
Article

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**Mythological Adaptation of Sun and Kadita through Narrative
Appearance and Mechanics in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang***

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Abstract

This study examines the adaptation of Sun Wukong (Chinese mythology) and Nyi Roro Kidul (Javanese mythology) into *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* heroes Sun and Kadita, analyzing narrative, visual appearance, and gameplay mechanics. Grounded in Hutcheon's adaptation theory—particularly “repetition without replication”—this research employs a descriptive qualitative comparative method through textual analysis of mythological narratives, cultural references, and official in-game materials. While prior studies have explored mythological adaptation in *Mobile Legends* broadly, Kadita's visual symbolism, and gender representation, comparative scholarship examining both heroes across narrative, appearance, and mechanics within a unified framework remains limited. Findings reveal that *Mobile Legends* preserves recognizable symbolic identities from both mythologies while selectively transforming philosophical, ritual, and socio-cultural meanings to suit participatory gaming structures and global commercial logic. Sun demonstrates strong fidelity through cloning, transformation, and staff combat mechanics, yet simplifies Sun Wukong's spiritual journey. Kadita retains maritime sovereignty and royal symbolism while transforming Nyi Roro Kidul's communal and ritual identity into individualized heroism. This study concludes that mythological adaptation in digital games functions as strategic reinterpretation, balancing cultural recognizability, medium-specific interactivity, and market-driven design.

Keywords: mythological adaptation; *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang*; digital game culture; Sun; Kadita

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1. Introduction

Digital gaming has become a key platform for sharing culture and reinterpreting myths in today's media environment. In contrast to passive forms of media like movies or books, video games turn original stories into interactive experiences, requiring players to not just watch but actively engage with myths through gameplay choices. This divergence is important from a theoretical standpoint: as stated by Hutcheon (2006), adaptation functions as “repetition without replication,” where recognizable cultural elements are kept but altered significantly for different media, audiences, and objectives. In the realm of digital gaming, this change goes further than just story and visuals; it also involves the very structure of how a game is played — a point emphasized by (Meakin, 2024), who claims that video games consist of interconnected structural elements that together convey meaning, with narratives being

influenced by the game's medium inherently. This unique structural nature of games makes them a complex space for adapting myths, which cannot be properly understood using the criteria applicable to literature or film.

Within this context, Mobile Legends: Bang Bang stands out as a notable example. This game, one of the most popular multiplayer online battle arenas worldwide, especially in Southeast Asia, features heroes from a wide variety of mythological, historical, and cultural backgrounds. Vandewalle (2024) posits that mythological video games act like "interactive mythology museums," as they compile and rearrange narratives from diverse cultures into playable formats, with Mobile Legends: Bang Bang serving as a prime illustration of this by transforming culturally rich mythic figures into digital characters that can be distributed globally. What sets this game apart from others inspired by myths is the tension it creates between cultural uniqueness and commercial appeal — a tension that becomes most insightful when looking at heroes from different mythological traditions that do not align with one another.

This research centers on two such heroes: Sun, who is based on Sun Wukong from the Chinese classic *Journey to the West*, and Kadita, who is inspired by Nyi Roro Kidul, the Southern Sea Queen in Javanese belief. These two characters are chosen not just for their fame, but for the structural differences their original myths embody. The tale of Sun Wukong is characterized by episodic events, action, and themes of transformation and combat — elements that adapt easily into game mechanics. In contrast, Nyi Roro Kidul's mythology focuses on rituals, ecological symbolism, and cosmic significance. Kristianto et al. (2024) highlight that Nyi Roro Kidul is rich with religious, ecological, and cosmic meanings within Javanese maritime culture — meanings that present distinct challenges when translated into an interactive skill set. By investigating how these two mythological traditions are treated in terms of narrative, visual style, and gameplay within the same game, this research seeks to reveal that the process of adaptation is shaped not only by artistic intentions but also by the inherent properties and commercial principles of the gaming medium itself.

Current research on the adaptation of mythology in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang has provided valuable insights, although they are somewhat limited. Hidayaturrohim (2021) explores mythological adaptation through several heroes, addressing narrative, visual, and mechanical aspects; however, the wide-ranging nature of the study sacrifices some depth of analysis. As a result, no single hero is thoroughly compared, and the connections between the different adaptive aspects remain insufficiently examined. Meanwhile, (Muhdaliha et al., 2025) focus specifically on Kadita's visual design and its ties to Nyi Roro Kidul, but the analysis does not consider how her mythological character is altered in terms of narrative or gameplay elements. Rubinia (2025) looks into how female heroes are represented in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang, contributing to the critique of representation, yet it does not prioritize mythological adaptation as its primary focus. Together, these studies indicate a recurring trend: adaptation is often seen as a one-dimensional event instead of a complex, interconnected process.

