Visual Analysis of Ancient Egyptian Mythology Character in Marvel Comic

S A Morsi[1] **and T Hidayatullah***[2]

[1,2]Magister Design Department, Faculty of Design, Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Indonesia.

Syaima.75320005@mahasiswa.unikom.ac.id

Abstract. The goal of this research is to find the transformation in the perception framing of the ancient Egyptian Goddess in marvel's comic book. This research studied the visual aspects of the character design of Sekhmet, one of marvel's super-villain characters that were adapted from ancient Egyptian mythology. Marvel comic is one of the most popular American comic books that tell stories of its original superheroes and super-villain characters. The focus of this research is Sekhmet's character that was designed based on an ancient Egyptian Goddess with the same name, Hathor-Sekhmet. This study used a qualitative research method to describe the character of Sekhmet based on its original narration in Egyptian mythology and marvel's comic book version. Then using the manga matrix method, the character design's form, costume, and personality matrix were studied and analysed. This method helped to find the relation and similarities among the theories and the perception elements. This method helped to find the relation and similarities among the theories and the perception elements. This study proved that Sekhmet's character design contained imagery framing that formed a new perception of the lion goddess image, where in the costume matrix there has been an addition of leather, metals and gold attributes and accessories and in the personality area, Sekhmet personality shifted from its neutral character to an evil villain character. This imagery framing transformation affects the way Sekhmet is being perceived by readers.

1. Introduction

Mythology is a collection of stories about mythological creatures and characters passed on from time to time through verbal and written narration.[1] Stories about mythological characters have been known for attracting people's interest. Studies reported that characters with mythological narratives have a higher chance of being commercially successful [2]. This is why mythological characters are highly famous within the comic and gaming industries. Characters are subject with added unique expressions and traits. These characters are individualized to stimulate an intimate feeling with the people who come in contact [3]. Although characters are mainly recognized for their roles and contributions in a story, details on their visual layers are added to give life to their characters.[4] These visual layer details consist of; skin tones, attire, hairstyles, accessories, facial expression, and mannerisms. [5]. Marvel comic, formerly known as atlas comic, is an American comic book publisher originally founded by martin goodman in 1939. [6] Though established in 1939, the marvel era only began in 1961 when its most famous comic book writer, Stan Lee, launched ''The fantastic Four'' with his co-workers Steve Ditko, Jack Kirby, and others. [7] Marvel's most famous traits and

characteristic are its flawed and imperfect superheroes that instead of looking like the perfectly beautiful superhuman, looks like a misfit and freaks instead. The hulk is one of its most famous monster-looking superheroes with its giant green body that resembles monsters more than a superhero. Marvel became even more famous globally as it continued publishing more superhero and supervillain titles and characters. All of these characters existed in

marvel's real-life mirrored cities and places. This shared reality is famously known as the marvel universe. [8] As seen in figure 1, In 2020, marvel published its mini-series called the heroic age: prince of power, written by Greg Pak and Fred van Lente [9]. These series are divided into four issues, in which issue number 3 is the first appearance of Sekhmet as the goddess of destruction where she is the villain of the main characters, Thor and Amadeus Cho. [9]

Figure 1. Illustration of the heroic age: prince of power cover featuring Sekhmet, thor and Amadeus cho.

Studies relating comic character that involves culture, ideology, psychology, and others have been done frequently. But these studies focus on the way of myth formations. According to a study that discusses comics as a combination of a visual, literary form of arts, a sequence of the singular story which contained a series of images is what formed a comic. [10] A comic can also be known as a graphic novel. Each image inside a comic contained a text bubble to explain the narrative and visualize the easily recognized characters. [10] In "understanding comic" book, the differences between the design figure movements can determine different characters, personalities, and nature. All these different characters will then form a more tangible representative icon. [11]. Previous research that was done about character pose and proportion design discovered that a successful storytelling in comics is heavily affected by the establishments of the addition of character design traits and personalities. [12]

