



# Cultural message of the brave men in Tarung Sarung film by Archie Hekagery (semiotic analysis of Roland Barthes)

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to: 1) find out the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myths contained in the Tarung Sarung film; and 2) find out the cultural message of brave men contained in the Tarung Sarung film. This research uses qualitative methods with semiotic analysis in order to make it easier to analyze the symbol in the film. The data collection was carried out by an initial viewing of the films, followed by observations on the dialogues and visual elements. The results of the research show that Tarung Sarung film is a picture of a man who has a courageous attitude and responsibility in solving a problem he faces in the land of Bugis, Makassar. This film contains 12 cultural messages for brave men in the Tarung Sarung film, namely, 1) gangs are not a solution to problems; 2) men must dare to take responsibility; 3) chivalrous spirit; 4) siding with the truth; 5) upholding siri' (awareness law in Bugis-Makassar's term of sacred); 6) being responsible for one's own problems; 7) not deifying money; 8) social spirit; 9) mutual assistance; 10) learning to be sincere; 11) the assertiveness of the Bugis-Makassar people in solving the problems; and 12) the attitude of resignation. The implications of this research are anticipated to provide valuable contributions to experts in the field of semiotic analysis. Furthermore, it enhances our understanding of the cultural messages conveyed in Tarung Sarung film through the view of Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis.

**Keywords:** Cultural message of the Brave Men; Tarung Sarung Film; Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Humans are social creatures who carry out a communication process almost all the time, whenever and wherever. This communication process is what drives humans to develop technology in the field of communication. Many various audio and visual

communication media are developing in society, so that a communication process is easily obtained and understood.

Film is an audiovisual communication process that has many meanings, because there are many messages contained in every movement of the film actor that can influence or shape the audience's views by paying attention to the messages conveyed in every scene.

The context of the mass media industry explains that film is a cultural industry that operates in a business logic that cannot be separated from the media economy. The media economy will drive the film business with profit calculations that often ignore the role and position of film in the life of the Indonesian nation. The importance of films for the nation's journey is outlined in the 1992 Film Act which was later updated in Law Number 33 of 2009 which was adjusted to the times.

Films have their own artistic value, because films are created as the work of creative professionals who are professionals in their field. Films as the art objects should be assessed artistically, not rationally. Why do the people still watch the film? Films are nothing new in society anymore. The general reason is that films are the parts of modern life and are available in various forms, such as in cinemas, on television, in the form of video cassettes, and laser discs. Films not only present exciting experiences, but also everyday life experiences that are packaged in an interesting way.

Relevantly, film is a field of study for semiotic analysis, because films are built solely on signs. These signs include various sign systems that work well together to achieve the same effect as architectural signs, especially indexical in films where iconic signs are used, namely signs that describe something.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the films created contain many cultural messages and are implemented in every second or minute of the film's content. Several elements are often implemented in cultural films, such as comparing one ethnic group with another, differences between one religion and another, and many more, as long as they do not violate the film laws.

The culture itself has a lot to do with the world of journalism and communication because culture has many meanings that can be implemented in the world of journalism and communication. Cultural research is closely related to the world of journalism, namely in making journalistic films which are also usually called documentary films.

The cultural film highlighted by the researchers is a film entitled *Tarung Sarung*. This film tells the story of someone who has a romantic conflict and also highlights Makassar Bugis culture. There are many cultural messages contained in several scenes in the film.

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<sup>1</sup>Yoyon Muliono, *Semiotic Studies in Film*, Journal of Communication Sciences, Vol. 1, No.1, April 2011, P. 132.

This film contains many moral messages for the audiences, especially for the outsiders who do not know the culture of the Makassar-Bugis tribe.

Tarung Sarung tells the story of someone who wants to solve a problem who has no other way than to fight in a sarong. This fight is carried out by two people who enter the sarong and then the two people do a fight, and each person holds a sharp instrument like a *badik* (a kind of dagger used by Bugis-Makassar community) then they do the fight to find out who wins in this problem.

One of the problems that causes this fight to occur is when someone feels humiliated or has violated the *siri'* in Bugis-Makassar culture. *Siri'* is the embodiment of a human's self-esteem, so it is a taboo for Bugis-Makassar people to be touched on their sense of self-worth (*siri'*).

However, as time goes by, fighting in sarongs has begun to become extinct and it is starting to be forgotten. With the film Tarung Sarung, starring Panji Zoni and Maizura as the main characters, the Bugis-Makassar culture revived and began to be known to the wider community. Not only the Makassar Bugis community, but people from outside also know about the Bugis-Makassar culture in the film.