This lack of comprehensive analysis highlights a deeper issue. In a game such as Mobile Legends: Bang Bang, mythological adaptation occurs across how a myth is narrated, how it is visually represented, and how it is made interactive — and these three aspects influence each other rather than stand alone. No prior study has looked at Sun and Kadita through all three aspects within a unified comparative approach, nor has Kadita's established visual adaptation been methodically linked to her narrative changes or gameplay evolution. This research aims to fill that void by exploring how Mobile Legends: Bang Bang modifies two distinct mythologies in terms of narrative, visual style, and gameplay mechanics, as well as what the comparison of Sun and Kadita can reveal about the limitations and opportunities inherent in mythological adaptation within digital gaming contexts.

The choice of these two heroes is intentional in terms of analysis. They signify not only different cultural heritages, but also different forms of mythological reasoning — one based on individual action and autonomy, while the other is rooted in ritual, ecology, and shared cosmology. This difference makes

them a suitable pair for examining how the requirements of interactive game design shape, and occasionally alter, the mythological elements they utilize.

The adaptation theory introduced by (Hutcheon, 2006) serves as the main analytical basis for this research. They assert that adaptation should not be seen as a lesser version of its original source, nor should it be assessed based on how faithfully it replicates that source. Instead, it stands as a unique creative and interpretive process. The idea of "repetition without replication" highlights this idea effectively: adaptations must keep identifiable aspects from their origins—like characters, storylines, and symbolic themes—while altering them to fit into a new medium, cultural setting, and audience. Importantly, Hutcheon and O'Flynn conceptualize adaptation as both a created text and a dynamic process that forges intertextual links between the original and its adaptation without favoring one over the other.

An important aspect of this research is Hutcheon (2006) model featuring three types of engagement: telling (narrative methods such as books), showing (visual and performance styles including film and theater), and interacting (participatory types like video games). The third type is notably different because it does not just change the source on a material level—it alters it on a procedural level, meaning that mythological themes must not only be understandable but also functional. Ristić & Kubik (2023) refer to this transformation as "transcoding," which involves transferring source content from one sign system to another, especially in video games, where this transfer needs to create not only meaning but also a playable framework. This highlights why adaptations in games cannot be judged using the same standards as those for literary or film adaptations, emphasizing the need for an analytical framework that considers all three modes at once.

The process of transforming source mythology into interactive gaming elements is neither neutral nor straightforward. According to (Ristić & Kubik, 2023), video games take original stories and change them into game mechanics, interactive features, and procedural systems, driven by a structural approach rather than random aesthetic choices. This transformation is significant because how well a mythological character can be changed is influenced by the alignment between the source mythology's internal logic and the mechanical demands of the gaming genre in question. In a game like *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang*, a multiplayer online battle arena, every character needs to have a specific set of active skills with measurable impacts. Therefore, mythological characters whose abilities are more symbolic, relational, or ritualistic face a different set of challenges in adaptation compared to those whose powers are more physical and episodic.

Building on this point, Meakin (2024) discusses that the storytelling in video games is always shaped and limited by the very nature of the medium. This means that not every narrative can be easily translated into playable systems. This is what makes the comparison between Sun and Kadita useful for analysis: Sun Wukong's abilities like shapeshifting, summoning clones, and combat skills can be adapted to multiplayer online battle arena frameworks with minor distortion, while Nyi Roro Kidul's power—shown through spiritual authority, ecological influence, and ritual practices—requires extensive reinterpretation to be converted into a usable skill set within the game. Researchers examining the figure of Nyi Roro Kidul have pointed out that water is not just an ecological element in her story but also serves as a foundational source of power, granting legitimacy through the divine connection between the ruler and the sea queen. This aspect of her mythology poses a challenge because it can't be easily simplified into cooldown-based mechanics without losing significant cultural context. Aiqing & Whyke (2024) have noted that when culturally significant symbols are altered for interactive engagement, there is a risk of obscuring or misrepresenting the cultural meanings they aim to convey. This risk varies greatly among different types of mythology, and the juxtaposition of Sun and Kadita offers a clear lens to demonstrate how these differences appear in real-world applications.

The issue of what remains intact and what is removed in the adaptation of myths goes beyond a simple formal matter and has an impact on ideas. (Vandewalle, 2024) indicates that myth-based games

act like well-organized collections, picking and rearranging mythological content influenced by the needs of design systems and market focus. This selection isn't random: these games usually highlight mythological aspects that are easily understood across different cultures, turning intricate rituals or cosmological concepts into recognizable visual symbols and combat identities for players who may not be familiar with the original tradition. Thus, there's a cultural simplification where the complexity of mythology is exchanged for wider cross-cultural appeal.

