

INDONESIAN TRADITIONAL STORY CONTENT IN ANIMATED SHORT FILM: CASE STUDY STUDENTS' ANIMATED SHORT FILM FINAL PROJECT

**RR. Mega Iranti Kusumawardhani, M.Ds
Muhammad Cahya Mulya Daulay M.Ds**

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, generation who were born in late 1970 and beginning 1980 have more access to entertainment, compared to earlier generations. They read storybooks, children magazine and comic books, and listened to stories through audio-cassette and radio. There were various contents to choose from; H.C Andersen and Brothers Grimm's classic stories, Disney's classic fairy tales, European and American super hero comic books, and Indonesian traditional stories. Indonesian traditional stories were introduced and brought by local children magazines and recorded stories from audio-cassette.

In 1980-1990 Anime was beginning popular in Indonesia through animated films and comic books. Children accessed animated films and comic books through movies and comic books rentals. When private television stations were beginning on air after national television station (TVRI) lost its monopoly in Indonesia's television broadcasting, anime became more accessible. Through private television station channels, more anime series were introduced and became very phenomenal at that time. As classic stories, fairy tales and super hero comic books were still accessible beside the popular anime, traditional stories content were rarer to be found since many local children magazines and recorded stories audio-cassette publishers were shut down.

As an effort to conserve local traditional content, Students of Animation specialization under Faculty of Art and Design in Universitas Multimedia Nusantara, are encouraged to promote local and traditional stories in their works. It means the students will have to explore forgotten Indonesian traditional stories, interpret and create narratives, and visualize it in animated short film. When the research took place, most students are born around 1997-2000. It was the era where Reformation took place in Indonesia and the access to anime were even easier and more various, anime became solid part of children's daily entertainment.

This article tries to explain students' work in visualizing traditional story content through short animated film. We try to make connection on how the students visualize traditional story content with reference from the most vary and the most accessible reference in their era, Anime. This is an exploratory research, we try to explain referred condition using two students' final project works as case studies. The expected result is to understand better how a more accessible reference becomes more influential in students' works, and how it will/will not create a new alternative to traditional story content and visual style in Indonesian animated film's future. First, this article will describe the popular genre and visual style shifting phenomenon in children's entertainment in Indonesia in the 1990's, and how it is connected to how students visualize traditional content in their animated short film. Selected students' works will be discussed based on the description of the condition. The analysis is limited on how the students visualize the story and the structure, and how they design the characters.

FROM SUPERHERO AND FAIRYTALE TO ANIME: POPULAR GENRE AND VISUAL STYLE SHIFTING

Demands for children's entertainment in Indonesia in 1970-1980 has grown big, it gave an access to flourishing printing business (Rambatan, 2015). Books and magazines for children were published, to satisfy demands. When it comes to content, limited local content were supplanted with foreign content mostly from Europe and America. The national television station (TVRI) also gave access to children's entertainment by importing children's animated films from America and Europe. Characters from fairytales and superhero subgenre films then gained popularity, children would like to have fairytale or superhero characters prints on their stuff; shirt, toys, dolls, books, bags, etc.

The popularity of these characters can also be seen at school. Art session in elementary and middle school were usually filled with drawing session. Teacher would ask the pupils to draw something based on given theme. When the pupils were asked to draw figure (persons or characters), they will bring a sample of printed super hero or fairytale characters from home. Then, they will try to trace the prints on their drawing books and then put some colour in it.

In 1990, anime became the world's phenomenon (Brenner, 2007). In Indonesia, anime started to gain its popularity when some of the animated series were imported by private television, soon after national television station lost its monopoly in Indonesia's television broadcasting. The first time anime series were broadcasted, audience can easily differentiate these kind of new visual style, with different style of storytelling and more

engaging plot stories. Doraemon is an example of anime which has been popular from the first time it was broadcasted in 1989 in Indonesia. Soon afterwards, Doraemon's simple visual style and 'slice of life' genre became very popular.

The popularity of anime among school children were also seen at school during Art session. In Art session, the pupils tend to trace an image rather than compose in the first place. Doraemon's visual style which are more simple, gave a more accessible drawing options to pupils. Both American super heroes and fairytales offered perfection in terms of body proportion and looks, yet too complex to imitate. Comparing to Doraemon's visual style with basic shape and simplified proportion, opens opportunity for children who think they can't draw to imitate the style.

Eventhough anime has been very well developed with visual style are so diverse (Napier, 2005), more characters like Doraemon distinguish the style from classic fairytale and American superheroes. These kind of anime characters are designed with certain exaggeration, they gave strong emotional states to the audiences. The effect is, the form will be represented by emotion itself, deforming the proportion (Poitras on MacWilliams, 2008). Kawaii, Chibi and Moe visual style are example of these kind of characters. As the style is usually considered cute, and easy to redraw and imitate, this kind of character are appealing to the young audiences.

The story theme in Anime is also vary (Napier, 2005). Contrast with fairytales and superheroes genre that was popular back then, some anime offer stories about neighborhood or domestic context. In Doraemon for example, story happens in the live of Nobita, foolish boy who is lazy, weak and frequent bullied by his friends. Doraemon, the robotic cat came to Nobita's life to intervene bad luck in Nobita's future caused by his own foolishness and laziness. Differ from fairytales and superheroes which offer perfection in the character, most characters in Doraemon are not 'perfect' which makes them more 'human' and relatable to the audiences. Many times, imperfect condition in the characters are also used to bring out comedy to the story.

