



Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts

**APPLICATION OF CHINESE DRAGON CONCEPTS AS A
SPIRITUAL FORCES IN ANIMATION**

Lee Jian Loong

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

2015

**APPLICATION OF CHINESE DRAGON CONCEPTS AS A SPIRITUAL FORCES IN
ANIMATION**

LEE JIAN LOONG

**This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Applied Arts with Honours
(Design Technology)**

**Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK**

2015

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the production of my film and thesis writing I have experienced several challenges, but I appreciated every moment in this process. It has been an amazing journey for me to complete my 3D animation film project, “Loong”. I believe ‘learned from the mistake’ is the most important and effective skills I have to remember along the process of learning. The experiences that I have gained along the way are truly appreciated and priceless.

However, I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who has helped me along the journey to success in my 3D animation project. Although there are many mistakes I have given along the process, I appreciate the help and patient guidance that allowed me to complete my 3D animation project successfully. I will always be thankful for the respect and continual support.

I wish to express my sincerest to Mr. Asadul Islam, my supervisor, for his advice, understanding and knowledge. At the same time, I would also like to thanks to all my lecturers in the animation department of Design Technology, especially thanks to Mr. Ang Tse Chwan, the lecturer from animation department and Mr. Humphrey Lincoln, the laboratory technician who help me access facilities during public holidays and sorry for giving inconvenience moment. Without your support and encouragement, my project will not completed. I am truly grateful.

Finally, I thank my beloved family for all their love and support and sorry for giving many troubles. It would not be possible without their priceless support and guidance. Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

The concept of the dragon is a combination of the early tribes, which is from the period of pre-historic era in Chinese social structure. The Chinese dragon is a totemic beast, which is the national emblem of China. However, in the modern era which is full of complexity, the specific interaction has been depicted from many different backgrounds, which distributed the cultural practices and knowledge of their meaning become more complex. There cannot be made simple as the local social system has the highest degree of cultural practices. A cultural practice is meaningful with concepts, which forge and continue the histories to link together between the society and culture. This research is to visualize the concept of Chinese dragon as a spiritual force in animation.

ABSTRAK

Konsep naga adalah gabungan suku-suku awal, yaitu dari zaman era pra-sejarah dalam struktur sosial China. Naga Cina adalah binatang totem, yang merupakan lambang negara China. Walau bagaimanapun, dalam era moden yang penuh dengan kerumitan, interaksi tertentu telah digambarkan dari pelbagai latar belakang yang berbeza, yang diendahkan amalan budaya dan pengetahuan makna mereka menjadi lebih kompleks. Sistem sosial tempatan mempunyai tahap tertinggi amalan budaya yang tidak boleh membuat kemudahan. Amalan budaya adalah bermakna dengan konsep, yang tergamak dan meneruskan sejarah untuk menghubungkan bersama antara masyarakat dan budaya. Kajian ini adalah untuk menggambarkan konsep naga Cina sebagai kuasa spiritual dalam 3D animasi.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

1.1 ‘Spiritual forces’

The definitions of the terms ‘Spirituality’ are numerous and differences between countries and religion. This has caused difficulty in the research, which to summarize the truth message of the meaning or definition in term of ‘Spirituality’. According to author Dollard (1983), *‘Toward Spirituality: The Inner Journey’* has mentioned that spirituality is concerned with our ability, thought of our attitudes and actions, to relate to others, to ourselves and to God. This definition has been commonly applied or modified in most of the field and it is representative of one of the most popular approaches to this theme of definitions.

However, Researcher also has found in the major report on the National institute of Healthcare Research in United States, which they defined the term ‘Spirituality’ as the feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behavior that arise from a search for sacred. (Larson et al., 1998). According to Father Leo Booth (1987), the spirituality defined as being a positive and creative human being in all areas of our life.

With these definitions from different authors, the term spirituality has similarities which it presented as a human characteristic which orientates the self towards “Self”, which the self-definitions determined by experiences (Page & Berkow, 1998). Therefore, Spirituality is a movement of the self towards to its own deepest ground and it is the most fundamental nature.

In order to convey all the message of ‘Spirituality’, animation is one of the potential media to translate the message to the audiences. Spiritual knowledge is a great’s gift that it realigns human sense of self to something that may not even ever imagine within people. Sharon Janis, 2008, an author of the book “Spirituality For Dummies, 2nd Edition” has mentioned that “You may think you’re limited to just your physical body and state of affairs that including your gender, race, family, job, and status in life, but spirituality comes in and says “there is more than this.”

