



Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts

**DESIGNING CHARACTER ANIMATION BASED ON
SARAWAK LOCAL FOLKLORE :
“THE LEGEND OF WHITE CROCODILE”**

CHAI WEI HAO

**Bachelor of Applied Arts with Honours
(Design Technology)
2018**

**DESIGNING CHARACTER ANIMATION BASED ON
SARAWAK LOCAL FOLKLORE :
“THE LEGEND OF WHITE CROCODILE”**

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51399

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2018

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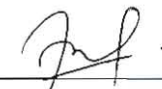
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ABSTRACT

This study shows how to design a character based on the inspiration of Sarawak local folklore “The Legend of the White Crocodile”. The researcher will analyzed films and the Sarawak folklore story to design the animation character. based on the study, the researcher designed an original appealing character style. The goal of this research is to assist filmmakers understanding the ways to design a character for animation from any imaginary story.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Study

This thesis is about how researcher can design or develop a character through a folklore story or an imaginary story. Researcher will understand the principles and steps that require to follow in order to create a good character design that will shows its appearance and identity.

This study is important because folklore was not popular among the animation film especially Sarawak folklore. Designing animation character based on culture story will help promoting the culture and attract the people to discover more about the culture. Besides that, this study can help the animation character designer to visualize the character based on the story.

The research focus on the Character design based on the Sarawak local folklore “The Legend of White Crocodile” and ensure the audience to recognize the character and with its appealing through the visual of the animation. This is important because a good character design with specific appealing can help the audience remember the story and the originality of the story.

1.2 Problem Statement

Character designing can help the audience to visualize the story. While designing a character through imagination is a challenge to the animation character designer. Sarawak folklore “The Legend of White Crocodile” is a good study example

because it does not have real image or footage as an example to develop the animation character. This research will help the designer to exaggerate the animation character into a creative way based on the folklore study.

1.3 Research Questions

Below are the research questions for this research:

- i. How to design character from an imaginary story of Sarawak folklore “The Legend of White Crocodile”?
- ii. How to effectively apply the culture characteristic into an animation character?
- iii. What is the importance of character representation from the Sarawak folklore?

1.4 Aim and Objectives

- i. To analyse the characteristic of the crocodile in the story and the Sarawak Iban culture’s as the inspiration for animation character design.
- ii. To apply characteristic into the animation character based on the result and data collected from the Sarawak folklore “The Legend of White Crocodile”.
- iii. To create animation story inspired by the character representation from the Sarawak folklore.

1.5 Importance and Significance of Study

The study of the Sarawak folklore “The Legend of White Crocodile” can delivered to the public through the character design in an animation. While the representation of the white crocodile, Sarawak Iban races and their tattoos style analyzed and applied in animation character design. Through the representative of the folklore story and the character designed for the animation, the audience will be able to understand more about the Sarawak culture,

1.6 Scope and Limitation

The scope and the limitation of the study was the image and data collection of the legendary white crocodile, original Iban costume, Iban warrior costume, iban house design. Nevertheless the limitation also involved drawing skills, imagination, and creativity of the animation character designer.

1.7 Summary of Chapter

Chapter one introduces the background and theoretical basis of this study. Identify research questions and conduct minor research questions. This chapter also includes the goals of this study and the significance of this study. The scope and limitations have been identified to specify the area of research. Researchers make assumptions and study designs to ensure that research is done on the right path.

Chapter two will discuss about is the literature review which related to the research topic. The researcher will study about the process designing a character and understand how the successful animation film develop their character using folklore.

Chapter three is the method that the researcher will use to designing a character based on the study on literature review.

Chapter four is the data specification and collection procedure that use the method discussed in chapter three. The researcher will observe and analyse the image related to the folklore and develop character using sketches and computer illustration for the final design.

Chapter five is the conclusion of the research. This chapter will explain about the founding on how to design a character and why it is necessary to develop a character from folklore. Besides that, this chapter will also explain about the scope and limitation for researcher and the future possibilities of this research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Developing A Story Based on Inspiration

Inspiration is important in developing a story. Disney successfully delivered many great animation through folklore and different culture. For example, “Mulan” (1998) from developed from China’s folklore, “Kung Fu Panda” from the Martial art culture of China, “Big Hero 6” (2014) applied Japan culture and element in their animation, and “Moana” (2016)” inspired by the Polynesian Islands.

