

# The Potential of Theriantrophic Characters in Folk Stories for Animation

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## Abstract

Indonesia is rich in folklore from the archipelago, every ethnic has it, but it has not been widely used for new media art, especially the character aspects contained in it. For this reason, this research was conducted with the aim of obtaining findings about the theriantrophic characters in Indonesian folklore that have the potential can be developed into animation. This research uses descriptive qualitative research with purposive sampling technique in data collection which is supported by literature study method. Data analysis used the Interactive Model with stages: data collection, data reduction, data displays, and conclusion drawing/verifying. The findings of this study show that a number of seven folk tales of the archipelago in which have theriantrophic characters. The seven folk tales have ten theriantrophic characters, namely (1) Raja Singabarong or Singalodra, (2) Buroq, (3) Nyai Roro Kidul, (4) Cindaku, (5) Arue, (6) Talokot, (7) Lembu Suro, (8) Mahesa Suro, (9) Petta Tenricaca E Gau'na, and (10) Aul. Theriantrophic figures in folklore reflect superpowers that are metaphorically depicted with certain parts of their bodies. The embodiment of the theriantrophic character has the potential to be adapted into animation because both contain elements of storytelling and superhero characterizations.

**Keywords:** Theriantrophic, folklore, Nusantara, animation

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## 1. Introduction

Folklore lives and develops across the ages. Folklore is not only inherited, but also acts as a means of inheriting cultural values, as it is said that folklore is the main vehicle for transmitting cultural heritage (Mota, 2009). Folklore also contains artistic forms that are well preserved from time to time through speech traditions, as written in Lingling Long's research that rich and artistic folk culture has been preserved for thousands of years in deep historical accumulation (Long, 2019). In addition to form and value, folklore also presents characteristics or characters in its characterizations, one of which is a character with extraordinary traits, which can be found in folklore, especially legends. Legends are characterized by humans, although sometimes they have extraordinary characteristics, and are often assisted by magical creatures (Dananjaya, 1986).

Magical creatures with extraordinary characteristics were born or appeared since ancient times, where humans responded to natural phenomena that resulted in belief in and worship of objects, animals and characters. Lingling Long said that in ancient times, under the prevention of various natural phenomena, people always experienced changing stars, birth, old age, illness and death with mysterious ideas and fears, thus generating various beliefs and worship of animals, plants and characters (Long, 2019). Characters in beliefs and folklore are sometimes in the form of human and half animals, which are called Theriantrophic. Theriantrophic embodiment (shape) is a combination of human and animal forms in works of art to represent super powers (Sugihartono, 2021). Theriantrophic characters in folklore can be explored for their potential and then developed into the world of animation, so that the types of Indonesian animated character designs are more diverse and globally competitive.

The need for the development of the animation world is urgently needed considering that the number of animated films is only 2% of the total film production in Indonesia. Film production in Indonesia up to 2021 totaled 3,423 titles, the number by type, namely 69 animated films, 168 documentaries, 206 short films, 289 movie films, 929 serial films (TV), and 1,762 advertisements (PDTI, 2021). Indonesia must take advantage of folklore as a source of animation development, where a number of 944 folktales above are a very valuable heritage. We can reflect from China that they have utilized folklore for the creation of animation, as it is said that Chinese folk art is rich in resources and various forms of folk art provide useful nutrition for the creation of animated art (Long, 2019). Likewise Japan, anime is another form of continuation of folklore, where it is said that folklore is an important element of cultural heritage and it is important to show it through its continued use and presence in other forms, such as anime (Slaven, 2012).

Based on the reality above, it is important to do research on theriantrophic characters in folklore. For this reason, the purpose of this study is to describe the embodiment of theriantrophic character in Indonesian folklore. At the end of this research, findings will be obtained about theriantrophic characters in Indonesian folklore that have the potential to be further developed into animation. Actually, Theriantrophic characters can also be

developed into other fields such as novels, films, comics, games, and cartoons.

## 2. Methods

This study uses descriptive qualitative research with a focus on the study of theriantrophic characters in Indonesian folklore. The primary data is in the form of Indonesian folklore that has been recorded by the Center for Data and Information Technology (Pusat Data dan Teknologi Informasi/PDTI) of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia and published in story books with ISBNs. Secondary data will be extracted from scientific and popular publications.

The data collection technique used purposive sampling, only a few folktales contained Theriantrophic characters and represented the existing provinces. Methods of data collection using literature study. Data analysis uses the Interactive Model developed by M.B. Miles and A.M. Huberman (1984), with the following stages: (a) Data collection: Data collected from Indonesian folklore that have been published and collected by the Center for Data and Information Technology of the Ministry of Education and Culture; (2) Data reduction: Data on Indonesian folklore is sorted and selected according to predetermined criteria, namely containing theriantrophic characters; (3) Data displays: theriantrophic character data found in Indonesian folklore is then presented in descriptive form (text) accompanied by tables and charts to support the narrative; and (4) Conclusion drawing/verifying: presentation of data on terianthropic characters found in Indonesian folklore, then conclusions are drawn as research findings and verified with the formulation and objectives and stages of the research conducted, then recommendations are formulated.

## 3. Discussion

The results of research on Indonesian folklore from Sabang to Merauke, found seven folktales containing theriantrophic characters or characters consist of (1) The myth of Nyai Roro Kidul, (2) Legend of Mount Kelud (3) Legend of Reog Ponorogo, (4) The Myth of Cindaku, (5) The Tale of the Arue Bird and Talokot Bird, (6) The Myth of the Demon Snake, (7) The Myth of Aul.

From the folklore above, we can find theriantrophic embodiment of the folklore characters that describe their physical characteristics. Folktales containing characters with theriantrophic embodiments come from West Sumatra, East Java, Central Java, West Java, West Borneo and South Sulawesi. Certain folklore lives and exists in several provinces. Most folktales only have one theriantrophic character, but some also have two theriantrophic characters.

