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# A STUDY IN TAIWAN ABORIGINAL OF ANIMATIONS AND COMIC

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The comic or animation based on the aboriginal people of Taiwan or other comic works on the market in the same period, in later works, the later aboriginal character design was largely fantasy-based, and there was a lack of historical research or data collection for costume design or plot setting. This research selects fourteen commercial comic publications between 1970 and 2015 that featured Taiwanese aboriginals, analyzing the plot setting and character design, art style, and costume design. The results of this study can provide more theoretical support when creating Taiwanese aboriginal themes in the future.

Key Words: Taiwan aboriginal, cheater design, comic, animation

## Introduction

The history of comics in Taiwan traces back seventy years to 1935. Before digital entertainment became popular, comics were a familiar medium of communication among the general public. In 1990, the first comic based on the aboriginal people of Taiwan, Seediq Bale: The Wushe Uprising, was released. Then, in 2017, Gaea Books launched the comic magazine Creative Comic Collection. In addition to traditional Taiwanese history and culture, the magazine also features many Taiwanese aboriginal characters and stories. However, comparing Seediq Bale: The Wushe Uprising and Creative Comic Collection, which were based on historical events, other comic works on the market in the same period, in later works, the later aboriginal character design was largely fantasy-based, and there was a lack of historical research or data collection for costume design or plot setting. This research selects fourteen commercial comic publica-

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tions between 1970 and 2015 that featured Taiwanese aboriginals, analyzing the plot setting and character design, art style, and costume design. The results of this study can provide more theoretical support when creating Taiwanese aboriginal themes in the future.

Literature Review

To make viewers or readers feel a sense of identification, most of the character designs in the comics are human. The graphic design of human characters includes art style and costume design. The present study adopted content analysis to examine comics published between 1970 and 2015 featuring the characters or stories of Taiwanese aboriginals. We collected a wide range of data and interpreted the content, focusing on the plot setting and character designs of the stories. Finally, we used cross-validation to integrate the results of the analysis, as shown in the research framework in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Framework

After excluding picture books and storybooks, the list of works is compiled in

Table 1.

Table 1. picture books and storybooks

| Year of publication | Title | Artist | Sample No. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1973 | Treasure of the rainbow Mountain | Wei yi xi/ hong yi nan (story/ artist) | 01 |
| 1980 | Hong-Ye juvenile baseball team | Wu wan lai．yang qi zhang (director) | cross out |
| 1990 | YOUNG GUNS | Lin zheng de | 02 |
| 1990 | Wushe incident Report Comic | Qiu ruo long | 03 |
| 1998 | Taiwan Fairy tale | Liang chong you (director) | 04 |
| 1999 | Kbalan boy | Lee tong / Kang jin he (original / director) | 05 |
| 2001 | Taiwan History Comics series2 | Hao guang cai/jiang jie (original /comic) | cross out |
| 2001 | The myth and legend of Taiwan aboriginal | Zhang shi ming (original / comic) | 06 |
| 2002 | Princess Banenn | Gu chang hong / cian siang (original / comic) | 07 |
| 2002 | People of Formosa | Du fu an | cross out |
| 2005 | The Origin-Legend | Qiu ruo long ( | 08 |

| | s of Taiwan Indigenous peoples | director) | |
|------|------|------|------|
| 2005 | Shihsan-hang trip | Du fu an | 09 |
| 2009 | The wing of Kopule | AKRU | 10 |
| 2010 | Traces | Robi Engler、Su jun xu(director) | 11 |
| 2011 | The Sage Hunter | An wei min、Lu ming kuan、Xue xiu fen(director) | 12 |
| 2011 | Yabit | Kao yi feng (director) | 13 |
| 2013 | The Comics of Taiwan History | Du fu an | cross out |
| 2015 | Rumor of Dutchf: Dayuan Incident | kinono | 14 |

Baseball Kids:

Hongye Little League is based on the Bunun people of Taiwan. However, the characters and story are modeled after the Japanese sports magna Star of the Giants, which is not useful for this study and is excluded. The three comics Ancient Taiwan, A History of Taiwan in Comics 2, and People of the Beautiful Land mainly introduce the history of Taiwan, and very little space is given to aboriginal people. Therefore, these comics are excluded from the present study. After reviewing eighteen works based on this principle, the fourteen works with obvious aboriginal characters were selected as the research sample.

