated with Indonesian visual identity. Beyond the batik patterns, symbolism also appears through the anthropomorphism of the kancil, known as a small, clever, and agile creature. Auditorily, the use of traditional gamelan music acts as a strong symbol, directly associating the animation with Nusantara

culture and wayang performances.

Lastly the third trichotomy, classifies the sign based on the type of effect or meaning it generates in the mind of the interpreter. However, because this is the final trichotomy, the author will also immediately describe the main classes of Charles Sanders Peirce signs that appear, as follows:

Rheme

When we observe the signs separately and in their raw form (*qualisigns*), various meanings emerge, such as “animation,” “wayang,” “kelir,” “performance,” “chibi,” “anthropomorphism,” “kancil,” “hybrid,” “culture,” “Nusantara,” and “gamelan music.”

These are categorized as Rhematic Icon Qualisigns. However, when these elements are viewed as a unified sign system under the concept of “Aniwayang” (*legisign*), the meanings become more cohesive. Interpretations such as “flat and black presentation of character and object,” “flat camera angle,” “characters designed in a chibi style,” and “characters with wayang-inspired aesthetics” emerge, forming Rhematic Icon Legisigns. Interpretations such as “animation with the atmosphere of a wayang performance,” “character movement supported by cempurit,” “character with animal like ear” and “musical nuances resembling traditional wayang performances” fall under Rhematic Indexical Legisigns. Meanwhile, interpretations such as “characters as anthropomorphic representations of the kancil”, “chibi style for children” and “musical nuances symbolizing traditional wayang performances” belong to Rhematic Symbolic Legisigns.

Dicent

Next, following the *rheme*, the meaning within the interpretant will state the facts regarding the observed sign in the animation. “The overall animation ambiance is indeed made to refer to the *wayang* performance: Characters and objects are deliberately created with a flat impression and support sticks and are only shown as shadows, indicating the ambiance of a *wayang* performance; Gamelan music is used as background music, reinforcing the *wayang* performance ambiance” all of this forming Dicent Indexical Legisign. Meanwhile “The characters are designed by combining *wayang* aesthetics with the contemporary chibi style for children and symbolism of kancil character” forming Dicent Symbolic Legisign.

Argument

After the rheme and dicent levels emerge, the final interpretation arises within the interpretant, formed through a logical synthesis of all the signs read as legisigns, which collectively symbolize a unified meaning. This final interpretation (Argument Symbolic Legisign) is that “*Aniwayang Desa Timun* is an animation that integrates various nuances of the *wayang kulit* performance with contemporary visual styles. This approach functions as a form of cultural revitalization carried out by the *Desa Timun* series, making traditional wayang performances more relevant to modern audiences. The atmosphere of wayang and its modern recontextualization are constructed through numerous signs drawn from both traditions, conveyed iconically, indexically, and symbolically. These signs reinterpret the original cultural elements without significantly altering their essence, while still ensuring that the adaptation remains accessible and meaningful for contemporary audience.”

To facilitate clearer understanding, the overall results of the analysis of the main classes of Charles Sanders Peirce’s signs identified in the animation are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Peircean Semiotic Classes of Sign.

| | | Qualisign (individual sign) | Sinsign | Legisign (The concept of “Aniwayang”) |
|----------|------|---|---------|---|
| Rhematic | Icon | “animation,” “wayang,” “kelir,” “performance,” “chibi,” “anthropomorphism,” “kancil,” | | “flat and black presentation of character and object,” “flat camera angle,” “characters |

| | | | | |
|-----------------|--------|--|--|---|
| | | “hybrid,” “culture,” “Nusantara,” and “gamelan music.” Etc, all of the raw quality of sign perceived and interpreted. | The opening video itself, along with the specific clips analyzed in this study | designed in a chibi style,” and “characters with wayang-inspired aesthetics” |
| | Index | | | “animation with the atmosphere of a wayang performance,” “character movement supported by cempurit,” “character with animal like ear” and “musical nuances resembling traditional wayang performances” |
| | Symbol | | | “characters as anthropomorphic representations of the kancil”, “chibi style for children” and “musical nuances symbolizing traditional wayang performances” |
| Decent | Index | | The opening video itself, along with the specific clips analyzed in this study | "The overall animation ambiance is indeed made to refer to the wayang performance: Characters and objects are deliberately created with a flat impression and support sticks and are only shown as shadows, indicating the ambiance of a wayang performance; Gamelan music is used as background music, reinforcing the wayang performance ambiance" |
| | Symbol | | | “The characters are designed by combining wayang aesthetics with the contemporary chibi style for children and symbolism of kancil character" forming Dicient Symbolic Legisign. |
| Argument | Symbol | | | “Aniwayang Desa Timun is an animation that integrates various nuances of the wayang kulit performance with contemporary visual styles. This approach functions as a form of cultural revitalization carried out by the Desa Timun series, making traditional wayang performances more relevant to contemporer audiences. The atmosphere of wayang and its modern recontextualization are constructed through numerous signs drawn from both traditions, presented iconically, indexically, and symbolically. These new legisigns reinterpret the original cultural elements without significantly altering their essence, while still ensuring that the adaptation remains accessible and meaningful for contemporary audiences.” |

Discussion

After analyzing the cultural elements identified through the signs present in the opening song of the Desa Timun series, this discussion returns to the main objective of the research: to understand how Indonesian cultural elements are carried out by Aniwayang Studio, and thereby examine how innovation is implemented in their cultural preservation efforts. Although this has been implicitly conveyed throughout the semiotic analysis, the following section elaborates on it more explicitly.

