

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Cirebon is a region in Indonesia rich in arts and culture, particularly in traditional performing arts. One of its important elements is the Cirebon Mask, which not only has aesthetic value but also contains deep symbolic meaning. This mask is used in various dance and wayang performances, making it an inseparable part of the cultural identity of the Cirebon people. Raising this topic is highly urgent because many local cultural heritages are at risk of being marginalized amidst the strong currents of globalization and the dominance of foreign content in the creative industry. With the rapid development of technology and the gaming industry, the integration of local cultural elements such as the Cirebon Mask into character design not only helps cultural preservation but also creates a unique and competitive visual identity in the global market. According to Dzhanakhmetov (2020), strong character design can enhance the player experience and strengthen the narrative in the game. Therefore, this study aims to explore and develop a game character design based on the Cirebon Mask, which combines visual appeal with a rich cultural context.

Panca Wanda was chosen because it is the core of the Cirebon Mask performance, depicting the human life cycle from birth to death, thus representing the entire journey and moral values contained in the culture (Sidyawati, 2020).

Cirebon masks have a long and rich history. Originating from traditions dating back to the 15th century, these masks have undergone various developments and adaptations over time. The existence of Cirebon masks is inseparable from the influence of Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic cultures that have taken root in this region. The characters featured in Cirebon mask performances are often drawn from folklore, legends, and historical stories that convey moral lessons. For example, the character "Semar," who represents wisdom and discernment, is often a central figure in the performance, teaching the audience the importance of moral values.

Each mask used in the performance has a distinctive design and color, which are not only visually appealing but also rich in symbolism. Certain colors represent specific qualities; for example, red is often associated with courage, while white symbolizes purity. Furthermore, the shape and details of the masks also have deep meaning. For example, a mask with an angry expression can depict a brave and assertive character, while a mask with a calm expression depicts a wise one. Thus, each element of the mask not only functions as an accessory, but also as a communication medium that conveys moral messages to society (Imawan, K., Ragil, M., & Kusuma, W. D. 2025).

The development of the video game industry in Indonesia shows an increasing trend, along with the growing public interest in this interactive medium. One crucial element in video game development is character design, which serves not only as a visual representation but also as a tool to convey narrative and emotion to players. In this context, character designs inspired by local culture, such as Cirebon masks, can provide significant added value. Cirebon masks, rich in symbolism and cultural meaning, offer great potential for creating unique and engaging characters in video games (Dzhanakhmetov, 2020).

In the development of the creative industry, especially in the realm of character design for entertainment media such as video games, local cultural elements are often not utilized optimally. Modern characters tend to adopt global trends rather than exploring the richness of their cultural values. This raises the first problem, namely the lack of utilization of cultural elements in modern character design. Especially in the context of Indonesian culture, Cirebon masks are one of the cultural heritages rich in philosophical values and visual symbolism. However, due to a lack of understanding of the meaning and philosophy contained within them, designs inspired by these masks are often shallow and lack meaning. This becomes the second problem, namely ignorance of the values and philosophy of Cirebon masks that cause the designs to be meaningless. Therefore, the problem formulation in this study focuses on two main things: What are the values and philosophy of Cirebon masks? and How to design characters based on the philosophical values of Cirebon masks? Through exploration and in-depth understanding of these two aspects, it is hoped that the resulting character designs will not only be visually appealing, but also culturally meaningful.

With the advancement of technology and digital media, cultural preservation through video games has become increasingly relevant. Video games are not only entertainment but also an effective educational tool for introducing local culture to the younger generation. In an era of rapid information technology development, young people spend more time in front of screens, whether on computers, tablets, or smartphones. Therefore, video games can be an effective medium for conveying cultural values, including the Cirebon Mask. The global gaming industry is estimated to reach USD 159.3 billion in 2020, and this figure continues to grow annually. This demonstrates that video games have great potential to reach a wide audience and serve as an effective medium for cultural preservation (Newzoo, 2020).

A concrete example of cultural preservation through video games can be seen in several games that feature local cultural themes. For example, the game "Lokapala" adapts elements of Indonesian culture, including folklore and mythology. In this game, the characters presented not only have attractive designs but also convey profound cultural values. Players are not only invited to play but also to learn about the culture represented by these characters. This demonstrates that character design based on local culture, such as the Cirebon Mask, has high relevance in today's creative industry.

