

## CHAPTER 2

# MAYANG: Cursed of Spirit Preservation and Awareness of Ulek Mayang Through Animation

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is a diverse country with a diverse culture and heritage that is also known for its unique, traditional, and valuable. Folklore is often passed down orally or through performance. Most of the performances are not only for entertainment but also for some people's beliefs. *Ulek Mayang* is one of the mystical folklore that is known for the ritual of the sea that is mostly located in the coastal state of Terengganu. The story tells about a sea princess that fell in love with a human, which later on caused a disturbance that could only be resolved by a ritual. The ritual included a chant, a dance, and an offering. This supernatural ritual has been practiced by the fishermen's communities to seek protection.

Historically, *Ulek Mayang* is associated with pre-Islamic and

Hindu-Buddhist influences [10]. From an Islamic perspective, such practices may be considered *syirik* (associating partners with Allah) and are generally forbidden [11]. As a result, the ritual has undergone reinterpretation. Today, *Ulek Mayang* is often presented as a performance, cut down on its spiritual elements, and reimagined as heritage art [12]. This allows for a preservation in a way that respects Islamic teachings while still enjoying its artistic and historical value. In accord with this, this project approaches *Ulek Mayang* from a cultural and artistic lens by using animation to reframe the ritual for modern audiences without compromising religious sensitivities.

Cultural preservation through creative innovation is one of the most dynamic and immersive mediums that offers a powerful solution. Animation allows a combination of visuals, motion, sound, and music to be a form of entertainment and emotional engagement to bring ancient tales back to life [13]. Animation is an ideal tool for educational and cultural outreach. In Malaysia, there are only a few animated works that focus on local heritage and culture.

So, this project was tilled. “MAYANG: Cursed of Spirit” is a 2D animated short film that combines cultural authenticity with creative storytelling. It adapts the *Ulek Mayang* ritual to a modern story that reflects both traditional Malaysian art and the cinematic techniques of modern horror animation. In this project, it seeks to demonstrate how folklore can be preserved not through static images but through animation. By doing this, it not only preserves a valuable piece of heritage but also inspires a new generation to rediscover and take pride in Malaysia’s rich cultural stories.

## **2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.2.1 ULEK MAYANG**

*Ulek Mayang* is a traditional ritual dance from Malaysia, particularly in Terengganu. The dance was originally performed as a chant to a healing ritual by a *bomoh* (traditional healer) to cure a spiritual illness that was believed to be caused by the sea

spirits [14]. In early Malay society, many believed that the way to heal a spiritual illness was by restoring spiritual balance. The performance tells the story of a man that believed who is a fisherman, who falls ill after a supernatural encounter at sea. Six sea princesses come to claim him, but the seventh and the most powerful, known as *Tuan Puteri*, restores a famous chant. *Ulek Mayang* is identified as part of Malay ritual theater. Traditional instruments are played in repetitive rhythms, and dancers will wear traditional royal attire to represent the sea princesses. Nowadays, *Ulek Mayang* is often performed as a cultural dance during events like beach festivals (*Pesta Pantai*) [15]. However, arguments like this still bring up where modern performances are at risk of losing the ritual's original spiritual significance. Despite this, *Ulek Mayang* still remains important to Malay cultural heritage.

### 2.2.2 ULEK MAYANG IN ISLAM

With the spread of Islam in Malaysia during that time, such practices are still under scrutiny. In Islamic theology, seeking help from the spirits or performing a ritual is considered as *syirik* (associating a partner with Allah) [16], which is now strictly prohibited by JAKIM in 2020. Practices that involve spirit worship, offerings, or a trance are considered as *bid'ah* (innovation) in religion [17]. As a result, many Alim (scholars in Islam) have condemned the traditional form of *Ulek Mayang*, especially when it was performed with a spiritual intent. Nevertheless, *Ulek Mayang* has been adapted as a cultural performance. Its spiritual elements have been removed to allow it to be showcased as part of Malaysia's performing art.