Another study about comic character design stated that a character design could be dissected and studied by using Hiroyoshi Tsukamoto's manga matrix method, by dissecting the character's form, costume, and personality matrix to understand the details of the character's elements. [13] The manga

matrix method was also used to create and study characters by using a mathematical method where they break down the object into several parts to re-arrange the function and position column into an x-y axis matrix diagram [13]. According to research about character design [14], a character design is a part of a culture because the character is not just a mere object. Still, the character is the reflection of the visualization of the cultural context and tendency.[14] It also serves as a cultural communication medium that can change into a pervasive field. One of the best sources for this type of character is the classic and legendary one, where they represent one's nation's history and culture.[14]. This study differs from any previous studies and research because this study focuses on the analysis to uncover the imagery framing and perception transformation of an ancient Egyptian mythical character. Previous research has shown a lot of studies of subjects related to comic character design. Still, none of the research focuses on the imagery framing and perception transformation done to the ancient Egyptian mythical character.

Most of marvel's comic book superheroes and supervillain characters are an adaptation and heavily inspired by folklore or mythological characters. Each character design has a distinct and unique cultural attribute associated with its local mythology culture and symbols.[9] This study analyses the visualization of the Egyptian goddess mythical character into marvel's comic book character design; the study is done to understand and uncover the transformed values of the character. The descriptive qualitative method is used for this research to analyze the aesthetic aspect studies and reveal the cultural aspects formed in the comic book character design. To further analyze the visual aspect of the character, character design studies are used to dissect and study the elements of the comic character and its role.

2. Method

There are two methods used in this study, these methods are descriptive qualitative and character design studies.

2.1. Descriptive Qualitative

The descriptive qualitative research method is a method that can be used for explaining, describing, and interpreting data that has been collected. This model is effective because its occurrence in a natural setting that helps the researcher to build a detailed understanding from being involved in the research experiences.[15] This descriptive qualitative method is used to study and analyze the aesthetic aspect to understand the meaning of the ancient Egyptian lion goddess character, Hathor-Sekhmet's imagery transformation, to develop the theoretical context and time consumption of Sekhmet's character design. [15] Using Creswell's qualitative approach explanation, Sekhmet's character design is the phenomenon that can be learned by its comic narrative explanation and its visual aspect for the design process [15]. Detailed information about the Sekhmet character's information is gathered using several data collection procedures and methods, not forgetting to also consider the relevancy and the case occurrences. Sekhmet's narrative description in the comic book is also identified to gain the basic information of the comic character design.

2.2. Character Design Studies

Hiroyoshi Tsukamoto stated that the manga matrix method could be used to study character designs with an unlimited source of references. [16] There are three stages and steps in designing a character according to Tsukamoto's manga matrix method. These stages are; Form matrix, where the character's form parameter is determined as a study reference. This form matrix also used the outer visual aspect appearance to be analyzed. [16] Second, there is the costume matrix, the matrix method where the costume or the character's attributes and outfit are used as the parameter to determine the character and identity of the character. [16] The third and the last is the personality matrix, where the character's weakness/deficiencies, profession/status, desires, behavior, environmental origin, and narration are used as the parameter to be analyzed. [16] Sekhmet's character visualization is a fascinating character to study since the community is already familiar with the character's origin folklore/myth story. This

familiarity and interest strengthen the need to analyze further and study the shifts and changes in the character and its visualization from the original mythology to the modernized stories about the ancient Egyptian lion goddess, Sekhmet.

3. Results and Discussion

Sekhmet's character comes from Egyptian mythology, known as the lion goddess. [17] Based on Egyptian folklore, this goddess has several forms but is mainly known as a half lion half female human. [17] according to the original mythology and tales, this character is a neutral character that is not perceived as an evil goddess. [18] However, Sekhmet's character perception is known to have a shift following the modern time's adaptation and how the storytelling systems constantly evolve and change.

