

## DESIGNING 2D ASSETS AS DIGITAL PROMOTIONAL MEDIA FOR BATAK MANDAILING CULTURE

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**Abstract.** Designing 2D Assets as Digital Promotional Media for Batak Mandailing Traditional Clothing. This study is motivated by the declining appreciation of younger generations for local culture amid globalization and the rapid development of digital media. The research object focuses on Batak Mandailing traditional clothing, visualized in the form of 2D illustration assets, including men's and women's traditional attire and supporting elements such as ulos, bulang, colors, and traditional accessories. This study aims to design representative and communicative 2D visual assets as digital promotional media as well as a means of cultural education. The method used is descriptive qualitative research with a visual design approach through the stages of data collection, visual analysis, sketching, digitalization, coloring, and finalization. The results show that 2D illustrations in a semi-realistic style can visually represent Mandailing traditional clothing without eliminating its symbolic values. In addition, this visualization can enhance aesthetic appeal, making it more acceptable to audiences, especially younger generations. In conclusion, the design of 2D illustration assets for Batak Mandailing traditional clothing can serve as an effective digital promotional medium as well as a visual educational tool to support the preservation and strengthening of local cultural identity in the digital era.

**Keywords:** 2D Assets, Mandailing Traditional Clothing, Digital Promotion, Illustration, Visual Media.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with highly diverse cultural wealth, manifested in languages, customs, arts, and traditional clothing. Each region has a distinctive cultural identity that forms an important part of the nation's heritage and therefore needs to be preserved, maintained, and introduced to the wider community. One of these cultural treasures is Batak Mandailing culture, originating from North Sumatra. This culture has a strong visual identity, one of which is reflected in its traditional clothing, which is rich in aesthetic, symbolic, and philosophical values.

Batak Mandailing traditional clothing is not merely traditional attire, but also a representation of cultural identity that reflects the social values, status, honor, and local wisdom of its people. The visual elements found in the traditional clothing, such as garment forms, the use of ulos, head accessories, colors, and decorative motifs, have distinctive characteristics that differentiate them from other cultures. This uniqueness makes Batak Mandailing traditional clothing a cultural element with strong potential to be developed as a visual promotional medium.

Amid the rapid flow of globalization and the development of popular culture, younger generations' interest in local culture tends to decline. Foreign cultures, which are more easily accessed through digital media, are often better known than local regional cultures. This condition has caused various elements of local culture, including traditional clothing, to be increasingly less understood in depth by society, particularly

among young people. If this situation continues, traditional clothing will no longer be viewed as a living part of cultural identity, but merely as a ceremonial symbol limited to certain events.

One effort that can be made to address this issue is to utilize digital visual media as a means of cultural promotion. Digital media currently plays a very important role in disseminating information because it is fast, broad-reaching, interactive, and easily accessible. In this context, 2D illustration is one form of visual communication media that is effective in introducing traditional clothing to the public. 2D illustration has the ability to simplify visual objects without removing their main characteristics, making them easier to understand, attractive, and applicable to various digital media needs such as social media content, posters, animation, and other promotional media.

So far, the promotion of Batak culture in digital media has tended to display general elements, such as dance, music, or traditional houses, while the visualization of traditional clothing as a cultural identity has not been widely developed specifically in the form of digital design assets. In fact, Batak Mandailing traditional clothing has rich visual potential to be developed into 2D illustration assets. The depiction of Batak Mandailing men's and women's traditional clothing through a well-conceptualized visual approach can serve as a medium that is not only aesthetically appealing but also capable of conveying cultural information in a more communicative and educational manner.

Based on this background, this study focuses on designing 2D assets of Batak Mandailing traditional clothing as digital promotional media. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a visual design approach. This method is used to understand the visual elements of Batak Mandailing traditional clothing, identify its main characteristics, and translate them into representative and communicative 2D illustrations.