This discussion is grounded in the findings derived from the Argument Symbolic Legisign stage of the analysis. Broadly, Aniwayang Desa Timun is an animation that integrates multiple nuances of wayang kulit performances with contemporary visual styles. But how is this integration actually achieved by Aniwayang Studio? The answer emerges from the combination of numerous raw signs (qualisigns) that collectively form a new conceptual sign “Aniwayang” (legisign). The studio preserves various original audiovisual aspects of wayang kulit: Through iconic representation by maintaining visual similarities to the traditional performance; through indexical representation by adapting causal

elements from the authentic staging (such as lighting, shadow projection, and puppet mechanics); and through symbolic representation by incorporating culturally established visual and musical symbols of Nusantara heritage, especially those associated with wayang.

At the same time, similar strategies are applied to the aspects of modernization and recontextualization, such as adopting a contemporary chibi character-design style, implementing anthropomorphic features, and applying modern animation principles. These, too, are expressed iconically, indexically, and symbolically. The fusion of these classical and modern signs ultimately constructs a new legisign, a conceptual hybrid between two existing legisigns: the traditional wayang kulit performance and modern digital animation. This hybrid form becomes “Aniwayang” itself.

Rather than simply replicating a wayang performance in digital format, the studio recontextualizes and revitalizes it by blending traditional elements with contemporary design choices and by utilizing the expressive possibilities of digital animation. Conversely, they also avoid merely creating a modern animation and only labeling it with cultural element such name and terms from original wayang performance or Nusantara heritage. Instead, the studio faithfully brings the atmosphere of the performance into digital space. This hybridization successfully revitalizes the original audiovisual cultural elements without significantly altering their essence, while ensuring that the adaptation remains accessible and meaningful to contemporary audiences.

As explained in the background section, this approach has proven effective, as demonstrated by several global achievements and forms of recognition:

1. World Osaka Expo 2025: *Desa Timun*'s children's wayang performance became a focal point of Indonesia's cultural diplomacy (Sofia, 2025).
2. Kineko International Children's Film Festival: Participation in Tokyo, including live Japanese dubbing sessions (*The Cucumber Village (Desa Timun)*, 2024).
3. Government support, such as collaboration with Indonesiana.TV under the Ministry of Education and Culture (Fahas, 2024).

Therefore, this approach of cultural revitalization implemented by Aniwayang Studio serves as a key recommendation of this study for future efforts and research on revitalizing traditional cultural heritage.

Conclusion

This study aimed to understand how Nusantara cultural elements (particularly the traditional wayang kulit) are carried out by Aniwayang Studio within the opening song of the *Desa Timun* animation through Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework. Thereby examine how innovation is implemented in their cultural preservation efforts.

It is concluded that the Aniwayang *Desa Timun* is an animation that integrates multiple nuances of wayang kulit performances with contemporary visual styles. The atmosphere of wayang and its modern recontextualization are constructed through numerous signs drawn from both traditions, presented iconically, indexically, and symbolically. The fusion of these classical and modern signs ultimately constructs a new legisign, a conceptual hybrid between two existing legisigns: the traditional wayang kulit performance and modern digital animation. This hybrid form becomes “Aniwayang” itself. These legisigns reinterpret the original cultural elements without significantly altering their essence, while still ensuring that the adaptation remains accessible and meaningful for contemporary audiences. This approach functions as a form of cultural revitalization carried out by the *Desa Timun* series, enabling traditional wayang performances to become more relevant to contemporary audiences. This strategy has proven effective, as demonstrated by the various global achievements and recognitions received by Aniwayang Studio.

The findings of this study contribute to the development of applied semiotics theory of Charles Sander's pierce for studying a unique case study that explores the intersection and integration of traditional nusantara heritage with modern media. In this case, performing arts (wayang) and modern

digital media that has achieved global recognition. Practically, the revitalization approach implemented by Aniwayang Studio, as outlined in this research, serves as a key recommendation for future cultural revitalization efforts and related studies. It also provides a valuable reference for animation studios seeking to preserve Nusantara cultural heritage effectively through contemporary digital media.

This research is qualitative and limited to the semiotic analysis of a single object, the opening song video, which functions as a master sign. This limitation means the study could not measure the audience's reception (effectiveness) of the transmitted cultural signs, nor could it analyze the evolution of these cultural signs within the narrative context of the entire series. Future research is recommended to employ a mixed-method approach that combines semiotic analysis with audience reception studies (e.g., through surveys or interviews) to measure the actual effectiveness of communicating these cultural signs, especially among the target child audience. Furthermore, future research could expand the scope of analysis to include the entire series to examine more complex cultural messages throughout the storyline

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