1.2 Research Question

1. What do the spiritual forces of Chinese practices believe in dragons?
2. How can the Chinese dragon concept as spiritual forces applied in animation?

1.3 Statement of problem

The spiritual knowledge of 'Dragon' in China has created a huge influence since 16th century BC. Dragon in China is one of the most famous legendary creatures whom play an important role in most of the Chinese mythology and its own spirituality and symbolism of cultural practices. At the end of 2006, Professor WU You-Fu has suggested in an interview China should consider to discarding 'Dragon' as the emblem of China. There was an intense debate in China whether to prohibit dragon as the national emblem of China due to the difference in perspective and definition of dragon from western countries. What will be representing as their mascot or national emblem except dragon?

'Spirituality' goes deeply into the heart of every matter and extends far beyond the physical world of matter. 'Spirituality' is the connectivity of the relationship between people to the profoundly powerful ad divine force that is present in this universe. Whether people are looking for worldly success, inner peace, or supreme enlightenment, no knowledge can propel the person to achieve that goal and provide as effective plan for living as does spiritual knowledge.

Chinese citizen used the term of "Descendants of the Dragon" as a sign of ethnic identity, when the different Asian

nationalities were searching for the animal symbols as the representative of their countries (Sleeboom, Margeret, 2004). This issue has been more serious due to religion and the national emblem of China. Through the story of the 3D animation, people would look forward by thinking about this issue. On top of that, the importance of the relationship between human would reviewed by introducing this animation, as it would help to spread the term of 'Spirituality'.

1.4 Research objective

Below are the objective of the project:

1. To explore the traditional culture developed the spiritual forces of Chinese dragon.
2. To determine the characteristic in personality of Chinese dragon through the exploration of spiritual forces.
3. To produce an animation based on the Chinese dragon concept of spiritual forces.

1.5 Significant of Study

By conducting this research is to express the visualization of Chinese dragon concepts as a spiritual force, which to point out the misunderstanding of Chinese dragon in Western perspective views. In the course of this research, the elements of the spiritual force of

Chinese dragon concepts will be adapted into animation to form an abstract animation. Therefore, this will develop an abstract animation through the concepts as spiritual force of the Chinese dragon.

1.6 Hypothesis

The presentation style of animation is designed based on the concept of Chinese by using 3D character modelling. The approach of 3D animation would likely raise the attention to the target audiences. The method of executing 3D animation would be explored. The spiritual forces of Chinese dragon would be by introducing this 3D animation as it would help to discard the misunderstanding of the Chinese dragon issue which happening around us.

1.7 Scope of Research

This research focused on the concept of Chinese dragon of the character to visualizing of an animation. Simple storyline used to deliver the message about the Spirit of Chinese dragon through the animation.

1.8 Limitation

The facilities provided are limited usage in high quality rendering, which is the challenge to apply the movement effect and high quality texturing in the animation. Therefore, the way to present the animation has to be careful based on the character texturing, environment setup, and quality rendering. There were deep thinking about the emotion of the entire 3D animation in term of the placement of lighting, camera, composition and so on.

1.9 Summary

This chapter helps researcher to design a 3D animation based on the issues presented. The issue and difficulties will take notes and frame as a guidance for researchers to complete the task.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will help researcher discusses about the literature reviews collected from journals, books, and internet. It provided guidance in term of history, information, data and knowledge to researchers.

2.0.1 Chinese dragon

Dragons in China are one of the most famous legendary creatures whom play an important role in most of the Chinese mythology and Chinese folklore. In China, there are many of depiction of the dragon has found in the manufactured handcraft, which is from the *Shang* and *Zhou dynasties* in the 16th century BC. According to the Archaeologist *Zhou Chong Fa*, the very origin of the pronunciation of the dragon in China was the onomatopoeia of the sound of thunder. The dragon in China was the strongest and with the highest ranking among the animal hierarchy in China, which is strongly related or represented as the emperor and hence the power and majesty. However, the origin of the appearances of a Chinese dragon are still mysteries and indefinable, somehow many legends

that have made it as a spiritual force to the citizen in China from the history until now to the masses.