Through this design process, it is expected that 2D visual assets of Batak Mandailing traditional clothing can be produced to strengthen the promotion of local culture in the digital sphere. In addition to serving as promotional media, these visual assets are also expected to function as educational tools that help the public recognize the forms, elements, and cultural values contained in Batak Mandailing traditional clothing. Thus, the design of these 2D assets can contribute to cultural preservation efforts while supporting the development of local cultural visual identity in the fields of visual communication design and the creative industry.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a visual communication design approach. This method was chosen to explore, understand, and represent the visual elements of Batak Mandailing traditional clothing in the form of communicative and contextual 2D illustrations as digital promotional media.

### Type of Research

The type of research used is descriptive qualitative research. This study focuses on collecting data in the form of visual information and literature specifically related to Batak Mandailing traditional clothing, both men's and women's attire. The data are then analyzed to identify the main visual elements, which are subsequently applied in the design process of 2D illustration assets.

### Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques in this study include:

#### a. Literature Study

Collecting data from journals, books, articles, and other written sources that discuss Batak Mandailing traditional clothing, including clothing structure, the function of *ulos*, the symbolic meaning of colors, and the use of accessories such as *bulang*, bracelets, and other ornaments.

#### b. Visual Study (Image References)

Collecting visual references in the form of photographs and image documentation of Batak Mandailing traditional clothing from various sources as references in the visualization process. This study aims to maintain the suitability of forms, proportions, colors, and ornamental details so that they continue to represent the characteristics of the original culture.

#### c. Digital Media Observation

Observing existing forms of visualization and promotion of Batak traditional clothing on social media. This observation aims to identify weaknesses in visual presentation and discover opportunities for development through a more attractive and communicative 2D illustration approach.

### Design Stages

The design process of 2D assets for Batak Mandailing traditional clothing was carried out through several stages as follows:

#### a. Material Collecting

The stage of collecting data and visual references focusing on Batak Mandailing traditional clothing, including clothing forms, *ulos* motifs, head accessories (*bulang*), and other complementary elements.

#### b. Concept Sketching (Concept Art)

Creating rough sketches as the visual basis for determining composition, body proportions, and the structure of men's and women's traditional clothing before entering the digitalization stage.

#### c. Digitalization Process

Converting sketches into digital illustrations through the stages of outline creation and line art. At this stage, ornamental details such as *ulos* motifs, fabric folds, and distinctive Mandailing accessories are also added.

#### d. Coloring and Finishing

Applying colors according to original cultural references, such as the dominance of red, black, and gold, as well as adding lighting and shadow effects to strengthen the visual dimension.

#### e. Asset Finalization

Producing 2D illustration assets of Batak Mandailing traditional clothing that are ready to be used as digital promotional media on various platforms, such as social media, digital posters, and other visual content.

### Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed descriptively by identifying the main visual elements of Batak Mandailing traditional clothing, such as clothing forms, *ulos* motifs, colors, and accessories. Furthermore, these elements were simplified without eliminating their original cultural values and meanings, so that they could be applied into a semi-realistic illustration style that is more adaptive to digital media.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The design of assets in this study focuses on the visualization of Batak Mandailing traditional clothing in the form of 2D illustrations as digital promotional media. Traditional clothing was chosen as the main object because it has strong visual and symbolic values in representing Mandailing cultural identity. Unlike previous approaches that include various cultural elements, this study specifically emphasizes traditional clothing as the main representation, because it contains various important elements such as *ulos*, *bulang*, colors, and accessories that have philosophical and social meanings in the life of the Mandailing community.

The design concept was carried out by integrating traditional cultural elements into digital visual media through a 2D illustration approach. This approach aims to produce visuals that are not only aesthetically appealing but also able to communicate cultural values to audiences, especially

younger generations. In this process, the visual style used is semi-realistic, which combines realistic forms with visual simplification in order to maintain the original characteristics of the traditional clothing while making it more flexible and adaptive for digital media needs such as social media content.