<p align="center">Narration</p>

The character description of Sekhmet "Once upon a time, there was a rebellion against the God Ra, this rebellion was done by the people of ancient Egypt. [18] Angry at the rebellion, Ra sent Goddess Hathor to defend him and punish the rebels that plotted against him. Hathor, not being able to control her rage and bloodlust, transformed into Sekhmet. In her Sekhmet's form, she gained an incredible power of destruction, and with this power, she destroyed half of Egypt. Ra, that got scared of Sekhmet's uncontrollable fury, tricked Sekhmet into drinking beer that he had dyed red. Ra feared that Sekhmet would destroy all the human race.[18] Sekhmet that got blinded by her bloodlust drank all of the beer that she blacked out and transformed back into Hathor, the goddess of love. [18]" there are two versions of characterization of the lion goddess as a character. One is in old folklore literature or old mythology, and the other one is found in recent modern time stories. According to the ancient folklore and Egyptian mythology, Sekhmet was the goddess of healing and also the goddess of war, and she is also being characterized as a lioness.[17] Most of the time, she is drawn and described as a half-female human with the head of a lioness. She was also the protector of the pharaoh kings, and she continued to protect them until their death. She then led them to the afterlife. [18] She was the goddess of war and also the goddess of healing, her character is perceived as a neutral character, meaning not evil or exactly kind character.

Sekhmet's features are based on the old folklore literature [18];

- Sekhmet was the goddess of Protector, Vengeance, Medicine, war, and fire.
- Sekhmet wore a sun disk on her head and red linen clothing.
- Sekhmet has a large cat or a lioness form, and she was also the solar deity.
- She was a really fierce hunter
- She can transform lands into the desert with her breath
- She was the children and instrument of the sun god, Ra.

Figure 2. Avengers volume 1 comic scene, where Sekhmet is visualized as the lion God

See figure 2, different characterizations can also be seen in adaptation and modern stories, such as in the Marvel comic book "Avengers volume 1" [19]. As seen in figure 2, in this part of the comic book scene, Sekhmet is visualized as a lion god with unusually God-like power. This brings a new perspective to Sekhmet's character, who is usually pictured as a lion goddess with human female body parts and figures. [18] As shown in the Marvel comic "Heroic Age: Prince of Power" see figure 3. Sekhmet is visualized as a fierce lion goddess with a human-like body and an animal head and claws (lion).[9] Her character is drawn in a masculine type of female body with her muscular build. [9] This differs from how she was described as a feminine goddess who doesn't look muscular, as told in the old folklore story and mythology [18].

3.1. Personality

Sekhmet is a lion goddess and the sibling of Bast, the panther God. [9] She served as a war goddess in lower Egypt. She is one of marvel's super-villain comic characters. She can summon lions during her fight in wars. Sekhmet can also cause extreme destruction and damage with her uncontrollable bloodlust. Her weakness is that she can be tricked using blood. She is also an accomplished and fearsome warrior [9]. Her skills are mostly superhuman strength, speed, reflexes, endurance, and the ability to heal. Table 1 is the comparison of Sekhmet's exceptional skill and the lion goddess abilities.

Table.1 Sekhmet's Skill Analysis

No.	Egyptian mythology [18]	Marvel comic book [9]
1	"She was the fiercest hunter	"She is a fearsome and accomplished warrior and fighter"
2	"She protected the pharaohs and spearheaded their wars"	"Utilize Egyptian style khopesh swords as well a hunting spear which channel offensive energy"
3	"Sekhmet was associated with healing and medicine"	"She has the power of healing"

The similarity of Sekhmet's skill proved that Sekhmet is heavily inspired or created based on the ancient Egyptian mythology story of the lion goddess, Sekhmet. They have the same description of fighting and healing skill that is mentioned in the "Sekhmet & Bastet: The Feline Powers of Egypt [18] and in the marvel comic book "Heroic Age: Prince of Power. Though they have very similar skills and personalities, there is also a shift in the message of the story. Based on Sekhmet's character design analysis, there is a new perspective of the story of Sekhmet, an ancient Egyptian mythology lion goddess, which is shifting into an evil villain character. [9]

3.2. Form

The study of character design development stated that a character's crucial attributes are identity, entertainment, and communication values [20]. Sekhmet's form is a half-human half-animal type where her body is human but some of her features are an animal (lion). [9] Sekhmet's form shows that she has a lion head, claws, and fury body like a lion. As seen in figure 3, Sekhmet's half-human appearance, with a relatively still considered a normal human height [9]. Sekhmet's silhouette shows a strong and masculine-looking build.