The researchers took this film as the research material because there are many cultural messages contained in the Tarung Sarung film, where culture has many important roles in the world of journalism and communication. It is expected that this research will have many benefits for the researchers and people who work in the world of journalism, as reference material for developing research in the field of culture. The researchers also expect that it will be of benefit to people who work in the field of journalism, as reference material for creating journalistic works such as news features or documentary films.

The researchers use the Roland Barthes analysis method because the researchers intend to know and distinguish the meaning of the denotations, connotations, and myths contained in the Tarung Sarung film, so that the researchers can get information and know the meaning of the film which is useful for researchers and the community. Therefore, based on the rationales stated in the previous paragraphs, the researchers are motivated to conduct a study of the Cultural Message of the brave men in Tarung Sarung Film.

## **Communication and Culture**

### **1. Intercultural Communication**

The intercultural communication is a communication between people who essentially have different cultures, both in terms of ethnicity, race, religion, socio-

economic and so forth. Abdi Fujiono in his journal describes several expert opinions on the definition of intercultural communication as follows:<sup>2</sup>

Andrea L. Rich and Dennis M. Ogawa stated that "Intercultural communication is communication between people of different cultures, for example between ethnic groups, between ethnicities, races and between social classes". Samovar and Porter said that "intercultural communication occurs between message producers and message recipients whose cultural backgrounds are different". Charley H. Dood revealed that "intercultural communication includes communication involving the participants who represent personal, interpersonal, and group, with an emphasis on differences in cultural backgrounds that influence the communication behavior of the participants". Furthermore, Lustig and Koester said that "intercultural communication is a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual communication process carried out by a number of people because they have different degrees of interest, provide different interpretations and expectations of what is conveyed in the form of certain behavior as meaning is exchanged".

Intercultural Communication (ICC) is that "Intercultural communication is an interpersonal interaction between a member and a group of different cultures". Guo-Ming Chen and William J. Starosta said that "intercultural communication is a process of negotiation or exchange of symbolic systems that guide human behavior and limit them in carrying out their functions as a group". In addition, Young Yung Kim asserted that "intercultural communication refers to a communication phenomenon in which the participants from different cultural backgrounds are involved in contact with one another, either directly or indirectly."

Intercultural communication first appeared in 1974 by Fred Casmir in the International and Intercultural Communication Annual. Then, Dan Landis strengthened the concept of intercultural communication in the International Journal of Intercultural Relations in 1977. In 1979, Molefi Asante, Cecil Blake, and Eileen Newmark published a book specifically discussing intercultural communication, namely *The Handbook of Intercultural Communication*. Since then, many experts have begun to study intercultural communication.

## **2. Cultural Message**

Social life, an inseparable form of culture, is interrelated with all forms of activity or human behavior in communication. Communication and culture is an inseparable relationship. The ways we communicate, the circumstances in which we communicate, the language and style of speech used, and our nonverbal behaviors are all primarily responses to and a function of our culture. Communication is bound by culture. Cultural

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<sup>2</sup>Abdi Fauji Hadiono, *Intercultural Communication (Study of Intercultural Communication at the Darussalam Islamic Boarding School Blokagung Banyuwangi)*, *Darussalam Journal: Journal of Education, Communication and Islamic Legal Thought*, Vol. VIII, No 1: 136-159, September 2016, P. 142

similarity in perception allows for the giving of a similar meaning to a social object and an event. As cultures differ from one another, the meaning of communication practices and behavior of individuals who are raised in that culture will also differ.<sup>3</sup>

Culture concerns the way humans live. Humans learn to think, feel, believe, and strive for what is appropriate according to their culture. Language, friendship, eating habits, communication practices, social actions, economic and political activities, and technology are all based on cultural patterns. There are people who speak Tagalog, eat snakes, avoid liquor made from wine, bury their dead, talk on the telephone, or launch rockets to the moon, all because they have been born or at least raised in a culture that contains these elements. What people do, how they act, and how they live and communicate are the responses to the functions of their culture.

### **Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis**

Semiotics as a study of mass media that has become an important approach in media theory since the late 1960s, as a result of Roland Barthes' development. Roland Barthes was born in 1915 to a middle-class Protestant family in Chenbourg and in Bayone, a small town near the Atlantic coast in southwest France and Paris. His father was a naval officer who was killed in action when he was only one year old.<sup>4</sup>

According to Barthes, semiotics is a science or method of analysis to study signs. Signs are a set that is used in the context of trying to reach the path in this world, among humans and with humans. The notion of semiotics is divided into two, namely denotation and connotation. Denotation is the descriptive and literal level of meaning agreed upon by all members of a culture. At the connotative level, meaning is generated by the relationship between the signifier and the wider culture which includes the beliefs, behavior, framework, and ideology of a social formation.