In the design process, each element of Batak Mandailing traditional clothing was analyzed based on its symbolic function. *Ulos*, as the main element, does not only function as a complementary cloth in the attire but also carries meaning as a symbol of warmth, protection, and kinship relations in Mandailing customs. *Bulang* as a head covering reflects honor, social status, and the role of individuals in the customary structure. Meanwhile, the use of red, black, and gold has symbolic meanings related to courage, authority, and nobility. This is in line with the opinion of Harahap (2022), a Mandailing customary figure, who states that *ulos* is not merely a traditional cloth, but a symbol of respect and a bond of social relations in the life of the Mandailing customary community.

Furthermore, Nasution (2021), as a Mandailing customary figure, also explains that the use of *bulang* for men and women has different meanings, where *bulang* for men symbolizes leadership and responsibility, while for women it reflects honor and elegance within the customary structure. Thus, each element in Mandailing traditional clothing does not only have an aesthetic function but also serves as a medium for communicating cultural values that have been passed down from generation to generation.

The visualization stage began with the creation of rough sketches, or concept art, which functioned to determine the basic composition, body proportions, and placement of main elements such as *ulos* and *bulang*. At this stage, form exploration was carried out to ensure that the resulting visual structure remained in accordance with the characteristics of Mandailing traditional clothing. These initial sketches became the basis for the digitalization process, so that the design could proceed systematically and purposefully without eliminating the cultural values contained in each visual element.



**Figure 1. Concept Art**

The initial sketch, or concept art, of Batak Mandailing traditional clothing displays the basic composition of men's and women's attire, including body proportions, the position of *ulos*, the form of *bulang*, and the main clothing structure as a reference in the digitalization process.

When compared with other Batak traditional clothing, such as Batak Toba, Mandailing traditional clothing has several

distinctive similarities and differences. The main similarity lies in the use of *ulos* as an important element in the attire, as well as the dominance of red, black, and gold, which have symbolic meanings. However, Mandailing traditional clothing tends to be more closed, indicating the influence of Malay and Islamic cultures. In addition, the form of *bulang* in Mandailing has its own characteristics that distinguish it from other Batak sub-ethnic groups, as well as the use of relatively simpler ornaments. These differences show that although they originate from the same cultural family, Mandailing traditional clothing has a unique and distinctive visual identity.

#### **Material Collecting**

The material collecting stage in this study focuses on collecting data and visual references specifically related to Batak Mandailing traditional clothing. This process was carried out through literature studies and the collection of visual references from various sources, such as journals, books, cultural documentation, and digital media. The data collected were not only in the form of visual representations of traditional clothing, but also included the symbolic elements contained within it, such as the use of *ulos*, *bulang*, colors, and other supporting accessories.

The collection of visual references aims to maintain the accuracy of cultural forms and meanings in the design process. This is in line with the opinion of Situmorang (2018), who states that Batak Mandailing traditional clothing has a visual structure that cannot be separated from the cultural values and social system of its community.

In addition, based on an interview with Harahap (2022), a Mandailing customary figure, it was explained that every element in traditional clothing has a symbolic function that cannot be separated from customary life. He stated that:

"*Ulos* in Mandailing traditional clothing is not only a complement to the attire, but also a symbol of respect, protection, and kinship ties that have been passed down from generation to generation."

This opinion reinforces that the data collection stage does not only focus on visual aspects, but also on understanding the symbolic meanings contained in Batak Mandailing traditional clothing.

#### **Assembly Stage**

The assembly stage is the process of arranging and processing the collected visual references as the basis for designing 2D illustration assets. At this stage, various references of Mandailing traditional clothing were analyzed to determine the main visual elements to be visualized, such as clothing forms, *ulos* structure, *bulang* models, and color composition.

This process was carried out by considering not only aesthetic aspects but also the symbolic meanings contained in each visual element. According to Nasution (2021), as a Mandailing customary figure, the structure of traditional clothing has its own rules that reflect the identity and social role of individuals in society. He stated that:

"Every part of Mandailing traditional clothing, from *bulang* to *ulos*, has a meaning related to honor, status, and responsibility in custom."