Method

The analysis of the works consisted of the plot setting and character design. Plot setting: Dividing the works into three main categories according to the main plotline; further subdividing the works according to the character design, the art styles presented in the works, and the costume design worn by the characters. The art style of works is analyzed to understand the preferences of viewers or readers; the costume designs are analyzed and compared the aboriginal character design in the works to learn about the author's references when creating Taiwanese aboriginal characters and the public's impressions of aboriginal appearances and costumes.

*Plot setting*

The present study divided the plot settings of the works into three main categories: (1) Tribal legends: The legends or myths passed down by Taiwan's aboriginal tribes; (2) Historical adaptations: Adaptation of actual historical events involving the aboriginal people of Taiwan; (3) Original fantasy: The works feature Taiwanese aboriginals, but the plotlines are not closely related to categories (1) or (2).

The plot settings of the 14 works were analyzed according to the three major categories, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2.　Plot Settings Of Analyzed

| Sample No. | plot settings | analyzed |
|------|------|------|
| 01 | An adventurous of fighting enemies and finding treasures | Original fantasy |

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| 02 | Teen comedy | Original fantasy |
|---|---|---|
| 03 | Based on actual events. | Historical adaptations |
| 04 | Adapted from tribal legend about the flood. | Tribal legends |
| 05 | Through drama. | Original fantasy / Tribal legends |
| 06 | Introduce the creation myth of the aborigines of Taiwan. | Tribal legends |
| 07 | Taiwan aboriginal myth | Tribal legends |
| 08 | Taiwan aboriginal myth. | Tribal legends |
| 09 | Museum Guide cartoons and comics. | Tribal legends |
| 10 | Fantasy tale and friendship. | Original fantasy |
| 11 | Adventure story for kids | Original fantasy |
| 12 | Self-identity and historical inquiry | Tribal legends |
| 13 | A story between a little boy and a science teacher | Original fantasy / Tribal legends |
| 14 | Adaptation of History. | Original fantasy / Historical adaptations |

The analysis in Table 2. is summarized in Table 3. Summary of findings: For the plot settings of the fourteen works: most are (1) Tribal legends with eight works, followed by (3) Original fantasy with seven works, and finally (2) Historical adaptations with two works.

Table 3.    Plot Settings Summarize

| Sample No. | plot settings | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Tribal legends | Historical adaptations | Original fantasy |
| 01 | | | ● |
| 02 | | | ● |
| 03 | | ● | |
| 04 | ● | | |
| 05 | ● | | ● |
| 06 | ● | | |
| 07 | ● | | |
| 08 | ● | | |
| 09 | ● | | |
| 10 | | | ● |
| 11 | | | ● |
| 12 | ● | | |
| 13 | ● | | ● |
| 14 | | ● | ● |
| subtotal | 8 | 2 | 7 |

*Art Style*

This study classified the art styles of the works into three main categories: (1) Simple cartoons: The art style of the characters is simple in concise, and viewers or readers are from a wide age group; (2) Realism: The art style is realistic, with emphasis on the real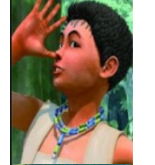istic depiction and detailed presentation; (3) Aesthetic transformation: The style of the characters is based on fantasy embellishment, embellishing certain features to make the characters more attractive.

Table 4.    Art Style Of Analyzed

| Sample No. | Art style | Sample pic |
|---|---|---|

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| 01 | aesthetic transformation |  |
|---|---|---|
| 02 | aesthetic transformation |  |
| 03 | realism |  |
| 04 | simple cartoons |  |
| 05 | aesthetic transformation |  |
| 06 | aesthetic transformation |  |
| 07 | aesthetic transformation |  |

| | |  |
|---|---|---|
| 08 | aesthetic transformation |  |
| 09 | simple cartoons |  |
| 10 | aesthetic transformation |  |
| 11 | aesthetic transformation |  |
| 12 | aesthetic transformation |  |
| 13 | realism 3DCG |  |

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| 14 | aesthetic transformation |  |

The analysis in Table 4. is summarized in Table 5. Summary of findings: For the art styles of the fourteen works, most are (1) aesthetic transformation with eight works, followed by (3) simple cartoons with four works, and finally (2) realism with two works.