This process has important implications for the study of figures such as Kadita. Li & Li (2023), examining player discussions surrounding Genshin Impact, discovered that games that include elements of cultural heritage often balance between being true to the culture and being accessible to a global audience, leading to mixed cultural identities that hold different meanings for various community groups. A similar balance can be seen in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang, where the need to create heroes that everyone can recognize conflicts with the unique aspects of the mythological inspirations. To analyze this conflict, it is essential to look deeper than just what is visually represented—one must question not just which features of Nyi Roro Kidul or Sun Wukong are kept, but the reasons certain features are chosen and how keeping or leaving them out affects the role of the hero in the game system.

Research on Mobile Legends: Bang Bang has laid an initial groundwork, but it has not yet achieved the comprehensive and comparative analysis that this research aims for. (Hidayaturohim, 2021) shows that mythological characters in the game are selectively adapted in terms of story, design, and gameplay; however, the study examines these aspects separately instead of considering their interconnections. The work by (Muhdaliha et al., 2025) stands out as the most thorough current analysis of Kadita, detailing the visual elements that connect her appearance to Nyi Roro Kidul. Their analysis places Kadita's design within a larger cultural discussion, shedding light on how local mythological traits are expressed in the universal context of digital media. Nevertheless, this research does not explore the relationship between those visual choices and her storyline or gameplay role as a mage-assassin. (Rubinia, 2025) offers a valuable critique on how female heroes are represented but does so at a level that overlooks the individual mythological changes that each hero experiences.

These studies share a common limitation, which is not a lack of thoroughness but rather a failure to incorporate a comprehensive perspective. The adaptation of a game character arises from the connections between narrative, visual elements, and gameplay mechanics, rather than from examining just one aspect in isolation. When Kadita's ocean-related symbolism is visually preserved while her ritual power is diminished to a skill with a cooldown, there is a significant interplay among all three aspects that a single-dimensional analysis cannot fully elucidate. This analytical void is what this study intends to fill.

This research puts into practice the tripartite model proposed by (Hutcheon, 2006), which includes telling, showing, and interacting. It serves as a cohesive analytical framework that is applied in a comparative way to Sun and Kadita. Each method corresponds to a different aspect of how a hero is created: narrative (the story and mythological origins as depicted in the game), visual design (the aesthetic and symbolic elements that bring the mythological character to life), and gameplay mechanics (the interactive systems that allow for the mythological character to function). The analytical value of this study arises from viewing these three aspects not as separate categories but as interconnected elements: the way a myth is narrated influences what is able to be depicted, and what is depicted affects how gameplay is structured.

Recent academic work has suggested that video games do more than just feature myths; they actively create new mythological constructs that can gather and rearrange tales from various cultural backgrounds while crafting new symbolic meanings through the logic of game design (Vandewalle, 2024). This research seriously considers that idea, asserting that Mobile Legends: Bang Bang does not merely present Sun Wukong or Nyi Roro Kidul in an interactive way, but instead creates new cultural items whose connections to their mythological roots are influenced by the requirements of the

multiplayer online battle arena genre and the commercial needs of a product distributed worldwide. The analysis of Sun and Kadita highlights this creative aspect clearly because their original myths are structurally quite distinct — one adapts smoothly, while the other exposes the restrictions and alterations imposed by the medium and market. This imbalance, along with what it reveals about the conditions of myth adaptation in digital gaming, forms the central analytical insight of this study.

2. Methods

This research utilizes a qualitative descriptive technique alongside comparative analysis to investigate the ways in which Mobile Legends: Bang Bang reinterprets the mythological characters Sun Wukong and Nyi Roro Kidul into the digital avatars Sun and Kadita. The foundation of this study is based on the adaptation theory proposed by (Hutcheon, 2006), particularly their view of adaptation as “repetition without replication.” This concept highlights that adaptation is not simply a copy but rather a selective reinterpretation influenced by new media, audience expectations, and intentions. With this foundational perspective, the study focuses on three key adaptive dimensions derived from Hutcheon’s engagement modes: narrative (telling), appearance (showing), and mechanics (interacting). This framework enables the research to analyze how mythological source materials are either preserved, altered, or recreated when they are incorporated into digital gaming environments.