2.0.2 Appearance of Chinese dragon and Western dragon



Figure 1.0 Chinese dragon

According to legends, dragons in China have the nine animals characteristic, which is based on some part of their appearances such as, “head like a camel, scales like fish, horns like a deer, eyes were like a stealth, ears like ox, neck like a snake, stomach like oysters, soles of his feet like tiger, and paws like a hawk.” Nevertheless, according to the Sinologist *Henri Dore* has listed eight animals’ characteristics, which would be found in the appearances of Chinese dragon, such as “the antlers of a deer, head of a crocodile, demon’s eyes, the neck of the snake, tortoise’s viscera, hawk’s claws, palms of a tiger, cow’s ears.” However, the Chinese dragon most

commonly depicted as a giant snake creature with four legs, which have the abilities to fly without wings. The appearance of the dragon in China was the combination of these different animals into one character, but it has formed an unbelievable unique creature, which represented as the emblem of China from the history until now. The dragon also represented as hope, prosperity, and blessing to human, which is bringing good luck and wealth to people.



Figure 2.0 Western dragon

In the most of the western countries, dragons served as contrasting meaning and characteristic from the eastern dragon. Dragon in western was often shows its aggressive attitude and acted as an evil creature to social practices. The appearances of western dragon are more to reptile form, which were short body, long neck, horns, wings, long tails and breathing fire. According to *The book of*

Revelation, the dragon represented as bad luck to the citizens. The dragons were the greediest creatures that liked gold. The most commonly dragons in western represented as, “Satan”, the powerful demons in the underworld.

However, these two different creatures are in the same categories, which named as the Dragon as well. There are different stories based on different legends and different cultures, but the dragons between eastern and western have the huge contrast meaning more than its appearances.

2.0.3 Symbolism of Chinese dragon

In the 16th century BC, the dragon was the symbol of the Emperor in China. In the *Zhou Dynasty*, the five-clawed dragon represented to the Son of Heaven, the four-clawed dragon represented as the nobles, and the three-clawed dragon represented as the ministers. On the other hand, the five-clawed dragon in *Qin Dynasty* represented as the Emperor while the four-clawed and three-clawed dragon represented as the civilian in China (Sleeboom, Margeret, 2004). Nevertheless, there was a flaming pearl under the dragon's chin, which has shown in many statues not only in China. The pearl has its own symbolism, which represented as the wealthy, blessing, and prosperity. The Chinese dragon commonly used as the national emblem of China. However, the usage of the dragon as the national

emblem was not common in both of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Taiwan. According to an article at the end of 2006, the dragon has an aggressive and bad luck significant and it has been expected that the China government wishes to avoid using the dragon as the national symbol of China. However, this issue has intensified debate the citizen in China whether to discard the dragon as the national emblem of China. However, Chinese citizen uses the term of "Descendants of the Dragon" as a sign of ethnic identity, when the different Asian nationalities were searching for the animal symbols as the representative of their countries (Sleeboom, Margeret, 2004).

2.0.4 Mythology approach in Chinese dragon

The Chinese dragon has evolved to become a mythical animal from the stylized depiction of the natural creatures. The *Han Dynasty scholar* Wang Fu recorded Chinese mythologies that the dragon had nine dissections of resemblances.

"The people painted a dragon shape with a horse's head and a snake tail. Furthermore, there are expressions as 'three joints' and 'nine resemblances' to representatives of the dragon. It started from head to shoulder, from shoulder to breast, and from breast to tail. These are the joints to the nine resemblances of the dragon such as, "antlers resemble those of a stag, head like a camel, the eyes of a

demon, the neck of a snake, belly of a clam, scales of a carp, the claws of an eagle, the soles of a tiger, and ears of a cow.” (Visser, Marinus Willem, 1913)

The Chinese dragon was the benevolent creatures, but the Buddhists were introduced the concept of malignant has influence among the others dragons. According to Buddhists, some of the worst floods are caused by a human who upsetting a dragon. The Chinese dragon acquired an almost unlimited range of the supernatural powers, which can control the weather and water. According to the *Shuowen Jiezi*, Chinese dragon can disguise itself to become silkworm, or to become as large as our universe. Chinese dragon can form clouds, turn into water, and can change color as an ability to blend with their surroundings, as an effective form of semblances or glow in the dark. On the other hand, the depiction of a dragon in tattoos has become more fashionable as they represented as the strength and power in most of the Asian countries. These phenomena appear especially to the criminal organizations where dragons hold a meaning of highest identity among the criminals. The believers must be fierce and strong enough, which to earn the right to wear the dragon on his skin.