The making of “Mulan” animation was actually developed from the folklore of China. According to Okapina 2011, Disney’s “Mulan” animation is slightly different form the original story “The Female Mulan Joins the Army in Place of her Father”, by an arty chap named Xu Wei. Comparing Disney animation and Wei’s story, The Disney version uses “Mulan” as a pioneer, and despite being persecuted or restricted, she remains loyal to herself. While the Wei use “Mulan” to show that regardless of their status and gender, everyone has the responsibility to serve their family and country.

Disney added on extra element and also character like dragon to show the characteristic and culture of China. While Wei’s version does not have a dragon in their story.

Chen-Yi Chang the character designer supervisor at Disney Studio designed “Mulan”, following the principle of design through shapes , for example round shape, square shape and triangle shape to differentiate different personality. He use S curve

to design the character “Mulan” and applied the elegant look and feel of ancient Chinese art.

“Moana” is inspired by Polynesian Islands and their culture. According to Flores (2016), “Moana” is an imaginary story about a teenage girl in a mission sets sail to save her people that in the South Pacific island. The designer crew of “Moana” went to multiple trip to do research on the island for collecting the data and images. This is important to visualize the look and feel of the animation.

Characteristic also plays important part in developing a character design. According to, Flores (2016), Character art director Bill Schwab says, contrast is important in designing a character, and balancing is the key to have character with different proportion. Nevertheless, through research is important to understand characteristic of a character. For example, research on the full appearance of Polynesian patterns and designs. Which include clothes, tattoos, accessories, and what kind of material they used.

2.1.1 Character design

Character design is a process of visualizing an idea and concepts. Beiman (2017) described that creating a character without any reference or clues is the most difficult way for a designer while designing a character. She also state that a good character can be develop or inspired from an existing story of a culture. Different culture has their own unique story identity which can be the based in creating a unique character compare to others. Du Gay (1997), explained that the different identity of the culture

formed by the way of how the people lives their life and the way they communicate in society.

According to the animation pioneer in Malaysia, Hassan Muthalib (2004) state that, Malaysian animation cannot be compare to successful Western and Japan animation because students lack the sense of local identity through their final animation project. Thus, it makes Malaysian animation industry lack of local character identity.

In process of designing a character, it is necessary for designers to have clear vision on the character personality, culture and their local identity.

2.1.2 Folklore Adaption Into Character Design

Visual communication is the main idea that can adapt folklore story. Khalid (2018), state that human used symbolic and forms to create new meaning to their world and this is how myths appear.

There has been many animations was animated using their country folklore. One of the example is The Golden Apple. Patrov, (2016) State that The Golden Apple was inspired by the Balkan mythology and folklore. He mention that the story narrative relates with contemporary issue to associate with modern viewers. Which means the character design must be unique, memorable for the modern audience that can stands out from other animation. This is because there is a lots of animation created every year and the uniqueness of the character will helps the audience to memorize the animation. For example Goku in the “Dragon Ball” animation, the main characters

hair and costume was very unique that every one can recognize him by just looking at its silhouette.

2.2 Developing a character

Different character have their own appearance, where line and shapes plays important element to form a character. According to Hedgpeth and Missal (2006), the challenge for the designer is the ability to manipulate abstract visual elements, such as lines and shapes, into a unified, concise and recognizable form. Nevertheless, it is important that the designer must able to understand the story to define how the character is perceived while designing a character.