The primary data for this analysis includes official materials from Mobile Legends: Bang Bang, such as hero backstories, character details, visual representations, skill descriptions, and gameplay elements. Secondary sources encompass mythological writings, academic research, and relevant theories regarding adaptation, representation, and digital media. Data collection was conducted through documentation and textual analysis, and the findings were examined using the ethnographic analytical framework proposed by Van Maanen (1979), focusing on domain analysis, taxonomy, and componential analysis. This blend of methodologies enables the study to systematically categorize mythological adaptations while interpreting them through the lens of (Hutcheon, 2006) theory to understand how myths evolve across different media.

2.1 Data Source and Data Analysis

The analysis of data utilizes the three-phase ethnographic model proposed by Van Maanen (1979). Initially, a broad analysis of the domain highlights the general adaptive categories in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* 2016, which include narrative, visual, and mechanical adaptations. Next, the taxonomy analysis structures these categories into comparative elements, allowing for a detailed investigation of how each hero is reimagined. Finally, componential analysis uncovers both the resemblances and distinctions between the original mythological texts and their digital adaptations, showing which cultural, symbolic, and structural aspects remain the same, are simplified, or are transformed.

Informed by the adaptation theory of (Hutcheon, 2006), these analytical stages are employed to analyze the characters Sun and Kadita through the three interconnected aspects: telling, showing, and interacting. The narrative adaptation looks into how mythological tales are transformed into the backstories of heroes; appearance adaptation focuses on how visual and symbolic identities are reworked; and mechanics adaptation investigates how mythological powers are changed into gameplay mechanics. Using this approach, the research examines how Mobile Legends: Bang Bang effectively modifies mythological characters into universally relatable digital heroes, illustrating adaptation as a creative reinterpretation process influenced by the demands of the medium, participation, and commercial aspects.

Table 1. Data

Data	Data Source	Textual	Mythology Adaptation
Narrative Adaptation	✓	✓	✓

Appearance Adaptation	✓	✓	✓
Mechanics Adaptation	✓	✓	✓

The table indicates that this research investigates the adaptation of mythology across three significant aspects: the narrative, visual design, and gameplay mechanics. Within this context, Sun and Kadita are analyzed as digital representations of Sun Wukong and Princess Kadita in the game *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang*. The character Sun reinterprets the Monkey King tale by creating a revised narrative identity, adopting a monkey-like appearance, and focusing on combat-driven gameplay. On the other hand, Kadita presents the character of Princess Kadita through a royal and oceanic narrative, a maritime-inspired design, and gameplay centered around the sea. These two heroes do more than simply utilize mythological names; they also craft new mythological narratives, symbolic identities, and cultural meanings that align with contemporary gaming design.

In this analysis, narrative adaptation examines how the original legends of Sun Wukong and Princess Kadita are evolved into hero narratives and digital storytelling. Appearance adaptation looks into how mythological symbols are transformed via costume design, visual aesthetics, and overall looks, such as the symbolic expression of Sun's monkey warrior and the visuals linked to Kadita's sea queen persona. Mechanics adaptation focuses on how mythological abilities are turned into interactive gameplay systems, highlighting Sun's power to create clones and engage in fights, as well as Kadita's movement influenced by wave dynamics and her ocean-based attacks. By exploring these elements, the research investigates how *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* specifically opts to keep, simplify, and alter myths in its digital adaptation.

3. Results and Discussion

The adaptation of mythology in digital gaming involves a careful reinterpretation where mythic characters, stories, and meanings from traditional cultures are transformed into modern interactive experiences. According to Hutcheon (2006), adaptation is viewed as “repetition without replication,” meaning it does not exactly reproduce but creatively reconstructs recognizable aspects while altering narrative, visual, and functional components for new formats. Sanders (2015) adds that adaptation purposefully keeps cultural familiarity while changing the source material to fit new settings. Meanwhile, Kirkpatrick (2007) points out that in digital games, significance is created by combining aesthetics, storylines, and gameplay mechanics. In the game *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang*, this approach is evident in how Sun Wukong and Nyi Roro Kidul are reimagined as Sun and Kadita. Both heroes keep essential mythological traits but are redesigned selectively. Sun retains his monkey identity, battle symbolism, and mirroring powers but simplifies deeper spiritual elements for a focus on combat gameplay. In contrast, Kadita embodies noble femininity, control over the sea, and oceanic themes while transforming cultural rituals into a visually stunning and globally appealing fantasy heroine. This method in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* shows how mythology is preserved, simplified, and restructured into playable digital characters that balance familiar traditional symbols with modern visual style, engaging gameplay, and market accessibility.