The description above shows that animals combined with human forms include tiger, lion, cow, horse, dog, birds, fish, and snakes. The shape of the animal is worn on the head, body and legs of the character. The story characters whose heads use animal shapes are Raja Singabarong/Singalodra, Cindaku, Lembu Suro, Mahesa Suro, and Aul. While the heads of the characters using human forms, namely Buroq, Nyai Roro Kidul, Arue Bird, Talokot Bird, and Petta Tenricaca E Gau'na.

The body parts of the characters in the form of animals are Petta Tenricaca E Gau'na, Talokot Bird, Arue Bird, and Buroq. But there is also human bodies but hairy like animal, namely Aul. Meanwhile, the characters with animal-shaped legs are Buroq, Nyai Roro Kidul, Arue Bird, Talokot Bird, and Petta Tenricaca E Gau'na. As for Aul, his legs are hairy like an animal's, but the shape of his feet is like a human's.

Table 1. The embodiment of theriantrophic character in folklore

No	Theriantrophic Character	Embodiment			Power
		Head	Body	Legs	
1	Raja Singabarong/Singalodra	Animal: tiger or lion	Human	Human	A human with the head of a tiger or a lion with a violent and cruel characteristics. The head of Singobarong can change. The peacock perched on his shoulder suddenly became one with his head, so that the king of Singobarong had two heads.
2	Buroq	Human: princess	Animal: horse body, bird wings, and horse tail	Animal: horse legs	The winged horse that the Prophet Muhammad rode on during the Isra Mi'raj journey from the Haram Mosque to the Aqsa Mosque.
3	Nyai Roro Kidul	Human	Human	Animal: waist to toe like a fish	She does not sink even though it lives in the ocean, so it can live on land and at sea.
4	Cindaku	Animal: tiger	Human	Human	Humans who have Cindaku power can change shape into a tiger human.

No	Therianthropic Character	Embodiment			Power
		Head	Body	Legs	
5	Burung Arue	Human	Animal: feathered bird	Animal: feathered bird	There isn't any.
6	Burung Talokot	Human	Animal: feathered bird	Animal: feathered bird	There isn't any.
7	Lembu Suro	Animal: cow	Human	Human	Dig a crater well overnight.
8	Mahesa Suro	Animal: buffalo	Human	Human	Dig a crater well overnight.
9	Petta Tenricaca E Gau'na	Human	Animal: snack	Animal: snack	Demon snake that is powerful and cruel, its peck is able to hypnotize (magic) the victim.
10	Aul	Animal: wolf (dog)	Human: furry	Human: furry	Immune to sharp weapons.

Of the theriantrophic characters above, it appears that the majority have more (super) powers, only two characters do not have them, namely the birds Arue and Talokot. This super power is described metaphorically through certain parts of their body. Metaphors are used to describe the super powers possessed by theriantrophic characters/figures.

Archipelago (Nusantara) folklore shows extraordinary hidden potential. Theriantrophic characters in folklore can be adapted into superhero characters in animation and films, as well as telling folklore. Apart from being adapted into films and animation, these characters also have the potential to be applied to comics and games. All three contain storytelling and characterizations. This adaptation opportunity is in line with the statement that fairy tales have been adapted globally into works ranging from literature to theatre, from radio to film and animation (Denison & Peer, 2021). Adaptation of folklore into animation has been carried out in many countries, even globally or transnationally.

If developed, the potential for the use of theriantrophic figures in folklore will provide the possibility for folklore not to be eroded and lost in time. So that, the continuity of folklore in the future is increasingly maintained. Deep exploration of national culture, especially folklore, is the basis for the long-term development of art and design, especially animation in the future, as it is said that deep exploration of national cultural potential is the beginning of the long-term development of animation art and the inheritance of the spirit of folk art (Long, 2019). Furthermore, James Dananjaya said research on Indonesian folklore was very useful for the unity and integrity of the Indonesian nation (Dananjaya, 1986). The re-introduction of the Nusantara folklore is very important because it is a form of the original culture of the archipelago and a national identity (Wiguna & Sugihartono, 2020). To face the global, we have to study local, the more global, the more local (Dharsono, 2016), one of which is through exploring the potential of this folklore which can be developed into animation and films in the future.

#### 4. Conclusion

Research on the folklore of the Archipelago, which has theriantrophic characters, shows that there are seven folktales, namely (1) Reog Ponorogo from East Java; (2) Nyai Roro Kidul from East Java, Central Java and West Java; (3) Cindaku from West Sumatra; (4) Arue and Talokot Birds from West Borneo; (5) Legend of Mount Kelud from East Java; (6) Demon Snake from South Sulawesi; and (7) Aul (West Java and Central Java).

From the seven folklore above, there are ten theriantrophic characters who have a combination of human and animal forms, namely (1) Raja Singabarong or Singalodra, (2) Buroq, (3) Nyai Roro Kidul, (4) Cindaku, (5) Arue, (6) Talokot, (7) Lembu Suro, (8) Mahesa Suro, (9) Petta Tenricaca E Gau'na, and (10) Aul. In one story, there are sometimes more than one theriantrophic characters. The names of theriantrophic characters in the story also become the titles of folklore, except for Reog Ponorogo and Demon Snake. Theriantrophic character is said to have more (super) powers which are described metaphorically in certain parts of his body.

Theriantrophic characters with super powers in Indonesian folklore have the potential to be adapted into a film or animation, because apart from sharing elements of storytelling and characterization, the Indonesia film and animation needs superheroes that are uniquely from Indonesian. Superheroes excavated from folklore will have differentiation from Western-style superheroes.

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