

Bima Satria Garuda, A New Face of Indonesian Superhero Character

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Abstract. For a few decades ago, Indonesia has many superheroes characters from comics to television serials. Unfortunately, these characters became forgotten because they can't survive in rivalry with global superheroes. Bima Satria Garuda is one of success television serial among Indonesian superheroes genre. The uniqueness of the characters' designs and the creative process lead this title in order to gain the popularity to its target audiences. The marketing of these serials merchandises such as action figures and other toys soon follow the success of the serial. The situations that never be happened with early superheroes characters in Indonesia. This situation can not be separated from the involvement of Ishimori Production from Japanese involved in the development of this series. The problems shown here is why the Japanese home production could make Bima Satria Garuda loveable to his fans (the children), could we create a character designs with same approaches that in the future we don't need to submit the designs process to production houses abroad? Using the qualitative methods and literacy studies we try to study the success of Bima Satria Garuda design. With the characters design theories and the formal analysis, this research goal is to find a suitable formula to made an attractive superheroes characters without leave the localities values and our values. Bima Satria Garuda designs resemblance from our local visual elements with Japanese's years of experiences in developing their superheroes characters. Through formal analysis, we could find many interesting things that embodied in Bima' costume elements. This research also gives alternative solutions in how to develop new visualization for Indonesian superheroes characters by doing studies, and learn some new visual style What happened to Bima Satria Garuda could be learned and used by young artists in future generations to make a new faces of next Indonesian Superheroes.

Keywords: *Bima Satria Garuda, Character designs, Super Heroes, Local elements*

Introduction

Superhero comic was originally a product of American popular culture. This superhero comic genre, tells the story of fictional hero who wear costumes and masks. They represent the truth, has a sense of fairness, righteousness and always ready to fight the evil. The superhero also has a moral and values that they believe their own justice. Superhero comics genre is the most popular genre. The popularity of the superhero theme then spread throughout the world, including to Asia and also to Indonesia.

For many decades ago, especially in 1950's, comic readers in Indonesia had many local superheroes icons as adorable characters, such as, Sri Asih (created by R.A Kosasih) and then Puteri Bintang & Garuda Putih (created by John Lo). Although, these heroes were created based from noticeable US Superheroes characters, they became an Golden Era for Indonesian comic heroes. But, after the revolution and the regimes in those days banned the entertainments and any culture products from the West, the local heroes soon replaced by classic characters from Mahabarata (or Bharata Yudha) and Ramayanan epics. The epic heroes', such as Gatotkaca had became popular and put him to well-known hero until today. Then, after Soekarno regimes ended in the end of 1960's, the West modern and popular cultures product soon came back again with

more larger portion, and of course, comics are included as a part of modern cultures. Because of the limitation of resources and media, some of the comics artists brought back superheroes genre by copying some popular characters and made them looks like a local heroes, like Laba-laba Merah, which is the characters was ripped off from the popular Spider-man character. Meanwhile, some comics artists seems didn't take the same paths, like Hasmi and Wid N.S created Gundala Putera Petir, Godam, Aquanus and Maza. In the 1980s, superhero Indonesia cannot withstand the invasion of imported comics. By times , soon local superhero comics disappeared. The readers of comics started lured by the appeal of European and American comics. Meanwhile, video technology also brought a new entertainment alternatives, which that is anime from Japan. In the 1990s comic martial Hong Kong (or better known as manhua) and manga soon imported into Indonesia and suddenly gain tremendous attention from readers and the young comic artists until this day. In addition, the direct imported American superheroes comics is also easily obtained by the raised of hobbies and comics store in Indonesia.

The entry of imported comics directly, as well as the development of manga in Indonesia then stimulated the young comic artists to create a new perspectives of comics and characters. Thus was born the new talent in the creation of a super hero.

Bima Satria Garuda is one of most successful television serial among his genre in Indonesia. The uniqueness of the characters designs and the creative process behind the curtains lead this title gains his popularity among his audiences, especially the children (as Bima's Target Market). The Success of the tv series then, followed by the success of Bima's supporting media and the merchandises such as Action Figures. The most interesting point here is that Bima Satria Garuda is well developed by Japanese Production House, Ishimori Productions, while the marketing of the merchandises is run by Bandai, which produced some of many popular toys in Japan and the world, such as Power Rangers' toys.