3.1. Narrative Adaptation

In the classic tale of *Journey to the West*, Sun Wukong is depicted as a character with deep spiritual dimensions. His adventures encompass not just battles, but also acts of rebellion, challenges to divine powers, growth in philosophy, and changes in morals (Wu, 1977). Emerging from a mystical stone, Sun Wukong gains extraordinary abilities, including the power to transform into seventy-two different forms, eternal life, and the magical Ruyi Jingu Bang staff. He confronts the authority of heaven and ultimately reaches enlightenment through the practice of Buddhism. This framework illustrates that Sun

Wukong is more than just a brave fighter; he symbolizes a mythical being whose path signifies spiritual growth and the balancing act between disorder and wisdom.



Figure 1. Mythological Representation of Sun Wukong
Source: Wang & Gray (2019) *The Journey to the West*

In *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang*, Sun is brought back as “The Immortal Monkey King,” keeping key mythological features like his monkey nature, themes of immortality, extraordinary fighting skills, and warrior traits. Nevertheless, the game alters his story by stripping away the philosophical and spiritual elements that characterize the original legend, such as his rebellion against the heavens, his confinement beneath Five Elements Mountain, his journey with Xuanzang, and his final achievement of Buddhahood. Instead of that, Sun is reimagined as a hero focused on battle, with a narrative that highlights his power, toughness, and readiness for combat. This illustrates Hutcheon (2006) idea of adaptation being “repetition without replication,” where the recognizable symbols remain while the deeper aspects of the story are simplified to suit interactive gaming formats.



Figure 2. Sun's Narrative Adaptation in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang*
Source: *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* Current Version: 2.1.67.1173.1 Role: 1321747050

Through this transformation, *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* preserves Sun Wukong as a culturally recognizable symbol while appropriating his broader mythological journey into a globally accessible warrior framework. The result is a selective adaptation in which mythological identity remains visible, but its philosophical significance is subordinated to the competitive and action-centered logic of digital game storytelling. Sun's narrative therefore reflects how mythology in games is strategically streamlined for medium compatibility, prioritizing symbolic familiarity and gameplay functionality over narrative depth.



Figure 3. Mythological Representation of Nyi Roro Kidul

Source: (Rosli et al., 2025)

Kadita in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* finds her roots in Indonesian mythology, particularly in stories about sea queens and female supernatural power. The game presents Kadita as a royal princess who endures betrayal, a curse, exile, and ultimately transforms into a strong ruler of the ocean. This backstory highlights themes of personal loss and renewal, shaping Kadita into a unique heroic persona influenced by the conventions of fantasy tales. Muhdaliha et al. (2025) contend that Kadita's character design mirrors the essence of Nyi Roro Kidul, featuring visual and cultural elements that reflect her oceanic themes, royal imagery, and the representation of feminine spirituality in Indonesia. Their research indicates that Kadita carries important symbolic elements from local legends, especially through her visual representation, which resonates with Indonesian viewers.

However, while (Muhdaliha et al., 2025) focus on Kadita's visual and symbolic links to Nyi Roro Kidul, the narrative adaptation shows a more selective change. In Javanese mythology, Nyi Roro Kidul is more than just a princess who faced betrayal; she represents a holy spiritual authority integral to rituals, ecological symbolism, and royal mythology. Her power is collective and spiritually connected, especially through her ties to the Southern Sea and Javanese kingship. In comparison, Kadita reshapes these cultural aspects into a fantasy narrative that centers on individual pain, change, and empowerment. As a result, Kadita doesn't directly embody Nyi Roro Kidul but serves as a modified version that keeps recognizable symbols and visuals while reinterpreting Indonesian spiritual myths into a hero that resonates globally in the digital space.

In *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang*, Kadita showcases a key transformation from a human princess to a mystical ruler of the sea, all while keeping connections to ocean power, female strength, and maritime authority. The official storyline depicts her as a lovely princess who faces betrayal, curse, and suffering before she connects with the Southern Sea's might and becomes their guardian. This tale retains familiar elements from Indonesian maritime legends, especially those tied to the symbolic authority of Nyi Roro Kidul. However, the larger cultural aspects that characterize Nyi Roro Kidul in Javanese cosmology—such as her sacred ties to Javanese kings, environmental protection, ritual significance, and community-based spiritual rituals—are missing from the game's storytelling. Instead of maintaining Nyi Roro Kidul's relational authority and cosmological significance, *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* narrows these aspects into a more personal story focused on betrayal, suffering, and personal empowerment.

