

Research Article

Using the Malaysian Mah Meri Mask as Media for Cultural Introduction

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Abstract.

The Malaysian Mah Meri tribal mask is one of the primitive masks whose existence has become an artifact stored in museums and become a medium of learning for the younger generation about their culture. The masks made are representations of ancestors and are used in worship ceremonies dedicated to their ancestors. These masks are used for funeral rituals and fertility ceremonies and serve as provisions for the dead in graves or as grave guards. The Mah Meri tribe is a sub-ethnic group of indigenous people living along the coast of Selangor. This community group has long lived in the area, and their daily life is farming. Among the routine life of the Mah Meri tribe, there is the Mah Meri mask dance which displays the history of the ancestors of the Mah Meri tribe and represents the animals that live on the land, in the swamps or rivers they encounter, both good and bad. Problems arise when the animal masks of the Mah Meri tribe are displayed at the Asian Art museum. Besides not being widely known, they also have minimal information, which is not enough to be used as a learning medium. The research method used is the Borg and Gall development model, which is simplified into 4 steps, namely (1) research and information gathering; (2) planning; (3) developing the initial form of the product; and (4) the final product revision. The result of this development is a 3D application that can be used as a learning medium to help tourists of all ages learn the masks of Orang Asli Malaysia in museums more easily.

Keywords: Malaysian, Mah Meri, mask, 3D character, cultural

1. Introduction

Masks have different roles and functions in each region and country because they have different customs and beliefs. Masks may function as the embodiment of ancestors, worship of ancestral spirits, grave provisions, and dance clothing equipment (Martono, 1994). Acts by the maker are considered supernatural powers that can resist dangers from the outside (Sukadana, 1985).

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In the current era, many traditional masks of high historical value are stored in museums as a source of learning and information about the journey of masks that have contributed to a nation's history and cultural roots. In Malaysia, traditional historical masks belonging to the Malay tribe are kept in the Museum of Ethnic Arts. The mask belongs to the Mah Meri tribe, also known as the Mah Meri Mask.

Mah Meri is one of the sub-ethnic tribes of indigenous people who live in the area along the coast of Selangor. Among the routines of the life of the Mah Meri Tribe, there is an art that is also a means of worshiping ancestral spirits in the form of mask dances. This Mah Meri mask dance tells the recorded history of the tribal people who interact with nature so that they will form ancestral figures who represent animals that live on land, in swamps and rivers, both having good and bad impacts on their lives. This Mah Meri mask dance is performed at any time, such as during the celebration of the full moon, fishing activities, or for medical processions as a form of gratitude to the ancestors as well as asking for blessings to be kept away from disease, crop failure, to the difficulty of getting game (<https://panorama-magz.com>, 2015)

This research is an allied study between Indonesia and Malaysia (IMRC-Social Humanities) in the field of traditional culture-based tourism development, where researchers take the object of research on traditional masks and houses to be developed in the progress of tourism. According to the researcher, these two cultural products have the same collective identity, so they deserve to be developed.

The researcher chose the mask as the object of research because the Mah Meri Mask is the original mask of an ancient Malaysian tribe, considering that the country is multi-ethnic (Indian, Chinese, and Malay). The design of the Mah Meri mask 3D figure is part of a virtual reality-based learning media that will be available on the nusantaraheritage.org website. In addition, this research also aims to support the growth of the tourism sector, which impacts improving the surrounding community's economy.

2. Method

The development method in this study took the Borg & Gall development model. The Borg and Gall development model is chosen because the steps in this research are by the available time and funding and by the development concept that the researcher will carry out. Sukmadinata (2006) explained that there are ten steps for implementing research and development strategies in the Borg and Gall development model. In this

study, the steps were simplified into 4 degrees due to the consideration of the time limitations of the study. These stages can be described as follows:



Figure 1: Borg and Gall Development Model.

3. Findings and Discussion

The design of the Mah Meri Mask 3D figure begins with finding the mask data first. Because this research is collaborative research with the University of Technology Malaysia, a division of tasks is held where the researchers from Malaysia are tasked with finding data about the Mah Meri Mask in the form of photos, videos, and historical information about each mask. Data can be obtained through the Museum of Asian Art, which is located on the campus of Universiti Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Thus, it makes it easier for researchers to work on 3D figures of Mah Meri masks as part of virtual reality-based learning media.



Figure 2: Photo of Field Data Results. (Personal Documentation, 2022).

After the data is obtained, the initial stage is to do a rough sketch to estimate the depth of the 3D shape and color of each mask which will later be transferred and processed into 3D image-making software, namely Blender.