This study classified the costumes worn by the characters in the works into three main categories. (1) Simplified: Simplifying the costumes won by the aboriginal characters; (2) Faithful representation: Based on actual observation and avoiding excessive speculation; (3) Mixed fantasy: Using some aboriginal elements mixed with various fictional props or decorations. The analysis of the costume styles in the fourteen works is shown in Table 6.

Table 5. Art Style Summarize

| Sample No. | Art style | | |
| | aesthetic transformation | realism | simple cartoons |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 01 | ● | | |
| 02 | ● | | |
| 03 | | ● | |
| 04 | | | ● |
| 05 | ● | | |
| 06 | ● | | |
| 07 | ● | | |
| 08 | ● | | |
| 09 | | | ● |
| 10 | ● | | |
| 11 | | | ● |
| 12 | | | ● |
| 13 | | ● | |
| 14 | ● | | |
| sub-total | 8 | 2 | 4 |

Table 6. Costumes Design of Analyzed

| Sample No. | Costumes analyzed | Sample pic |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 01 | mixed fantasy |  |
| 02 | mixed fantasy |  |

*Costume Designs*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 03 | faithful representation |  |
| 04 | mixed fantasy |  |
| 05 | mixed fantasy |  |
| 06 | faithful representation |  |
| 07 | faithful representation and mixed fantasy |  |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 08 | faithful representation and mixed fantasy |  |
| 09 | simplified |  |
| 10 | mixed fantasy |  |
| 11 | simplified and mixed fantasy |  |
| 12 | faithful representation and simplified |  |
| 13 | faithful representation |  |

| | mixed fantasy | |
|---|---|---|
| 14 | | |

The analysis in Table 6. is summarized in Table 7. Summary of findings: In the fourteen works, the largest number of costume styles was (3) mixed fantasy with ten works, followed by (2) faithful representation with six works, and (1) simplified, with only three works.

Table 7. Costumes Design Summarize

| Sample No. | Costumes design | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | simplified | faithful representation | mixed fantasy |
| 01 | | | ● |
| 02 | | | ● |
| 03 | | ● | |
| 04 | | | ● |
| 05 | | | ● |
| 06 | | ● | ● |
| 07 | | ● | ● |
| 08 | | ● | ● |
| 09 | ● | | |
| 10 | | | ● |
| 11 | ● | | ● |
| 12 | ● | ● | |
| 13 | | ● | |
| 14 | | | ● |
| subtotal | 3 | 6 | 10 |

Integrating Research Data

*Matrix Diagram*

Tribal legends, historical adaptations, and original fantasy in Table 3. were coded as C1, C2, and C3, respectively. Simple cartoons, realism, and aesthetic transformation in Table 5. were coded as A1, A2, and A3, respectively. Simplified, faithful representation and mixed fantasy in Table 7. were coded as B1, B2, and B3, respectively. This produces the C-matrix diagram in Figure 2.
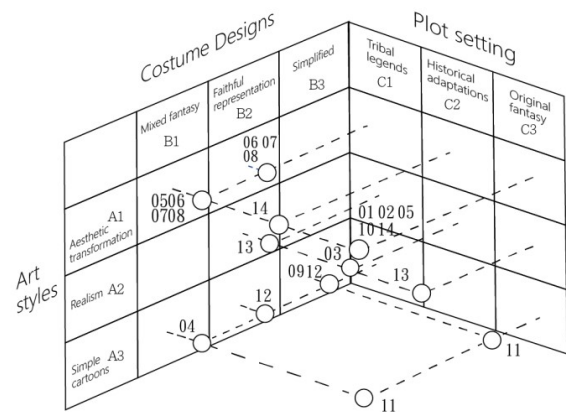


Figure 2. C-matrix diagram

3X3X3 array can get 27 combination strategies, There are 12 combinations in the 14 works,15 combinations left, Means that there are still combinations that have not been presented. The number of samples and the combination distribution are as Table 8.