### **Film Overview**

Film has several meanings based on the experts, especially from Indonesia. According to Febri Faizin Alvatra in his journal, he put forward several definitions according to experts as follows:<sup>5</sup>

According to Effendi (1986), film is a product of culture and means of artistic expression. Film here is considered as mass communication which is a combination of various technologies such as photography and sound recording, the arts, both fine arts and theatrical arts, literature and architecture, and music. Film is a moving picture.

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<sup>3</sup>Muhammad Iqbal, The Meaning of Cultural Messages in the Performing Arts of Traditional Calempong Music in Kuok Village, Kampar Regency, Jom Fisip Vol. 4 No. 2, October 2017, H. 6

<sup>4</sup>Muh. Ervin Saputra, Thesis: "Cultural Messages in the International Class Comedy Program at NET. TV (Semiotic Analysis of Roland Barthes)", (Makassar: UIN Alauddin Makassar, 2017), P. 25.

<sup>5</sup>Febri Faizin Alfatra, Creation of the Animation Film "Chase!" with the technique of "Digital Drawing, *Journal of Animation And Games Studies*, Vol. 5 No. 1 - April 2019, P. 37

Furthermore, Palapah and Syamsudin (1986) defined film as an entertainment medium that combines storylines, motion pictures, and sound. These three elements are contained in the elements of every film making. Therefore, films are often used as an element of learning media. In addition, according to Himawan Pratista (2008), film is an audio-visual medium that combines both narrative and cinematic elements. The narrative element itself is related to the theme while the cinematic element is the plot or storyline.

## **2. METHODS**

The type of research used by the researchers is qualitative research that is descriptive in nature and also tends to use analysis. On the problems to be studied, the researchers used Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis as the approach used in analyzing the problems. This approach is an advanced level of Ferdinand De Saussure's thinking. This approach focuses on denotational meaning which means the actual meaning and connotative meaning which means the implied meaning. In qualitative research, the researcher is the key instrument. Therefore, the researchers must have extensive theory and insight so they can ask questions, analyze, and construct the object under study more clearly. The object of this research is a film entitled Tarung Sarung which has a duration of 1 hour 55 minutes 47 seconds, and 44 scenes. Produced by StarvisionPlus, and the official trailer was uploaded on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020 on the StarvisionPlus, YouTube account.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Denotation and Connotation Meaning and Myth of Tarung Sarung Film**

#### **1. Deni Ruso's fight with an official's son in Jakarta scene 1 at 00.03.29 minutes**

The denotation in this scene is Deni Ruso holding the collar of the man's clothes who is the son of an official. The connotation in this scene is that Deni holds the man's collar with a bitchy expression which shows that Deni is angry because he was challenged to a one-on-one fight, and finally Deni hits the man to express his anger. The myth contained in this scene shows that the culture of the Jakarta people, which Deni Ruso said, namely gangs, is considered to be able to solve problems.

#### **2. Deni received a warning from his mother**

The denotation found in this film is Deni standing and watching his mother who is talking with her back to Deni.

The connotation in this film is that Deni is watching his mother who is reprimanding him because Deni has made a fuss with someone, which made his mother disappointed and gives sanctions to Deni by sending Deni back to Makassar so that Deni learns responsibility there. Deni's mother's disappointment was expressed by turning her back on Deni and a gloomy expression on her face.

The myth in this research is that this scene shows the firm attitude of Deni's mother in giving sanctions to Deni. Deni was sent back to Makassar because it was thought that this would make Deni learn about his responsibilities as a man with Bugis blood.

### **Cultural Interpretation of Brave Men in Tarung Sarung Film**

The cultural message of brave men contained in Tarung Sarung film contains 12 scenes, namely:

Scene 1: the message contained in this scene is a gang, not a problem solving. The dialogue spoken by Deni explained that the culture of young people in Jakarta is a deviant culture, where the culture of ganging up and hitting people, let alone ganging up to solve problems, is not something that we should emulate and apply to our lives, because solving one problem can be done by a calmer way without harming anyone.

Scene 2: the interpretation of the cultural message contained in this scene is that men must have the courage to take responsibility. As a man of Bugis descent, a man must be responsible and accept the consequences for the actions that he has committed himself.

Scene 3: the interpretation of the cultural message of brave men contained in this film is the spirit of a warrior, how the sarong fight itself has the meaning of a Bugis man who has a spirit of courage by solving problems without the interference of others.

Scene 4: the message of the brave man culture contained in this scene is siding with the truth, how is Deni helping the community overcome problems that occur without taking sides with the business owned by his parents, where the company has a very bad impact on people's lives.