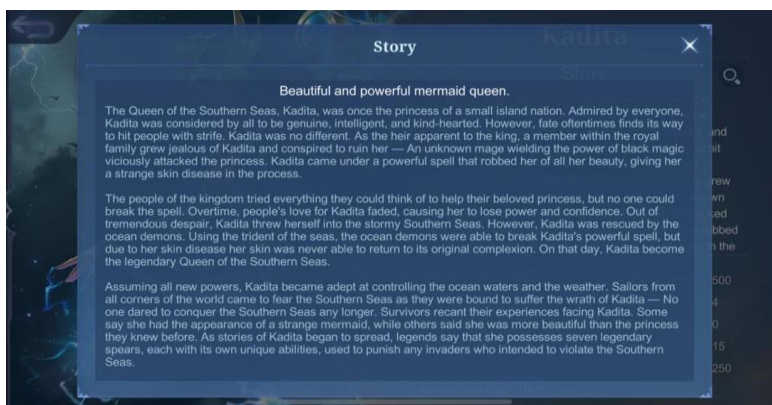


Figure 4. Kadita's Narrative Adaptation in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang

Source: Mobile Legends: Bang Bang Current Version: 2.1.67.1173.1 Role: 1321747050

What replaces the communal and spiritual dimensions of Nyi Roro Kidul's mythology is a fantasy hero narrative that aligns more closely with global game storytelling conventions. Through this transformation, Kadita becomes an individualized heroic protagonist whose identity is shaped less by ritual sovereignty and more by personal resilience and combat potential. In Hutcheon's (2006) terms, this reflects adaptation through selective reinterpretation rather than faithful reproduction, preserving symbolic recognizability while restructuring cultural meaning for participatory media. Kadita's narrative therefore demonstrates how Mobile Legends: Bang Bang appropriates Indonesian mythological symbolism into a commercially viable global framework, maintaining local cultural markers while transforming collective spiritual mythology into accessible fantasy heroism.

3.2. Appearance

In mythological depictions, Sun Wukong's appearance is defined by strong simian features, traditional Chinese warrior armor, and the iconic Ruyi Jingu Bang staff, all of which function as visual extensions of his supernatural and cultural identity (Wu, 1977). His monkey-like face, divine headpiece, and classical armor design emphasize both his animalistic origins and his role within Chinese mythological cosmology. These visual elements are not merely aesthetic, but symbolically reinforce Sun Wukong's identity as a rebellious supernatural being rooted in Chinese literary and religious tradition.



Figure 5. Mythological Appearance of Sun Wukong

Source: [Artstation: SHIBIN THOMAS](#)

Mobile Legends: Bang Bang preserves several of these recognizable visual markers, most notably the staff weapon, golden headpiece, and warrior silhouette. Sun's use of a staff directly maintains one of the clearest mythological traces from the original figure, functioning as what Hutcheon (2006)

describe as symbolic continuity through adaptive recognition. However, significant visual transformation occurs through humanization and fantasy stylization. *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang*'s Sun adopts a more conventionally heroic humanoid body, smoother facial structure, brighter fantasy armor, and globally accessible aesthetic proportions. While the monkey symbolism remains visible, the explicitly simian identity is softened to align with broader international character design standards. This demonstrates selective visual adaptation: culturally recognizable markers are preserved, but culturally specific physicality is modified for global legibility and commercial appeal.



Figure 6. Sun's Appearance Adaptation in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang*

Source: *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* Current Version: 2.1.67.1173.1 Role: 1321747050

This visual reconstruction reflects Hutcheon (2006) principle that adaptation preserves recognizability while reshaping representation according to new media contexts. Sun's appearance therefore balances mythological continuity with market-oriented redesign, transforming a culturally specific mythological figure into a competitive fantasy hero. This balance is not incidental but structurally motivated: the design must remain legible to players unfamiliar with the source mythology while retaining enough iconic markers to satisfy those who recognize it. The result is a character whose visual identity operates on two registers simultaneously — cultural specificity for those who know the myth, and generic fantasy accessibility for those who do not. Sun's design thus exemplifies how *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* negotiates the tension between cultural fidelity and commercial universality at the level of visual representation.



Figure 7. Mythological Appearance of Nyi Roro Kidul

Source: (Rosli et al., 2025)

In Indonesian cultural stories, Nyi Roro Kidul is often depicted wearing green royal attire, representing the ocean, feminine spiritual power, and strong ties with the sea itself (Wessing, 1997) The prominent green color associated with her holds deep meaning in Javanese culture, symbolizing holy authority and a connection to the Southern Sea. Unlike mythological figures that focus on fighting, her power is shown through her spiritual presence, environmental strength, and royal mystique. Her imagery highlights her role as a sacred queen instead of focusing on personal combat traits.