Table 8. C-matrix and Sample Quantity

| Sample Quantity | C-matrix |
|---|---|
| 5 | (A1,B1,C3) |
| 4 | (A1,B1,C1) |
| 3 | (A1,B2,C1) |
| 2 | (A3,B3,C1) |
| 1 | (A1,B1,C2)(A2,B2,C1)(A2,B2,C2) |

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| | (A2,B2,C3)(A3,B1,C1)(A3,B2, C1) (A3,B1,C3)(A3,B3,C3) |
|---|---|
| 0 | (A1,B2,C2)(A1,B2,C3)(A1,B3, C1) (A1,B3,C2)(A1,B3,C3)(A2,B1, C1) (A2,B1,C2)(A2,B1,C3)(A2,B3, C1) (A2,B3,C2)(A2,B3,C3)(A3,B1, C2) (A3,B2,C2)(A3,B3,C2)(A3,B2, C3) |

*Cross Analysis: Plot and Art Style*

Cross analysis of Table 3. and Table 5. on the relationship between plot settings and art styles produced Table 9. From Table 9, we can see that in Taiwanese comics published between 1970 and 2015 depicting aborigines, in order to meet the needs of the target market, the main focus was on the aesthetic transformation style loved by teenagers. The aesthetic transformation is characterized by the appearance of characters, and plot settings are embellished, fantasized, and exaggerated.

Table 9. Cross Analysis: Plot and Art Style

| | | plot settings | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Tribal legends | Historical adaptations | Original fantasy |
| Art style | aesthetic transformation | No.05* No.06 No.07 No.08 | No.14 | No.01 No.02 No.05* No.10 No.14 |
| | realism | No.13* | No.03 | No.13* |
| | simple cartoons | No.04 No.09 No.12 | | No.11 |

* Sample Recurring

The most common plot settings were tribal legends, and the least common plot settings were historical adaptations.

For art style, there were fewer works of simple cartoons and realism, with four works and two works, respectively.

*Cross Analysis: Plot Setting and Costume Design*

Cross analysis of Table 3. and Table 7. on the relationship between plot setting and costume design produced Table 10.

Table 10. Cross Analysis: Plot Setting and Costume Design

| | | plot settings | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Tribal legends | Historical adaptations | Original fantasy |
| Costumes design | mixed fantasy | No.04 No.05* No.06* No.07* No.08* | No.14 | No.01 No.02 No.05* No.10 No.11* No.14 |
| | faithful representation | No.06* No.07* No.08* No.12* No.13* | No.03 | No.13* |
| | simplified | No.09 No.12* | | No.11* |

* Sample Recurring

Table 10. shows that most common plot settings are tribal legends. In these types of works, costume designs are mostly mixed fantasy and faithful representation. Of the eight works classified as original fantasy in terms of plot setting, in six works, the costume design was mixed fantasy. This means that in terms of the costume design of characters, fictional props or decorations were

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added. For one work, the costumes were faithful representations, and for one work, the costumes were simplified. Of the two works classified as historical adaptations, for one work, the consumes were faithful representations, and for one work, the costumes were mixed fantasy.

*Cross Analysis: Art Style and Costume Design*

Cross analysis of Table 5. and Table 7. on the relationship between art style and costume design produced Table 11.

Table 11. Cross Analysis: Art Style and Costume Design

| | | Art Style | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | simple cartoons | realism | aesthetic transformation |
| Costumes design | mixed fantasy | No.04 No.10 No.11 | | No.01 No.02 No.05 No.06 No.07 No.08 No.14 |
| | faithful representation | No.12* | No.03 No.13 | No.06 No.07 No.08 |
| | simplified | No.09 No.11 No.12* | | |

* Sample Recurring

This shows that the most common art style was aesthetic transformation, and a majority of works in this art style adopted mixed fantasy.

A total of seven works were in the simple cartoon style, of which three used mixed fantasy and simplified costume designs, respectively, and one used faithful representation costume designs.

Finally, two works were in the realism style, both of which used faithful representation for costume design.