Scene 5: the cultural message contained in scene 5 is upholding *siri'*. Deni's brave attitude in facing Sanrego without thinking about his fate if he does Sarong fighting with Sanrego is because Sanrego is the champion for three years in a row in the Sarong fighting competition, because in this scene Sanrego insults Deni by saying *calabai* (sissy), while saying the words "*calabai!* Are you a boy or a girl".

Scene 6; the cultural message contained in this scene is to be responsible for one's own problems. Solving a problem must be resolved by our own courage without having to look for people to interfere and complicate the problems we are facing, because every personal problem is a problem we must face alone.

Scene 7: the cultural message that can be raised here is that money does not deify. Everything cannot be bought with materials such as money and so on. Material is not everything in human life, but faith, charity, and piety which are even more necessary for our lives. We as humans are taught to be more concerned with faith, charity, and piety in the world, not to make money as a tool to keep us away from the Creator and forget Him.

Scene 8, the cultural message of brave men contained in scene 8 is the social spirit, how Bugis men work together to help each other. We as humans must help each other selflessly and do something together to make a case or problem can be resolved quickly, which is likened to a broomstick. If the broomstick has only one stalk, it will be difficult to use, but if the broomstick has many stalks, it can be used easily.

Scene 9: the cultural message of brave men contained in scene 9 is the attitude of helping each other. Deni provides protection to the traders who are being harassed by a group of thugs. As human beings, we must protect each other and always provide help.

Scene 10: the cultural message contained in this scene is learning to be sincere. Sincerity is a commendable trait. We as humans must be sincere in dealing with a problem and surrender all of these things completely to Allah SWT.

Scene 11: the cultural message contained in this scene is the firmness of the Makassar-Bugis people in solving problems. Makassar-Bugis people consider running away from mistakes as something that does not reflect the chivalrous nature of Makassar-Bugis men or violates *siri'* as a man. The word *Siri'* means shame, which means that if someone runs away from a mistake and does not resolve the problem then this is considered shameful. The cultural message that can be taken from this scene is that we as humans have to face all the problems we face, from small problems to even big problems. Everything must have a path or a bright spot.

Scene 12; the message contained in this scene is an attitude of resignation, where in facing a dangerous situation, we do not have to retreat but ask for help from Allah SWT to be given protection and leave everything to Him. As Allah says in surah Al-Anfal verse 15:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا زَحَفًا فَلَا تُوَلُّوهُمُ الْأَدْبَارَ ﴿١٥﴾

*"O you who believe, if you meet disbelievers who will attack you, do not turn your back on them (retreat)" (Al-Anfal/8:15)".<sup>6</sup>*

The verse above teaches us how humans should behave when faced with a problem. We as humans must be brave and must not retreat or run away from a problem. We must face everything and completely surrender it to Allah SWT for protection and ask Him for help. As in Tafsir as-Sa'di/ Shaykh Abdurrahman bin Nashir as-Sa'di, a 14<sup>th</sup> century Tafsir expert, in his Tafsir, he says that Allah commands His servants who believe with courage, faith, steadfastness in carrying out His commands and efforts to bring about the causes that arise, and strengthens the heart and body. Additionally, He forbade them to flee the moment the two armies met. He said "O you who believe, if you meet those who disbelieve who are attacking you" namely in the battle line.

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<sup>6</sup>Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, Al-Qur'an and its Translation



## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this research using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, which analyzes the meaning of denotation, connotation, and also myth in the film "Tarung Sarung". Based on the results of the discussions, we can draw several conclusions regarding the answer to the problem formulation above, that is:

1. The denotation and connotation meaning of a brave man in Tarung Sarung film is a depiction of a man who has a brave and responsible attitude in solving a problem he faces in the Bugis land of Makassar. The film scene is a picture of a brave man with determination, effort, struggle, social interaction, such as honoring humans, helping each other, and much more. Thus, the film gave birth to a myth that contains cultural messages about brave men, prohibitions, and motivational sentences, both visually and verbally.
2. The interpretation of the cultural messages of brave men contained in the film is 12 messages, namely: 1) gangs are not a solution to problems; 2) men must have the courage to take responsibility; 3) have a chivalrous spirit; 4) side with the truth; 5) uphold *siri*; 6) be responsible for one's own problems; 7) not deify money; 8) having social soul; 9) helping attitude; 10) learning to be sincere; 11) firmness of Makassar-Bugis people in solving problems; 12) and *tawakkal* (trusting in the God's plan) attitude.

It is expected that this research can contribute to the parties who are competent in the field of semiotic analysis and increase knowledge about the cultural message in "Tarung Sarung" film using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis. This research can be used as a reference in the field of journalistic and communication research.

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