Muhdaliha et al., (2025) state that Kadita from Mobile Legends: Bang Bang maintains this symbolic framework in her visual design, especially with her striking green and teal colors, royal crown, ocean-inspired themes, and feminine strength. These features clearly connect to Nyi Roro Kidul's mythological symbols and are among the best examples of how local culture is preserved in the game. However, Kadita's design also changes significantly. The inclusion of a trident, a recognizable weapon of marine warfare not found in Javanese lore, shifts her image. Her stance, outfit, and fantasy elements change her portrayal from a sacred spiritual figure to a distinct battle-ready heroine. Rather than being visually bound to the sea, Kadita appears as a powerful fantasy ruler with control over it. This represents a selective adaptation, where specific cultural symbols are kept, but the spiritual and community aspects are transformed into elements of widely understood fantasy visuals.

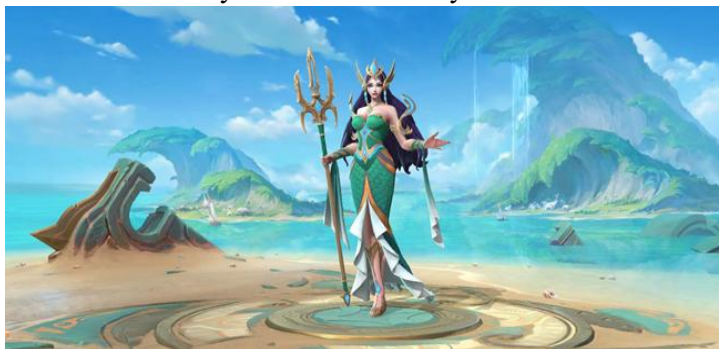


Figure 8. Kadita's Appearance Adaptation in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang
Source: Mobile Legends: Bang Bang Current Version: 2.1.67.1173.1 Role: 1321747050

Through this transformation, Mobile Legends: Bang Bang demonstrates a more visually preservative adaptation strategy in the case of Kadita compared to Sun, particularly through the consistent use of color symbolism and royal iconography. Kadita's design retains key cultural markers associated with Nyi Roro Kidul, especially the dominance of green tones and oceanic visual elements that signify maritime power and feminine authority. However, this preservation is accompanied by a selective transformation, where spiritual and communal meanings are restructured into a more individualized and combat-oriented fantasy identity. In line with (Hutcheon, 2006), this reflects the adaptive logic of "repetition without replication," in which recognizable mythological elements are maintained while being reshaped to fit the demands of participatory digital gaming.

3.3. Mechanics

Mobile Legends: Bang Bang translates Sun Wukong's mythological identity into gameplay primarily through mechanics centered on cloning, transformation, mobility, and sustained combat. Sun's passive skill, Simian God, reduces enemy physical defense while restoring HP through attacks, reflecting his mythological resilience, supernatural endurance, and near-immortal vitality gained through legendary quests for immortality. This mechanic preserves the idea of Sun Wukong as an indestructible trickster-warrior whose power increases through prolonged engagement. More directly, Clone Techniques reproduces one of the most recognizable elements of Sun Wukong's mythology: his ability to create duplicates from his hairs and seventy-two transformations. By summoning

doppelgangers that inherit his attributes, Mobile Legends: Bang Bang converts mythological transformation into participatory game logic, making cloning not merely symbolic but mechanically functional.



Figure 9. Sun's Mechanics in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang

Source: Mobile Legends: Bang Bang Current Version: 2.1.67.1173.1 Role: 1321747050

Additional capabilities such as Instant Move, Quick Swap, and Unlimited Choices enhance this transformation by highlighting aspects like deception, movement, and synchronized battles with clones. These features collectively reflect the combat style of Sun Wukong in mythology, which emphasizes swiftness, cunning, mastery of a magical staff, and outnumbering foes instead of relying solely on force. Among the analyzed examples, Sun stands out as the clearest case of fidelity to mechanics since his original stories are highly focused on action and abilities. According to Hutcheon (2006) perspective, this shows how adaptations in interactive media can maintain the identity of the source material most effectively when the mythological characteristics are procedural and suitable for combat. Thus, Sun's mechanics serve as a very faithful systemic adaptation, retaining not only symbolic identity but also the underlying mythological logic within digital gameplay.