2.2.1 Shape and line in character design

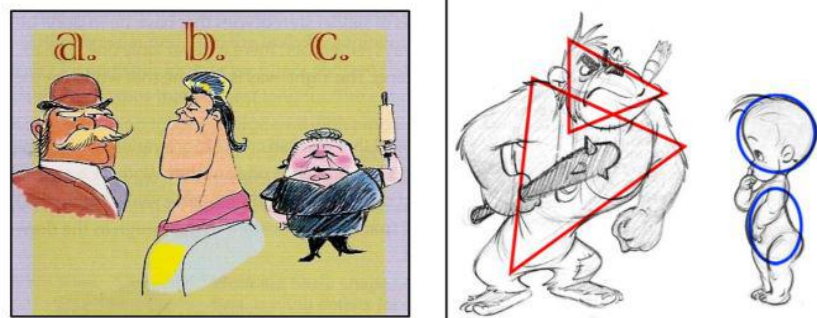


Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2 Shows the image by Beiman, N. (2007)

based on Figures 2.1 and 2.2., Beiman (2007), described that shape acquired symbolic meanings over centuries. She adds, for example the circular shape represent cute and non-threatening triangular shaped will make characters seem proactive or

aggressive. Preston Blair supported this idea with his categorization of characters appearance.

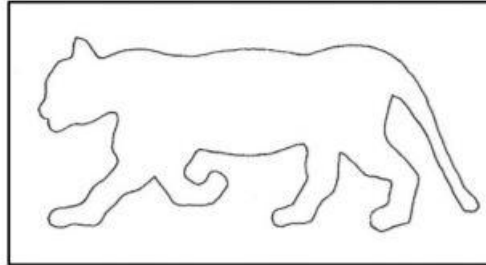


Figure 2.3: Line drawing of a tiger by Wallschlaeger,C. and Busic-Synder,C.
(1992)

Hedgpeth and Missal (2006) state that the most effective way developing a character recognition is by using primary shapes to define a character structure. Figure 2.3 shows the example of a shape constructed character. By using the shape to structure a character can help audience to recognize its characteristic. Altmann, C. F. (2001). State that the image or visual analysis is involved primary of the lateral occipital complex (LOC) in the human brain. So the shape plays an important roles in designing a character.

2.2.2 Psychology In Character design

To design a character, designer needs to study the psychology to produce a strong characters. Nieminen (2017), state that the study of psychology is important to build up a character from the perspective of the inside out which is their appearance and their personality settings. Without psychology elements, the audience will not be able to feel the emotion of the character because of plain characteristic.

The study of the folklore is required for the animation character designer because it helps the designer to understand the background and the characteristic of the character in the story before developing a character. For example, a children was rise up in a healthy family life style will be more confidence and positive thinking compare to the children that grows up in a war.

2.2.3 Connect visual with Psychology

After developed the story, the character designer can connect visual with psychology while designing a character. Nieminan, (2017) State that the psychology theory in character design were more applicable to written character because it can define deeper into the characters internal world. For example following the story to decide what kind of characteristic or personalities can be applied into the character designed.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter researcher will discuss about the ideation on how to develop a character based and the Sarawak folklore “The Legend of White Crocodile” and the observation required.

3.2 Ideation

In the ideation stage, researcher will gather information from the Sarawak local folklore “The Legend of White Crocodile” and translate it into concepts and idea. This requires many experimenting in drawing according to the character mentioned from the story. For example the study on the cocodile, Iban costume, accecories and the Iban long house.

Exploring different style to as much as possible so that all these idea can be combined and finally generate the best design. Nevertheless, according to Bancroft (2006), animator and designer should understand the background, personality traits, flaws and virtues of the character itself by the perspective from the character itself.

3.2.1 Research on the related element from the story

Research and understand the story of Sarawak Local folklore “The Legned of The White Crocodile” and all the element from the original story to develop a character. The culture, race, where they lives and what kind of accessories they used. Figure 3.1

shows part of the origin story of the Sarawak local folklore “The Legend of White Crocodile” .

“Bujang Senang crocodile said to incarnate Iban warrior named Simalungun. He killed and cursed be a crocodile and he vowed to kill all the generations mistreat them. “

Figure 3.1 From Mike, R. (2014)

By observing and understand the story, the designer will get the information of the characteristic of the main character. For example, the main character is an Iban warrior and he has been curse by the legendary white crocodile Bujang Senang. From these information, the designer will start doing research on the Iban culture as the part of designing a character.