Thus, the assembly stage does not only function as a technical process in arranging visual references, but also as a

process of cultural interpretation that ensures the resulting design continues to accurately represent Mandailing customary values.



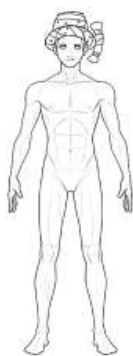
**Figure 2. Reference of Batak Mandailing Traditional Clothing (2024, SDN 13)**

**Men’s Traditional Clothing**

The design of Mandailing men’s traditional clothing was carried out through visual stages starting from sketch creation to the final coloring stage. The initial stage began with the creation of a head accessory in the form of *bulang* as the main element that reflects the identity of Mandailing men. In this process, the form and structure of the *bulang* were designed based on cultural visual references so that they remained in accordance with their original characteristics.

*Bulang* has a strong symbolic meaning in Mandailing culture. Based on an interview with Harahap (2022), a Mandailing customary figure, it was explained that:

“*Bulang* on Mandailing men is not only a head covering, but also a symbol of honor and responsibility as a leader in the family and customary community.”



**Figure 3. Process of Creating Men’s Traditional Clothing**

In the next stage, a silhouette of the shawl cloth or *ulos* worn diagonally across the man’s chest was created. This process was carried out by determining the direction of the cloth’s fall, then drawing the outline of the *ulos* silhouette without motif details.



**Figure 4. Process of Creating Men’s Traditional Clothing**

Next, accessories were created in the form of bracelets on both arms, a waist belt, and a *piso* weapon sheath, which are distinctive characteristics of Mandailing men’s traditional attire



**Figure 5. Process of Creating Men’s Traditional Clothing**

In the following stage, the process of creating the jacket worn as the upper garment of Mandailing men’s attire was carried out. The depiction of the jacket was made by following body proportions consisting of the collar, tie, sleeves, and jacket length.



**Figure 6. Process of Creating Men’s Traditional Clothing**

In the next stage, the design of the sarong and trousers as the lower part of the attire was created, along with the depiction of footwear.



**Figure 7. Process of Creating Men’s Traditional Clothing**

The stage of designing the upper and lower garments was adjusted to body proportions and the characteristics of Mandailing traditional clothing.

The final stage included the process of finalizing the line art and coloring. Coloring was carried out using the distinctive Mandailing colors, namely red, black, and gold, which have symbolic meanings.

According to Harahap (2022):

“Colors in Mandailing traditional clothing reflect the values of courage, authority, and nobility that are highly upheld in custom.”



**Figure 8. Process of Creating Men’s Traditional Clothing**

The final stage involved refining the lines and coloring by applying the distinctive Mandailing colors and *ulos* motifs.



**Figure 9. Process of Creating Men’s Traditional Clothing**

**Women’s Traditional Clothing**

The design of Mandailing women’s traditional clothing was carried out through systematic visual stages, starting from

sketch creation to the final coloring process. The initial stage began with the design of a head accessory in the form of *bulang* as the main element in Mandailing women’s traditional attire. This process began by determining the center line of the head to ensure that the position of the *bulang* remained symmetrical and proportional, then continued with the creation of the basic silhouette and *ruyung* structure according to cultural references.



**Figure 10. Process of Creating Women’s Traditional Clothing**

Description: The initial stage of creating *bulang* in Mandailing women’s traditional attire by considering the proportions and structure of the form.

*Bulang* in Mandailing women’s attire has symbolic meaning as a symbol of honor, elegance, and social status in customary society. Based on an interview with Nasution (2021), a Mandailing customary figure, it was stated that:

“*Bulang* in Mandailing women symbolizes honor and position in custom, and reflects the role of women in preserving cultural values.”