### 2.2.3 ANIMATION IN EDUCATION

Animation plays a crucial part in education, communication, and cultural preservation, as it's a powerful visual storytelling medium [18]. In Malaysia, digital media has big potential to guide younger generations and promote cultural literacy among youth. Animation also can enhance empathy by helping audiences emotionally connect. Even with this potential, Malaysian integration of

animation for folklore preservation remains limited [19]. Many Malaysian folklore projects still rely on text or static visuals with a minimal amount of adaptation into an animation.

#### **2.2.4 HORROR GENRE IN ANIMATION**

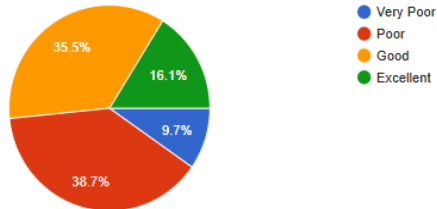
Horror is a unique genre that mostly uses two taps in emotions, which are fear, awe, eeriness, and mystery. Horror storylines can gain attention and improve memory retention through their emotional activation [20]. In Malaysia, this particular is relevant as many of the folklore stories involve spiritual themes, possession, and the supernatural [21]. The supernatural is central to Malay culture and makes horror fit in the adaptations. Using this genre, you can respectfully reinforce the folklore's emotional and spiritual aspects. The horror genre can also allow viewers to visualize metaphors such as darkness, shadow, and ritual symbols that can reflect the depth of traditional beliefs.

### **2.3 DATA COLLECTIONS**

To obtain data on the level of public understanding of Ulek Mayang and animation as a way to preserve and raise awareness among the younger generation, we conducted a survey of random participants. This way, we will be able to determine the level of effectiveness of our project later. The purpose of the survey was to gather quantitative information about young people's perceptions about Malaysian culture and heritage. A combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions covering cultural and historical knowledge were included in the questionnaire. The target audience encompassed individuals ranging in age from under 18 to 35 and above. A Google Form form was used for the study, and 30 randomly selected people responded. Instructions and tasks were provided to the participants. Following collection, the survey data was examined to find the main themes and trends in the responses from Figure 2.1.

How would you rate your knowledge of Ulek Mayang?

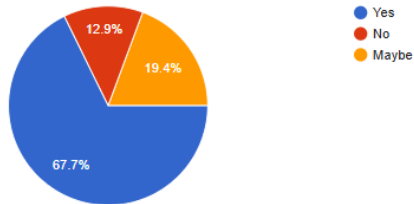
31 responses



(a)

Have you ever watched an animation based Malaysian folklore, myth or traditions?

31 responses



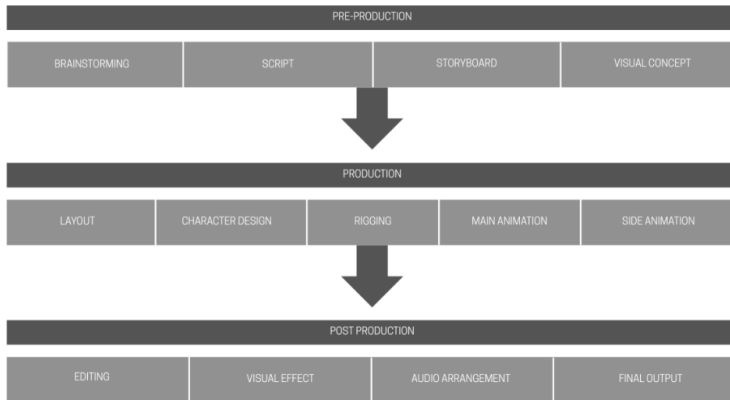
(b)

**Figure 2.1:** Survey question examples (a) Culture Knowledge Question  
(b) Animation as Cultural Tool Question

## 2.4 ANIMATION DEVELOPMENT

MAYANG: Cursed of Spirit uses a 2D animation character design in developing an animated short film. In this development process, this project is using the ragging or tweening method in Adobe Animate for the character movement. Some of the scenes are also using the frame-by-frame method. This process was followed by a workflow process, which is pre-production, production, and post-production, as shown in Figure 2.2. With this approach, this animation development process will run smoothly, and all

problems can be prevented before this animation becomes a public viewed.