Results of Analysis

The present study examined plot setting and character design. Character design was also divided into two categories: art style and costume design, producing a total of three points for analysis. In Figure 3, the plot setting is depicted on the X-axis, the art style is depicted on the Y-axis, and the costume style is depicted on the Z-axis. From Figure 3., the types of aboriginal characters in Taiwanese comics can be roughly divided into five types:



Figure 3. Tendency and quadrantal diagram
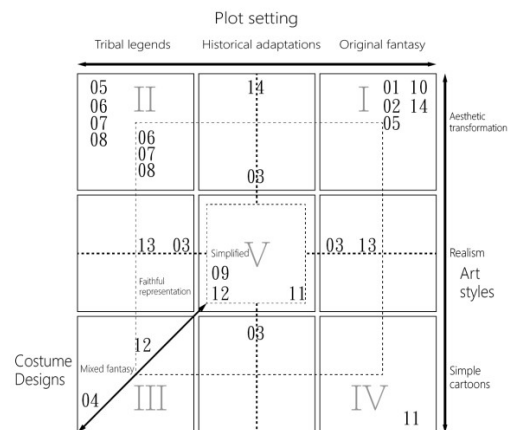
*Type 1: Fantasy Aboriginal Characters*

The design of aboriginal characters in this type is mostly stereotypical, and there is a huge discrepancy between character design and the actual situation. For example, in Sample 01 Treasure of Rainbow Mountain, characters wear animal skins and leaves without the features of Taiwanese aboriginals. The aboriginal characters in Sample 02

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Young Guns are from poor families and rely on part-time jobs for their livelihoods, highlighting the gap in status. Works that also have a fantasy-based plot but which belong to a new generation, Sample 10 Wings of Kopule and Sample 14 Dutchman in Formosa differ from earlier works. The main plot structure is the interactions between foreigners and aboriginals in Taiwan. The costume design of characters is mostly fantasy, but at the same time is based on historical evidence. The art style tends to be mature and stable.

### Type 2:Aboriginal Characters Asking, "Who Am I?"

In 1996, the Executive Yuan established the Council of Aboriginal Affairs (now the Council of Indigenous Peoples), and commercial publications of comics with aboriginals themes for educational purposes gradually increased. The content included introductions to the life of aboriginals, their clothing, and mythological themes, such as Sample 05 Young Kavalan, Sample 06 Genesis of the Nine Tribes, and Sample 08 The Origins). Sample 07 Princess Babenn and the Ghost Lake was written by a Rukai writer. It can be described as the sprouting of the creator's own identity and the start of a journey of self-exploration into indigenous identity

### Type 3: Aboriginal Characters for Education

Sample 12 Ahronglong Sakinu, adapted from a novel, promotes traditional culture and forest cultivation with school-age children as the main audience. Sample 04 Fairy Tales of Taiwan and Sample 13 Flying Squirrel Tribe use tribal life to promote science education. The characters in this type of work are mainly for educational purposes.

### Type 4: Cartoon Representations of

### Aboriginal Characters

The aboriginal characters in Sample 11 Traces are ordinary tribal members, depicting stories that occurred in ancient Taiwan. The art style and costume designed are cartoonishly simplified, and in addition to domestic audiences, the target audience is international cartoon licensing. In Sample 09 Shihsanhang Adventure, the author jointly worked with historians on research and then drew the findings in a comic strip.

### Type 5: Historical Stories of Aboriginals

Sample 03 The author of Seediq Bale: The Wushe Uprising, Row-Long Chiu, has a deep interest in aboriginal culture. This work was completed after several years of documentary research and study. The figures are depicted in a realistic way. This is an independent documentary work that cannot be classified into any of the above four categories.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The study found that there are five main types of aboriginal character designs in Taiwanese comics. Plot settings tend to be based on tribal legends and fantasy, the art style tends to be aesthetic transformation, and the characters' costumes often combine various fantasy elements. To conclude, it is recommended that in future, when creating character designs for comics with Taiwanese aboriginals as the themes, currently less common types such as historical adaptations as the plot setting, simplified cartoon as the art style, and faithful representation and simplified design as the costume designs can be adopted. It is hoped that this study will provide more theoretical support and cultural understanding for creative works on the themes of Taiwan's aboriginal culture and history.

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