Figure 1. Bima Satria Garuda Promotional Ads

Methods

This research is using qualitative research methods, by using document studies and some character studies following to the visual analysis from the character

Theoretical Backgrounds and Research Questions

One of the aspect for a successful characters is its designs. Scott McCloud explained that, a comic is considered successful if it has its' images and characters come to life¹. According to his opinions, there are three essential components needed to create a character. These three criteria are: 1. Character Designs, 2.Facial Expressions and 3.Body Languages. Character design aims is to make the figures of the characters visible and developed his/her unique personality. The uniqueness of these characters can make the audience understand and get to know the characters. A Good characters design shall fulfill these three main things: 1) The story of an interesting background. The background of the character's life is directly related to the story. A description of the background story of the characters will give you an idea of how the figure of the character live in order to help us visualized the characters we've made. 2) Visual Distinctions. The differences aspect between the characters to one another should be very clear. Comic artists or characters designers should be able to make memorable visual uniqueness for the characters, in order to help the reader to understand the lives of the characters. 3)Expressive Traits. Expressive traits, referred to how to make our character "moving" and "acts" in the story. [1]

Furthermore, Mukhlis Nur added that in creating the character within, the designer must be able to visualize the characters made in accordance with the vision of the author. Visualization can be made based on the other archetype characters, objects, animals and other things that are considered interesting. The most important thing in creating a character is to create sophisticated characteristic that is easy to remember and easy to recognize even from a distance. Furthermore, Mukhlis Nur emphasized that character should also have his/her functions and clear purposes in the narration. This is particularly relevant in the accessories, posture and special attributes attached to these characters.[2]

To analyze the idea of forms and shapes of superheroes characters, we use the formal analysis of art criticism method from Feldman. Formal analysis' purposes are to provide an explanation of why an object is formed and created (including to look forward the meaning of shapes, lines and colors). This approach allows us to read the ideas which contained in a work of art objects. In dissecting the character design, formal analysis is suitable to explains the ideas or search for the meanings from the images of the characters [3]

Those approaches will help us to answer could we create a character designs with same approaches that in the future we don't need to submit the designs process to production houses abroad?

Analysis to Bima Satria Garuda Visualization

Many visual entertainment observers criticized that Bima Satria Garuda character as a clone of the character Kamen Rider (or better known as the Ksatria Baja Hitam in Indonesia) from Japan. Is this true? Broadly speaking, it is true that visualization of Bima character's costumes are very similar to the design of Kamen Rider that exist today. For the record, Kamen Rider genre has evolved from 1971 to the present. Starting from the character into a genre, Kamen Rider characters had evolved their visual and narrative for more than three generations. This genre initiated by Shotoaro Onodera, better known by the name Shotaro Ishimori, a well known mangaka whose one of of Japanese superhero genre pioneer and also the founder Ishimori Productions, a production house that develops tokusatsu series, including Bima Satria Garuda. Despite taking "Bima" name, character Bima Satria Garuda completely unrelated to the Bima personification from the Mahabharata (Bharata Yudha) epic. Reino Barrack as the creator of the Bima said, that the name of the Bima been easily remembered, and easy to pronounced. It is precisely that the presence of Bima Satria Garuda generates the present generation want to explore and get to know the figure of Bima from Pewayangan universe [4].



Figure 2. The Comparisons between Bima Satria Garuda with Kamen Riders

Bima Satria Garuda's story told about Bima as a masked superhero, incarnation Brahasakti incarnation (played by Christian Loho), an ordinary youngster (who at the beginning of the story is told as) an orphan and lived after his uncle care. Ray turned into Bima by using Power Stone, a magic gemstone given by a youngster form parallel world named Mikhail. Mikhail himself came to earth after running away and stealing Power Stone from VUDO, an intergalactic

criminal organizations, led by Rasputin and his commander, Iron Mask. In the first invasion VUDO to earth, Mikhail met with Ray, and asked Ray to use Power Stone as Satria Garuda, Bima to protect Earth and humankind.

Although most of superheroes characters in Indonesia created through the transposition and adaptation process, Indonesian superheroes have some numbers of uniqueness that we cannot find in other super hero characters. The Conceptual and visual differences are the base and to develop a formula in order to creating a superhero characters in Indonesia [5] . In this Bima Satria Garuda case, the formula which applied is still adapting the patterns and models which used in Japanese superhero characters. Of course this circumstances, we couldn't blame by one side, while Isimori Productions who had developed many of Japanese superheroes characters, plays a big role as a developer of character Bima Satria Garuda here.