**Figure 2.2:** Stages of the 2D animation development work process

### **2.4.1 PRE-PRODUCTION**

In pre-production, this animation project early development used the initial process by designing the workflow according to the phases that involved (a) ideation, (b) script, (c) storyboard, and (d) visual concept.

#### **(a) IDEATION**

During this phase, data research is really needed, especially about Ulek Mayang, and it will be used as guidance through the MAYANG: Cursed of Spirit development process and to make sure that all of the information stays in the correct direction without any misleading. Other than that, the objective of the animation, target audiences, and due date were also discussed with the research team to make sure that this animation is not only for entertainment but also for preservation and spreading awareness about Ulek Mayang and Malaysia's cultural heritage. Based on the survey, the target audience for this animation primarily for Malaysian youth aged around 15 to 25 years old as this

generation is most likely to get influenced by global media. The concept of this project for MAYANG: Cursed of Spirit is supernatural folklore with a hint of mystery and emotional storytelling using 2D animation style. Below illustrate to the script from Figure 2.3

SKRIP:

SCENE 1/ EXT/ MALAM/ PINGGIR PANTAI

Di keheningan malam, Fina seorang gadis remaja, sedang berlatih tari Ulek Mayang bersorotan. Pergerakan yang sempurna dilakukannya. Tangan yang ayu melentur lembut. Kakinya melangkah dengan penuh anggun dan berhati-hati. Fina amat fokus dengan setiap langkah yang dibuatnya. Namun, langkahnya mula perlahan. Fina tersilap langkah. Fikirannya terganggu dengan perjumpaan kelab petang tadi.

CIKGU

Jadi, seperti yang kamu semua tahu, kampung kita akan mengadakan pesta keramaian, semasa malam puja pantai dan kelab kita dikehendaki membuat persembahan Ulek Mayang pada malam kejadian. Akan tetapi, saya akan memilih hanya tujuh orang sahaja dari kalangan kamu untuk menjadi wakil persembahan.

FINA

Ha? Tujuh orang je?! Ish, aku kene dapatkan tempat tu! "bisik Fina dalam hati"

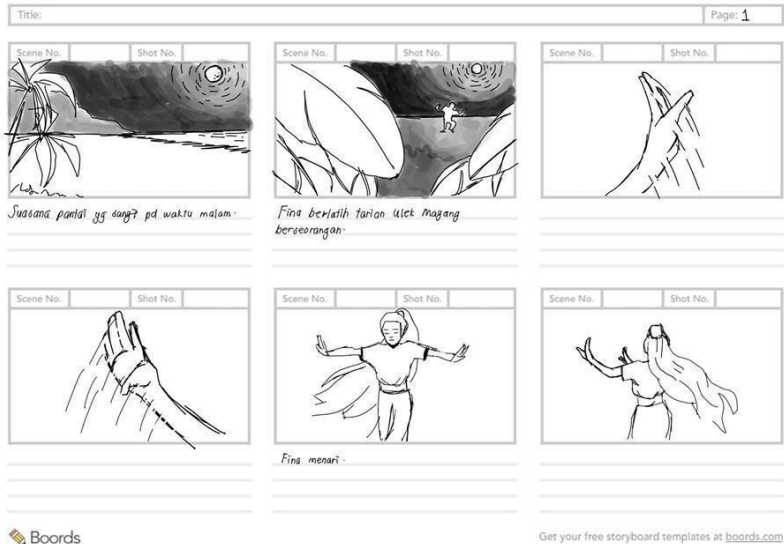
Fina yang teringat dengan kabar pemilihan itu terus kembali fokus. Pergerakan Fina semakin lancar dengan penuh keyakinan. Fina terus berlatih tanpa henti hingga lewat malam. Tanpa disedari, Fina tidak keseronangan pada malam itu. Susuk tubuh seorang wanita berakaidan seperti kerabat diraja sedang merenung talam kearah Fina dengan raut wajah yang garang.

CUTTO/

**Figure 2.3:** Example script for MAYANG: Cursed of Spirit

## (b) STORYBOARD

In this stage, the script will be visualize into a storyboard frames. These frames has detail instrustion of scene compositions, camera angle and dialogue. Storyboard will give a clear vision of the animation's flow. Figure 2.4 shows an example of storyboard that were used for MAYANG: Cursed of Spirit.