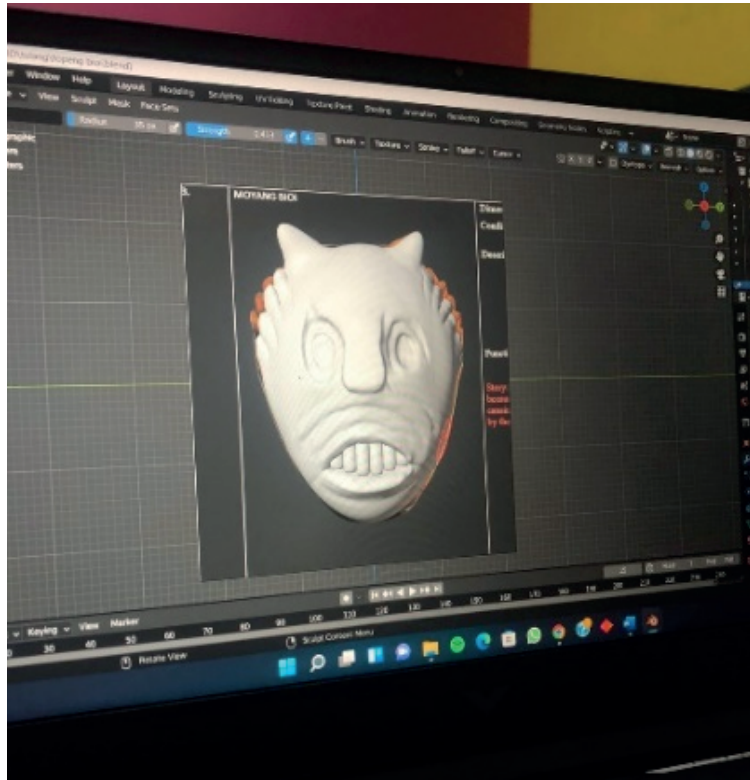


Figure 3: Processing 2D Images into 3D with Blender Software. (Data Processed, 2022).

In this software, digital drawings can be carried out, originally from 2D images into 3D shapes. The process of forming 3D mask modeling is done by giving shadow effects, indentations on objects, and light effects. This process is the core process of designing a mask model so that the results can later become a 3-dimensional model.

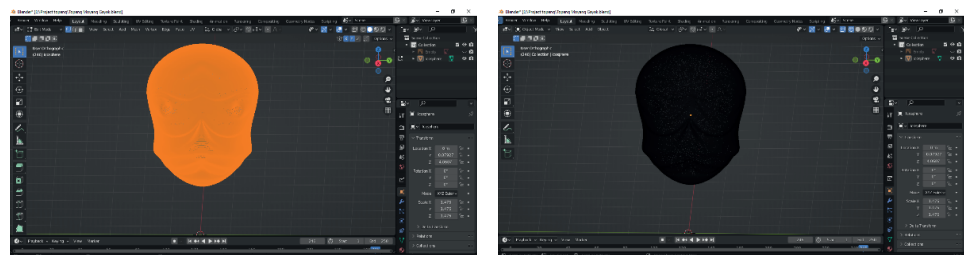


Figure 4: Formation of 3D Effect. (Data Processed, 2022).

When successful, the formation of this model will produce a mask model that can be seen in 3 dimensions, indentations, protrusions, and shadow effects. Checking can

be done from various sides, especially from the front, right, and left sides. As shown in Figure 5 below:

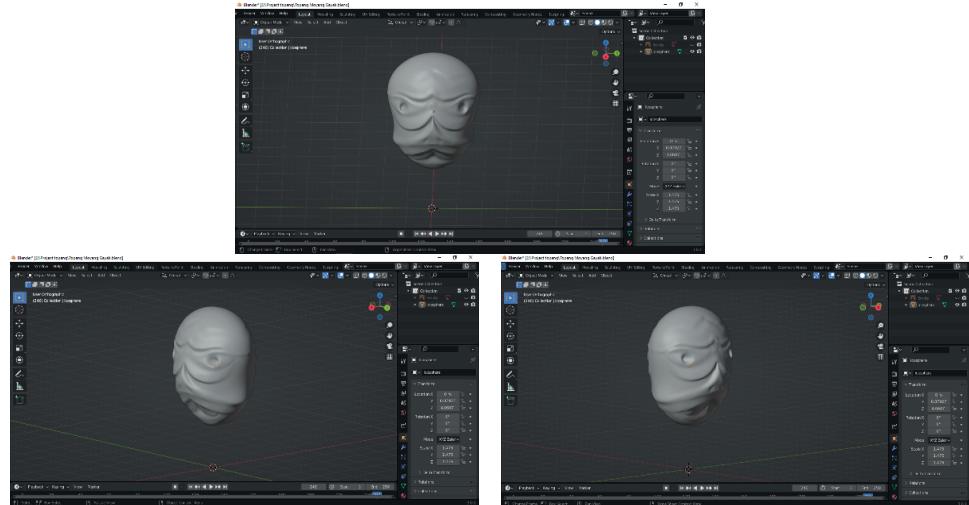


Figure 5: Mah Meri Mask 3D Results. (Data Processed, 2022).

When the 3D model of the mask is checked from various sides, it is deemed appropriate, and then the next step is to compare it again with the original photo taken at the time of observation. This is aimed at quality control so that the designed model does not deviate from the original mask in shape and composition.



Figure 6: Model Checking with Original shape. (Data Processed, 2022).

After the composition of the mask’s shape has matched the original condition, the last step is to color the wood material into the modeling of the mask. The selection of wood textures can be adjusted and sought as closely as possible to the original. Then the mask modeling can be rendered to get the final result, as shown in Figure 7 below:



Figure 7: Mah Meri's Mask 3D Rendering Results. (Data Processed, 2022).

Finally, designing the Mah Meri mask 3D figure has been completely completed. The results of this design can be combined with the application of virtual reality to be used as a learning medium which will later be very useful for the development of digital mask tourism.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

The Mah Meri mask is one of the wealth of Indonesian heritage owned by Malaysia. The traditional art of masks like this must be preserved, so they are not eroded by the times. One way is to create a digital Mah Meri Mask 3D learning media in the form of virtual reality, which will later be included on the nusantaraheritage.org website and can be accessed by all circles of society.

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