The next stage involved creating the basic necklace and the silhouette of the upper part of the *ulos* shawl. This process paid attention to the structure of the fabric folds and body proportions so that they remained in accordance with the characteristics of Mandailing traditional clothing. *Ulos* in women’s attire functions not only as a visual element but also has strong symbolic meaning.



**Figure 11. Process of Creating Women’s Traditional Clothing**

The stage of creating the silhouette of *ulos* and the necklace as the main elements in the upper part of Mandailing women's attire.

According to Harahap (2022), *ulos* in Mandailing women's traditional clothing symbolizes affection, protection, and kinship bonds in the social life of the community. This shows that *ulos* functions not only as a clothing complement but also as a symbol of cultural values.

The next stage was the creation of the silhouette of the *baju kurung* as the main upper garment. The *baju kurung* was designed by considering its loose and closed form as a representation of the value of modesty in Mandailing culture.



**Figure 12. Process of Creating Women's Traditional Clothing**

The stage of creating the silhouette of the *baju kurung* as the main upper garment in Mandailing women's traditional clothing.

Next, the lower part of the attire was arranged in the form of a long skirt made to reach the ankles, along with the addition of traditional footwear. These elements were arranged by considering visual balance and conformity with cultural references.



**Figure 13. Process of Creating Women's Traditional Clothing**

The stage of creating the long skirt and footwear as the lower part of Mandailing women's traditional attire.

According to Siregar (2020), the closed form of Mandailing women's clothing reflects the value of modesty

and the influence of Malay and Islamic cultures in the life of the Mandailing community. This shows that traditional clothing functions not only as a visual identity but also as a representation of social values.

The next stage was the finalization of the line art, namely the refinement of all line elements to produce a neater and more structured visual form.



**Figure 14. Process of Creating Women's Traditional Clothing**

Refinement of the lines, or line art, of all elements of Mandailing women's traditional attire to produce a neat and detailed visual.

The final stage was the coloring process by applying the distinctive Mandailing colors, namely red, black, and gold, as well as adding details of *ulos* motifs. These colors have symbolic meanings related to beauty, nobility, and honor in Mandailing culture.



**Figure 15. Process of Creating Women's Traditional Clothing**

The final coloring stage with the application of distinctive Mandailing colors and the addition of *ulos* motifs as cultural identity.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the study on the design of 2D illustration assets as digital promotional media for Batak Mandailing culture, it can be concluded that the visualization

of Mandailing traditional clothing in the form of 2D illustrations is able to serve as an effective medium for conveying cultural identity in a communicative and attractive manner. Traditional clothing, both men's and women's, was not only successfully visualized representatively but also maintained the symbolic values contained in each of its elements, such as *ulos*, *bulang*, colors, and clothing structure. The design process, which was carried out through the stages of data collection, visual analysis, sketching, digitalization, and coloring, shows that the semi-realistic illustration approach is able to bridge the authenticity of cultural forms with the visual needs of digital media. The visual simplification carried out does not eliminate philosophical meanings, but rather strengthens visual appeal so that it is easier for audiences, especially younger generations, to understand. In addition, the results of the study also show that every element in Mandailing traditional clothing has a symbolic function related to social values, honor, and kinship relations within the community. This confirms that traditional clothing does not only function as attire, but also as a medium of cultural communication that contains local values that are important to preserve. In the context of cultural comparison, Mandailing traditional clothing has similarities with other Batak sub-ethnic groups in the use of *ulos* and traditional colors, but it still has distinctive characteristics, such as the form of *bulang* and a more closed clothing structure. This uniqueness shows that Mandailing traditional clothing has a strong visual identity and deserves to be developed as a medium for cultural promotion. Overall, this study contributes to the field of visual communication design by presenting a digital-based cultural asset design approach that functions not only as promotional media but also as a means of visual education. The resulting 2D illustration assets have the potential to be used on various digital platforms and in the creative industry, thereby supporting efforts to preserve and strengthen Batak Mandailing cultural identity in the digital era.

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