The shape of Sekhmet's character that shows a lot of curves and revealing clothing adds an agile and physically attractive impression. Visually Sekhmet is visualized as a strong woman character that dresses in a sexy but fitting for war and fights. Each of Sekhmet's power and skill is made to further advantage her movements and speed. As seen in figure 4, her fighting stances and gestures also show that Sekhmet can move freely and have good agility. Sekhmet's leaning forward gesture showed that

she could move very fast and very agile. This impression is proved and supported from her clothing, attributes, body gesture, and figure.
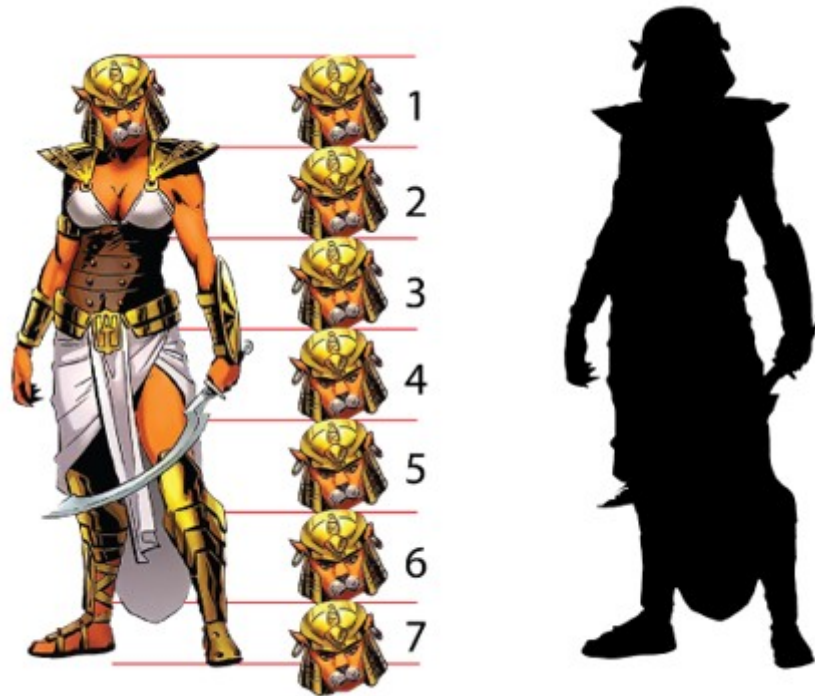

Figure 3. Sekhmet's Form Analysis by head length proportion and silhouettes form

Figure 4. Sekhmet's fighting stances that is shown in the comic book and also her gesture while moving shows movements gesture with a high mobility

3.3. Costume

Table 2 explained Sekhmet's costume which is a traditional ancient Egyptian goddess clothing which consists of red fabric that mimics the color of blood and is sometimes drawn with a rosetta pattern over each of her breasts and an ancient leonine motif which can be found on the shoulder knots. [21]. The clothing that Sekhmet wore in the comic book is different from the old mythology visualization. In the comic book, Sekhmet is drawn wearing a white fabric that reveals her breast cleavage and thighs, leather body corset, gold and steel accessories can also be seen attached to her arms, shoulders,

and body. [9] her revealing and modernized outfit shows her muscular female body but also adds the impression of a warrior's body Armor which is fitting for her war and fight scenes. Her costumes make her able to move and fight swiftly and easily.