The link between the original mythology and the game genre is intentional, as it highlights a deeper structural connection: Sun Wukong's story centers on personal agency, increasing conflict, and evident power — values that are favored and rewarded in multiplayer online battle arenas. As Ristić and Kubik (2023) point out, how well an adaptation in video games works depends on the ease of transforming the original material into procedural systems, and Sun Wukong's episodic and combat-focused mythology has a notably high level of translatability. This contrasts sharply with mythological characters like Nyi Roro Kidul, whose power is based on relationships and cosmological elements rather than individual traits, making it more challenging to achieve fidelity through mechanics. Therefore, the case of Sun not only exemplifies successful adaptation but also serves as a standard for evaluating and critically analyzing the adaptive difficulties presented by ritual-centered mythologies.

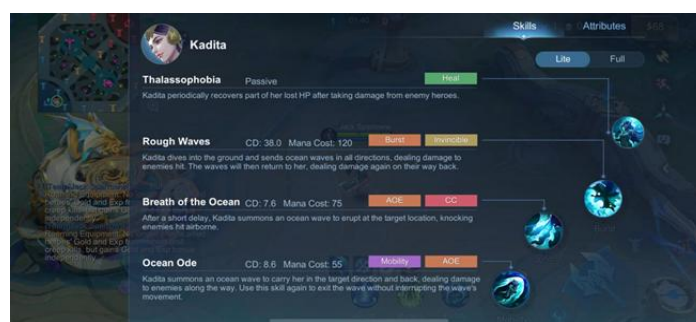


Figure 10. Kadita's Mechanics in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang

Source: Mobile Legends: Bang Bang Current Version: 2.1.67.1173.1 Role: 1321747050

Ocean Ode uniquely enables Kadita to connect with a wave, letting her glide across the battlefield as if she were fluid water, which is a clear reflection of her ties to the ocean. In contrast to Sun, whose abilities mimic specific actions from mythology, Kadita's skills maintain her identity by embodying elemental characteristics. This difference highlights a significant adaptive variation: while Sun's stories are conveyed through precise actions, Kadita's are expressed through symbolic representation. According to the theory by (Hutcheon, 2006), Kadita illustrates that in gaming, adaptation can maintain the essence of mythology, even when direct narrative elements or rituals cannot be mechanically represented. Thus, her gameplay converts Indonesian spiritual mythology into an experience of oceanic power, focusing on thematic identity rather than on a direct replication of myths.

4. Conclusions

This study concludes that Mobile Legends: Bang Bang reshapes the characters of Sun and Kadita by selectively adapting their narratives, looks, and gameplay features. This indicates that mythological figures are altered instead of being copied directly in interactive digital media. Following the adaptation theory by (Hutcheon, 2006), the results reveal that both heroes keep distinct mythological traits from their cultural backgrounds. However, there are careful changes made to their deeper philosophical, spiritual, and socio-cultural aspects to align with the engaging format, business goals, and worldwide reach of Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) game design. Sun shows a stronger connection to adaptive continuity in terms of gameplay mechanics and symbolic identity through elements like cloning, transformation, and staff fighting. But his larger spiritual path, moral growth, and religious importance are significantly streamlined into a warrior-focused action setup. Kadita also retains visual and symbolic elements from Indonesian ocean mythology, especially through royal symbolism, oceanic strength, and feminine authority. Yet, her collective, ritualistic, and ecological aspects as Nyi Roro Kidul are shifted into a more individualistic fantasy hero role. These trends suggest that Mobile Legends: Bang Bang emphasizes recognizable symbols and gameplay effectiveness over complete cultural accuracy, leading to partial adaptations that maintain mythic representation while making broader cultural details simpler.

More broadly, this research demonstrates that mythological adaptation in digital games operates as strategic reinterpretation, where cultural heritage is selectively preserved, redesigned, and globalized through the affordances of interactive media. In line with Hutcheon and O'Flynn (2006) concept of "repetition without replication," adaptation functions not as faithful reproduction, but as a process through which mythology becomes commercially viable via simplification, redesign, and procedural transformation. The implications of this study are twofold. Theoretically, it contributes to adaptation studies by extending Hutcheon's framework into the domain of interactive media, showing that adaptation must be understood as a systemic and multi-dimensional process involving narrative, visual, and mechanical reconstruction. Practically, the findings provide insight for game designers and cultural practitioners by highlighting how mythological content can be adapted in ways that balance cultural recognizability with gameplay functionality and global market appeal. Furthermore, this study encourages greater critical awareness of how digital games reshape cultural meaning, particularly in transforming communal and spiritual narratives into individualized and commercialized forms. Future research may expand this discussion by examining player reception, cross-cultural audience interpretation, and comparative studies across other mythology-based game characters to further explore how digital media reshapes, negotiates, and circulates cultural meaning in contemporary global entertainment.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author(s) Contribution

Dextra Brilliant Pratama designed the study and wrote the manuscript. Meza Parama Nohan supervised the research and revised the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version.

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