INDONESIAN TRADITIONAL STORY CONTENT IN ANIMATED SHORT FILM: CASE STUDY STUDENTS' ANIMATED SHORT FILM PROJECT

‘Bandhawa’ is students’ short animated film project based on the traditional story of Bawang Merah (Indonesian language for shallot) and Bawang Putih (Indonesian language for garlic)—an Indonesian traditional story about two beautiful maiden who have contrast attitudes. In the origin version, Bawang Merah is portrayed as antagonist who envies Bawang Putih’s beauty and kindness. Being spoiled by her mom who doesn’t like Bawang Putih either, Bawang Merah is determined to make Bawang Putih’s life miserable. In the end, Bawang Merah and her mother experience their karma, while Bawang Putih lives happily ever after.

It has been public acceptance, that Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih in the traditional folktale version are always characterized as persons—two beautiful maidens. Eventhough, the names are taken from kind of plants which commonly used as spices in traditional Indonesian food. Following fairytales formula, Bawang Putih is usually portrayed as flawless character; kind, beautiful and diligent. Her misfortune, being treated badly by her sister and her mom is character’s attribute which functions to gain sympathy from audiences and makes the story happens. Bawang Merah is an antagonist, although in some version of the story she is portrayed as beautiful as Bawang Putih, but by emphasizing her negative traits; envious and lazy person, it brings out conflict against the protagonist.

In ‘Bandhawa’, although the story is based on ‘Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih’ traditional story, the students didn’t follow the story formula at all. It is told that Bawang Merah was outraged at Bawang Putih’s clumsiness which caused them being left away by the truck’s farmer who was supposed to pack them. After series of misfortunes caused by Bawang putih’s clumsiness and foolness, they are finally hand in hand trying to find the track where the farmer left them away in the first place, and tried to get back to him.

Familiar characters of two beautiful maidens in ‘Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih’ are replaced by literally two raving shallot (*Allium Cepa*) and garlic (*Allium Sativum*). Their head is located on the bulb, with their faces’ attributes; protruded eyes, rounded noses and toothy mouths are emphasizing jocular yet comical looks. Their limbs are just below the bulb, where the roots are supposed to be located. What seem like torsos are just flaked skins. Bawang Merah is characterized as a cautious grumpy and hot-tempered shallot, while in contrast Bawang Putih is innocently witless and clumsy.

Traditional stories' structure usually follow a similar formula with fairytales where the protagonist should 'live happily ever after', and the antagonists should be punished due to wicked things they did to the protagonist. In 'Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih' story structure, it follows the formula. Different with 'Bandhawa', in the end of the story, it reveals that Bawang Merah is kind at heart, as it cares for and tried to protect Bawang Putih from dangers at any stakes even if it harms itself.

Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih characters in 'Bandhawa'

In the second short animated 'Inkarna', it tells about the relationship of Barong and Rangda;

Balinese mythical being. Barong, the ruler of life who posses power of light to heal, tries to comfort Rangda; the ruler of death who posses power of darkness. Rangda, who was upset because all that she touches ends up dead, tries to avoid Barong, fears her power will harm him. Barong, patiently tries to convince her through his light power. In the end, Barong shows Rangda their role to restore the balance of the universe.

Considered sacred and being worshipped to Balinese people, Barong and Rangda symbolize intertwining of light and dark, life and death. Barong is usually visualized as lion-like beast creature, while Rangda is usually visualized as demon queen with horrifying fangs and long dangling tongue. It has been public acceptance both Barong and Rangda are visualized with monstrous quality with thick fur and wearing very attractive gilded jeweleries with intricate details.

In 'Inkarna', Barong and Rangda has a contrast visualization to public acceptance. The characters are visualized child-like proportion with big eyes and short body posture. What stays with the origin is the costum and mask on their head. This kind of visual style is not quite relatable for those who are accustomed to the origin of Barong and Rangda. But for younger generation, they relate these kind of style as 'chibi'; more specific anime style which deforms proportion of the character to make it to look small and cute.

Barong and Rangda symbolize balance of the universe, thus they are usually visualized as opponent. As they are placed on different polar of binary opposition, it is not common to interpret their relationship as male and female situation. In 'Inkarna', instead of put Barong and Rangda in the common situation as opponent, students visualize Barong and Rangda as male and female, and put romance attributes in between them. This kind of different interpretation of Barong and Rangda's relationship, gives different context of the whole story.

Perceiving the students' works in visualizing Indonesian traditional story using point of view from the most accessed references, this younger generation are more familiar with anime's story structure. While protagonist and antagonist are contrast in fairy tales and superheroes theme.

BARONG AND RANGDA CHARACTERS IN 'INKARNA'

Protagonist and antagonist in anime are complex characters with colliding personalities. Just like in 'Bandhawa', students construct new meaning in both Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah personalities, as Bawang Merah is not really wicked and Bawang Putih is not that perfect as well.

In visualizing story, perfection is not the keyword the students try to achieve. Perfect characters' proportion, contrast protagonist and antagonist relationship and established tradition- accustomed story and characters are not anymore attractive. On the contrary, deformed proportion, daily life based stories and new story context are considered attractive and challenging. These attributes are easier to be found on anime rather than in fairy tale or superhero theme stories.

How the students perceive Indonesian traditional stories through short animated movie gives new perspective in how traditional stories can be developed to different formula and meaning, if given different references. Since traditional stories are bound to tradition-accustomed standard, the new story context might be contradictive with what might have been agreed upon in the traditional standard. Thus, a better understanding about tradition-accustomed standard should also be highlighted.

CONCLUSION

Using students' work in visualizing traditional story content through short animated film, we try to explain how traditional story content construction with anime references can be different from the way they were perceived at the first place. On one side, it gives a new possibilities to a new alternative to traditional story content and visual style in Indonesian animated film's future. But since traditional stories are bound to tradition-accustomed standard, a better understanding about it should also be highlighted.

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