By adapting local cultural elements, game developers can create characters that are not only visually appealing but also rich in meaning and context. For example, a character inspired by the Cirebon Mask can have a deep backstory, depicting a life journey filled with challenges

and lessons. This can enhance the gaming experience, where players are not only engaged in the game but also learn about the culture represented by the character. A study by Adams (2014) showed that characters with a strong cultural background can increase player engagement and provide a more immersive experience. Therefore, integrating local culture into character design can create a more meaningful gaming experience.

The goal of this project is to create a game character that integrates elements of the Cirebon Mask, thus providing a unique and educational experience for players. By understanding and adapting the values embodied in the Cirebon Mask, it is hoped that the resulting character design will reflect the richness of local culture and contribute positively to its preservation in a modern context. This process involves not only visual design but also the development of a strong and in-depth narrative that can invite players to explore and understand more about the Cirebon Mask culture.

In creating a character inspired by the Cirebon Mask Philosophy, it is important to conduct in-depth research into the characters within this tradition. Each character has a distinct story and meaning, and understanding the historical and social context of these characters will be crucial in creating an authentic design. For example, the character "Ciptoning," known for being cunning and cunning, can be adapted into an in-game character with special abilities in strategy and tactics. By providing a strong and relevant background, players will more easily connect with the character and understand the values being conveyed.

Furthermore, in his book, (Tillman, 2019) states that character is crucial in the production process or work of art. A product or work will be recognized by many people if the character is compelling, because a character is the main driving force behind a message or story conveyed through a medium to its audience. Therefore, a character must be designed in such a way that it looks attractive and can represent or convey the intended message. Captivating power is needed to draw the audience's attention to the design, even if only momentarily. This captivating power is present in all areas of design, especially character design. From the above opinion, it can be concluded that character is a crucial element of a story, and character design can influence how readers, listeners, or players interpret the story's content.

In the above description, integrating elements of Cirebon Mask Culture into video game character design is a strategic step in cultural preservation efforts. By utilizing technology and digital media, we can reach the younger generation and introduce them to Indonesia's rich culture. Through engaging character designs and immersive narratives, video games can be an effective tool for conveying the moral and social values embodied in Cirebon masks. This way, not only is cultural heritage preserved, but knowledge and understanding of local culture can also survive and thrive amidst modern advancements.

1.2 Problem Identification

1. Recognizing that cultural elements are not widely used in modern character design.
2. Ignorance of the values/philosophy of masks renders designs meaningless.

1.3 Problem Formulation

1. What are the values and philosophy of Cirebon masks?
2. How do you design a character based on the philosophical values of Cirebon masks?

1.4 Scope

1. What

Character design creation based on the philosophy of the Cirebon Mask “Panca Wanda Mask”

2. Who

The Transition Period of Adolescence to Adulthood aged around 15-25 years

3. When

This research will be conducted from April 2024 – June 2025

4. Why

Because **Cirebon masks have a strong philosophy** and rich visual forms to be developed into characters.

5. Where

Set in **Indonesia**, with a focus on **Cirebon (West Java)** culture as a source of inspiration.

6. How

Adapting mask elements into character forms that fit the game's world and story.

1.5.1 Design Method

The design method is the method used by the author in designing this research. The design method has two stages, the first stage is data collection consisting of interviews, observations, and questionnaires to produce primary data and literature studies to obtain secondary data. The second stage is the analysis of data obtained using content analysis and visual analysis.

1.5.2 Data Collection Method

Data collection was conducted using qualitative methods. Descriptive data on game characteristics and direct observation were necessary to qualify for qualitative research.

Qualitative research methods are often referred to as the most naturalistic because they are conducted in natural settings (Sugiyono, 2013:8).

The author collected data using the following instruments:

1.Digital Literacy

Digital literacy is done by obtaining additional information through media such as internet journals. Digital literacy is used to search for Character Design data as an additional reference.

2.Observation

Analyze character designs in popular games to identify patterns, trends, and elements that attract players' attention.

1.5.3 Data Analysis Method

Data analysis is the systematic investigation or extraction of meaning from collected data. The data analysis methods used by the author include philosophical and visual analysis to study patterns and deduce the meaning of the collected visual objects. The author analyzes the values, philosophy, and use of color in similar Character Design works.

1.6 Writing Systematics

The writing of this report is arranged in several chapters with the following systematics:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Contains background, problem formulation, research objectives, research benefits, scope, and methods used in the research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Basis

Discusses theories that support the research, including the definition of **narrative games**, principles of effective **character design**, **visual and narrative** elements in character creation, and case studies of character design in **narrative games**.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Explains the research approach, data collection techniques, design stages, tools and materials used, and data analysis.

1.7 Planning Framework