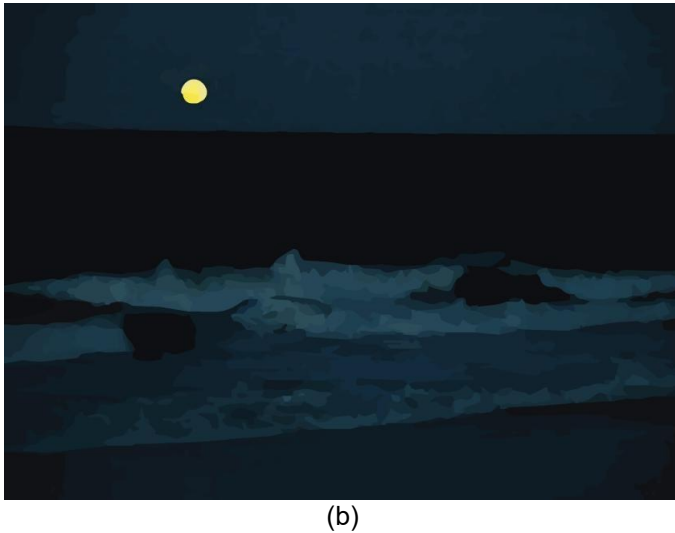


**Figure 2.4:** Example of storyboard for MAYANG: Cursed of Spirit

### (c) VISUAL CONCEPT ART

Creating detailed model sheets for characters, environments, props, and other visual elements that will be used. All the characters are digitally drawn and designed to match the story of the animation. The background layouts are refined to match every angle and screen planned in the animation. It has also been chosen to follow the storyboard that has been set. It's made so that the chosen concept and animation style are appropriate. Every detail of the characters, design, and overall animation is determined and visualized to meet the standard of the development needs of MAYANG: Cursed of Spirit. Figure 2.5 (a) shows an example of the character design and figure 2.5 (b) shows to the example of background .





**Figure 2.5:** (a) An example of character design for the main character,  
(b) An example of the background

## 2.4.2 PRODUCTION

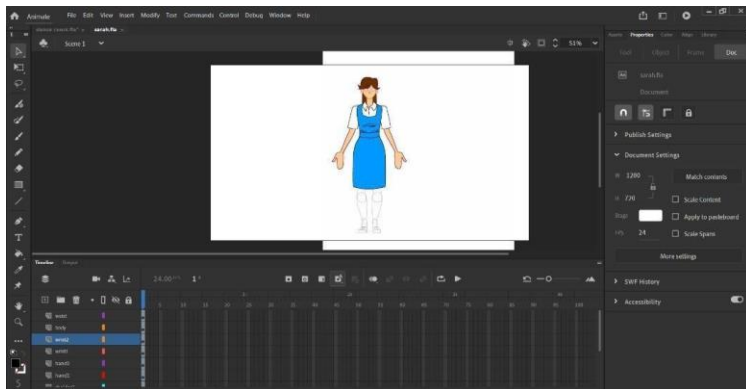
The production phases are focusing on the following (I) layout, (II) design, (III) tweening, (IV) key animation, (V) secondary animation, and (VI) full animation development.

## (a) LAYOUT

The layout is made to position the character in the simplest possible way before it is moved using the rigging concept in the animation development that will be done next. Layout initially to define all character positions. Other than that, the background assets are also refined to add authenticity to the character's environment.

## (b) RIGGING

Rigging is a step where characters are layered in different layers (head, body, arms, legs, etc.) with control points that are joined together but can be animated separately. This will help production team to animate them without redrawing it. This can ensure the fluid and consistent movement of each character animation. Figure 2.6 shows an example on how body part in different layers.



**Figure 2.6:** an example of rigging

## (c) KEY ANIMATION

After the rigging process, the animation will be moved according to the storyboard to archive the main movement before the side

movement in between. Every character movement that is involved in creating the animation is created by following the principles of animation to make it lifelike motion.

#### **(d) SECONDARY ANIMATION**

Subsequently, the development of additional pieces created motions within the main animation. The animation's secondary movements such as lip synchronization, facial emotions, and minor motion are refined to persuade and draw viewers in. It gives you a good picture of how long the character's mouth moves and how they are expressing themselves while speaking.