Figures 3. Bima Satria Garuda Model Sheets

There are a few points that why the character of Bima Satria Garuda could approach to its viewers: 1.) The images of the body proportions are match to Mongoloid race's (Asians) ideal proportions. 2.) The posture of the character is slightly bent, describes the characteristic of humble character persona. 3.) The costume is looks very attractive without having to show the muscles too over muscular in his character and also the costume design is not obliterate the heroic impression on his character. 4.) Similar with the most Japanese Superheroes (which is still favored by children) in general. Alter Ego from Bima Satria Garuda is an ordinary human being who can transforms himself into our main hero. Its strength is obtained from artifacts that give him superhuman abilities and also fighting skills.

The uniqueness and strength point from the visual elements in Bima Satria Garuda's costume are the visual elements, which shown some of Indonesian culture localities visual elements, although the character design and the costumes visualizations developed by Ishimori Production.



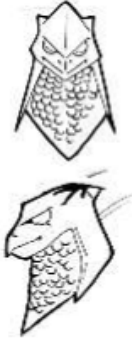



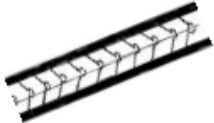

In an interview, Reino Barack as the originator of the series Bima Satria Garuda said, that element of the locality in Bima Satria Garuda doesn't lie to the costume, but it comes from the











words and behaviour. In this case we can assume that the figure Bima Satria Garuda itself was created from the narrative. However, researcher saw that the narrative locality in Bima Satria Garuda is not just limited to text, but also in contextual level.

By using formal analysis study of Feldman, researcher found a number of localities narrative can be found in costume ornaments, as well as attributes that are attached to the character of Bima Satria Garuda.

The localities visual elements in Bima's costume could find in this following analysis table:

Table of Analysis

| No. | Parts | Element Visualization | Descriptions | Ideas |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Fore Heads (Helmet)  | Wings  | Wings and ornaments like metal feathers which the patterns are similar with batik's patterns The Wing itself is taken from Sumping's simplification | To confirm that this hero is a Garuda's knight. Here's one of the shadow puppet's character, Garuda Mahambira one of a garuda knight in Wayang Purwa's Universe for comparison |
| | | Garuda's head  | Golden Garuda's head is somehow similar to Garuda Pancasila's head from side view.  |  |
| 2. | Body suspender and belt  | Golden Pattern inside black frame  | The patterns inside the belt's ornaments is also similar with batik's patterns but its much more simple  | Batik patterns represents the visual identity of the character of Bima Satria Garuda, as the super hero who comes from the land owner of this visual element Indonesia. |

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>3.</p> | <p>Hands and feet bracelets</p>  | <p>Golden Hand Bracelets</p>  | <p>Ornaments which look like bracelets in hand on golden feet, often used by the puppet characters and art of the traditional dress</p>  | <p>Traditional accessories represents the visual identity of the character of Bima Satria Garuda, as the super hero who comes from the land owner of this visual element Indonesia.</p> |
| <p>Golden Feet Bracelets</p>  |  | | | |
| <p>4.</p> | <p>The whole body</p>  | <p>Red, Black and White Color</p>  | <p>These colors schemes always used in many traditional patterns for example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Batak's Gorga  Balinese's Sarong  Yogya's Kawung Poleng  | <p>These colors are often appears in the our cultures.. Moreover, these colors describe the the existence of upper world, middle worls and the under world over the bottom and the middle. The meaning of the this color in the context of the Bima story is symbolizes the balance of good and bad. It is a duty of a knight is to create a balance between the two.</p> |

Conclusion

Bima Satria Garuda can be regarded as successful superhero character for our generations today. The Success of Bima Satria Garuda in the context of this study is not only limited in how it reaches its target audience or the success in the marketing plan and how they sell the

merchandises. Bima Satria Garuda is a success local superhero who carrying local wisdom in the modern embodiment. The approaches or formula that is used and applied in the creative process of Bima Satria Garuda character should be studied by the junior comic artists and character designers in order to make a new heroes.

Creative process in Bima Satria Garuda could be learn and adapted by next generation of our creators. We must learn and know our limitation first. It is fine that we asked or give submission to other home productions abroad to develop our designs in order to make an attractive superhero character, as long as we played the major role at it, as project supervisor, like what Reino Barrack and his teams done in Bima Satria Garuda. Furthermore, researcher feels that we must learn from the success of Bima Satria Garuda process, so in the future we could make and develop our own characters without depending to others. There are so much localities values that can be used as a new look of our heroes narratives. It depends to the creators, to use this richness and create many possibilities for giving a new Indonesian superheroes faces in the future.

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