3.2.2 Observation Study and application into character design

The animation character designer can create a character based on the data collected from the observation and study on the Sarawak folklore. The animation character designer can follow the study in the literature review and apply the experiment using drawings to design a character. Which is using, character personality setting, line and shape, proportion, physical attribute, and color.

3.2.2.1 Character Personality Setting

Character personality setting was the first steps on developing a character. For example the legendary white crocodile is evil. The first impression in the mind is sharp tooth or red eyes that represent the villain. The designer can use the information from the personality setting to decide the appearance of the character.

3.2.2.2 Line and shape

Shape is one of the important steps in character design. From the research of the story “The Legend of White ” the designer can define the characteristic of the character. Using different line and shape to create different appearance of the character. For example, Triangular shape will be used the most in the design because it show the aggressive of a warrior.

3.2.2.3 Proportion

Body proportion describe the size of the character, it can also show the character age, gender, and the role in a story. For example, huge a muscular man are designed for character like Superman, this will give the first impression for the audience to know that Superman is a strong person.

3.2.2.4 Physical Attributes

Physical attribute is the detailing in designing a character. This is important to make the character looks more convincing. For example the whats the main character wear, texture, patterns, small accessories and all the detail.

3.2.2.5 Color

Color can be use to define a character identity because it creates mood and feeling. For example, cold color tone create evil and dark appealing, while worm color tone are more suitable for heroes.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Data collection

The data collection will help researcher to identify the characteristic through the images collected from the research based on the folklore “Legend of the White Crocodile” and some background information which can help to develop a good character design.



Figure 4.1 Image from Mike, R. (2014)

Figure 4.1 shows the picture of the Estuarine crocodiles which is the saltwater crocodile that appear in the folklore story of legendary White crocodile. The researcher will observe the characteristic of the crocodile. The legendary white crocodile is a saltwater crocodile, it is a *Crocodylus porosus* species with measuring

20 feet long , have a big long mouth, sharp tooth, scales, flat long tail and has a white stripe on its back.

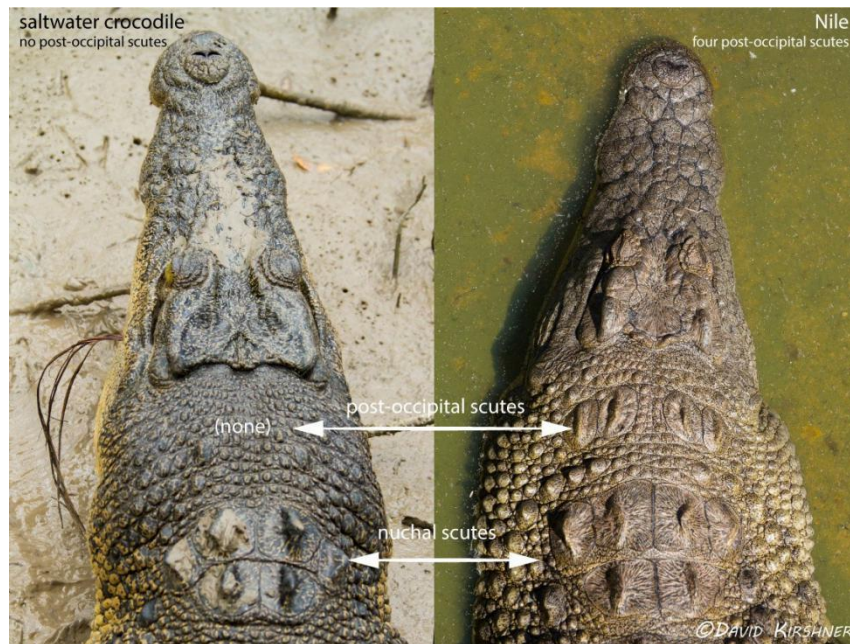


Figure 4.1.1 Image from Kirshner, D. (2017)

Figure 4.1.1 shows the different between saltwater crocodile and Nile crocodile. Saltwater crocodiles have evenly spaced, small, round scales on their flanks and have a pair of ridges going part way down the snout, starting in front of the eyes comparing to Nile crocodiles have a smoother snout.