Table 2. Visual study of Sekhmet's clothing design

Character	Traditional Ancient Egyptian Clothing	
	Traditional	**Modernized**
	Traditionally, the clothing is made of fabrics that covers the body of a female to keep them looking modest. Shoulder accessories or belt often added to the fabric. [21]	Modernized ancient Egyptian clothing is the modified form of clothing with several additional features of other clothing and accessories [9]
	Sekhmet's clothing is the modified traditional clothing, combined with additional features which are leather corset, steel and gold accessories that serves as body armour, fitting for her fight in wars. The clothing style is the revealing type especially in the chest and thighs area. [9]	
	White Fabric that reveals cleavage, attached to a gold shoulder armor like accessories.	
	Leather made body corset with steel button, fitting as body armor.	
	White fabric dress with revealing slit that reveal thighs area, with an addition of golden belt accessories.	

A character can be a cultural and social value representation. [20] Character design contains cultural change phenomenon and social value transformation that stresses the social value representation in the creation of the character design process. This phenomenon can influence form, costume, and personality character development (see figure 5). As seen in figure 5, the analysis process of Sekhmet's character design can be seen. Started by comparing the old folklore stories and mythology of Sekhmet and the new modernized version created by marvel comic book. This was done to reveal the general role and profession of Sekhmet's character. Then the narrative is studied to analyze and find out Sekhmet's special feature description. And lastly, study and analyze the personality form and costume that relates to the character. To adopt a mythical character into a comic book character, the character's appearance must represent the character's origin story, ability, similarity, or even identical feature. The general appearance must also match the mythological character so the readers can relate the comic character to the original mythology or folklore story that they are familiar with. Lastly, the

attribute and the character's clothing should be emphasized so that the character will be related to the original mythology. In Sekhmet's case, this will help the reader to relate Sekhmet as an ancient Egyptian mythology character and not Greek or other mythology.
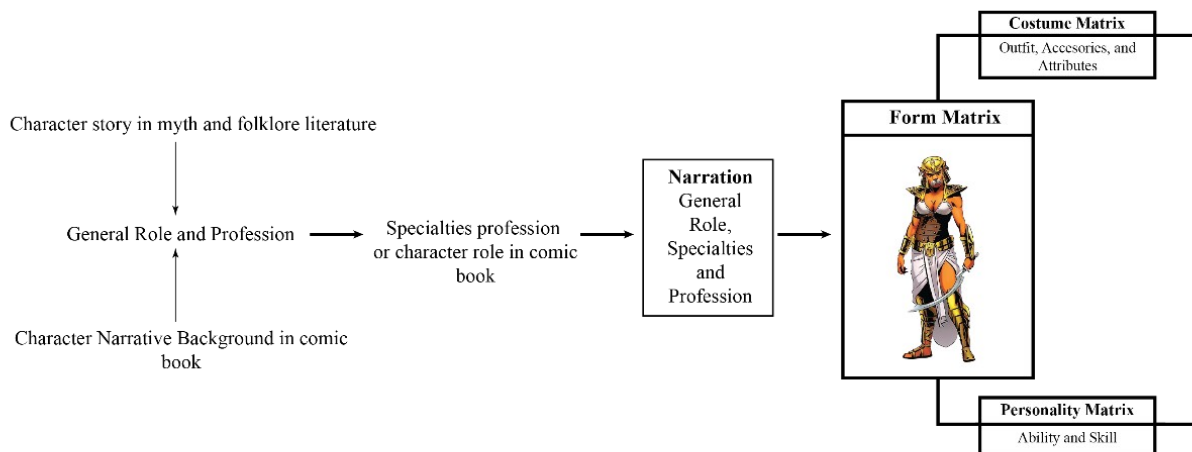

Figure 5. Marvel Comic book character design process scheme that adapted mythological character, Sekhmet's character design that represented the ancient Egyptian lion goddess

4. Conclusion

Sekhmet is the visualization of the goddess Sekhmet from ancient Egyptian mythology. The manga matrix method by Hiroyoshi Tsukamoto is used to analyze the character design. Based on the result of the manga matrix study and analysis, Sekhmet's form matrix analysis is leaning toward an evil character by being drawn and narrated as the villain and enemy of the superhero. Unlike the neutral character described in the old folklore literature and mythology. The personality matrix analysis result shows that Sekhmet's role and skill in the comic book is an adaptation from the original ancient Egyptian mythology.

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