#### **(e) DEVELOPMENT**

Thereafter, the 2D animation production program combines all of the other components from the animatic storyboard. Together, the characters, background, and animation components tell the tale to the viewer. The script-based voice dialogue recordings are also processed and merged to give an idea of how long the character's facial expressions and mouth movements last. Every integrated piece is also reexamined to determine whether it is appropriate for the story's plot. The appropriateness of the story's plot determines how to best enhance aspects like color, lighting, camera placement, and voice dialogue continuity.

### **2.4.3 POST-PRODUCTION**

In post-production phases are following to focus on (I) pengeditan, (II) visual effects, (III) sound design and (IV) final output.

#### **(a) EDITING**

To give the impression that they are all a part of the same scene, visual components from many sources specifically, 2D character designs and backdrops are blended and improved. External components can typically be added or removed to improve the interaction of each element and provide more realistic animation,

which improves the flow of each story plot. Transition effects like blur and fade are also included in story plot transitions. A realistic story mood will also be created through the use of special effects, including lighting effects. Making sure that each character's color adjustment has a uniform color scheme is another crucial aspect of editing.

## (b) VISUAL EFFECT

Sound effects, sound recording and end credits are all part of the visual effects phase. Additionally chosen the ultimate video format display for this MAYANG: Cursed of Spirit animation. To add artistic emphasis and make the animation more realistic, sound effects or audio effects are produced. Furthermore, the intergration of additional effects is intended to enhance the neatness and appeal of MAYANG: Cursed of Spirit.

## (c) SOUND DESIGN

Additionally, chosen and incorporated were sound recording components that enhance the animation flow and heighten the impact of each story scenario. The storyline's appropriateness with the voice acting and the visual effects were also improved. Additionally, each voice dialogue's sound intensity was noted and adjusted. Figure 2.7 shows an example of sound arrangement for background music.

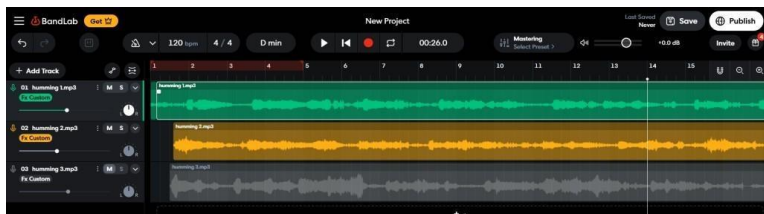


Figure 2.7: Sound arrangement for background music

## (d) FINAL OUTPUT

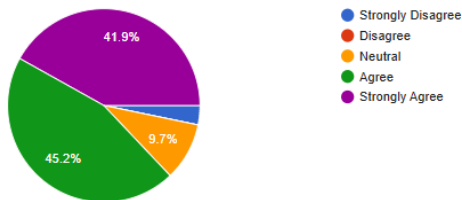
The final output is a process where the exportation of the MAYANG: Cursed of Spirit animation is in format and quality. The project has to be exported in a specific format for streaming platforms. MAYANG: Cursed of Spirit has been exported in digital format to be uploaded to YouTube.

## 2.5 RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

MAYANG: Cursed of Spirit has undergone an feedback from viewer, which consists 30 people. A total of 30 people who watched MAYANG: Cursed of Spirit animation and used “Google Form” to provide tier thoughts and comments. According to Figure 2.8, the majority of viewers agree that animation can be used to promote the traditional dance Ulek Mayang and raise awareness of its significance in capturing the attention of younger audiences.

Do you think animation is an effective way to promote Malaysian traditional culture?

31 responses



**Figure 2.8:** Results related to promoting Ulek Mayang through animation

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

With a focus on Malaysian youth, this study explores that cultural animation has a potential as tool for cultural heritage preservation. The result indicate that youth people in Malaysia are

receptive to learning about their cultural heritage through digital platforms particularly in animation where it included aspects of history, culture, horror and folklore. According to survey results, there was a high level of interest in folklore animation and many respondents acknowledge that animation with captivating storylines, voice acting and eye-catching visual can preserve and improve learning.