

Representation of Gender Discrimination and Patriarchal Culture in Movie of Mulan 2020 (Roland Barthes Semiotics Analysis)

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ABSTRACT

Watching movie is one of the communication activities. The messages that are found to be interpreted by the audience are known as ideologies. Nowadays, the patriarchal ideology in movies often creates criticism in society. This study examines the representation of gender discrimination and patriarchal culture on movie of Mulan 2020 using a qualitative descriptive method. The data analysis technique used the semiotics of Roland Barthes. The results of the research on movie of Mulan 2020 show the condition of Chinese society in the Tang dynasty, dominated by men and there are restrictions on women's movements. There are four forms of representation of gender discrimination. The results found are subordination, marginalization, stereotypes, and violence. Mulan's character is represented as having freedom which refers to existentialism feminism.

ABSTRAK

Menonton film merupakan salah satu aktivitas komunikasi. Pesan yang ditemukan dimaknai oleh penonton yang dikenal sebagai ideologi. Di kehidupan sekarang, masih ditemukan ideologi patriarki baik dalam masyarakat maupun film yang kerap mendapatkan kritik. Contohnya film Mulan 2020, laki-laki yang menguasai dalam hal memimpin. Penelitian ini untuk mengkaji representasi diskriminasi gender dan budaya patriarki yang ada dalam film Mulan 2020 dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Teknik analisis data menggunakan metode semiotika Roland Barthes. Hasil penelitian pada film Mulan 2020 memperlihatkan kondisi masyarakat Tiongkok di zaman dinasti Tang, didominasi oleh kaum laki-laki dan ada pembatasan terhadap gerak perempuan. Ada empat bentuk representasi diskriminasi gender yang ditemukan yaitu subordinasi, marginalisasi, stereotip, dan kekerasan. Karakter Mulan direpresentasikan memiliki kebebasan yang merujuk pada aliran feminisme eksistensialisme.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is an activity that can be done every day. Starting from home, when traveling with friends to watching a movie all of them are communication activities. The movie is one of the mass media used to convey messages to the wider community and play an effective role in forming public opinion. So that the movie will be packaged in such a way that the message contained in the movie can be conveyed to the audience well (Savitri & Junaedi, 2019). The film provides education,

entertainment, knowledge and an understanding of ideological values for the audience. Ideally, movies are used as tools to see the reality in society.

There are many movie genres, for example, movie that discuss women is one of the topics that are often discussed today in public life and movies. Stereotypical thinking in society that women are very disadvantaged because of assumptions that are more favorable to men. (Nadya, 2020) in its journal, it reveals that gender discrimination has caused various problems in women's lives that is not only affect the physical but also affect the psychological aspects of women. Discrimination against women occurs in various aspects of social life such as economy, politics, religion, education, and culture, and even discrimination against women in both household and movie.

The term gender according to Manshour Faqih (in Jane & Kencana, 2021), is the difference in roles and behaviors between men and women that are socially and culturally constructed. The gender representation of men and women in films still depicts unbalanced power. This is in line with the presentation in the movie with the reality that occurs in society such as gender discrimination and patriarchal culture. So women's lives are limited because not all can occupy all places in the space of life.

In addition to gender discrimination, patriarchy is also a cause of oppression against women. According to Bressler (in Apriliandra & Krsinani, 2021), patriarchal culture is a social system that exists in society, where men become someone who has primary authority so that they become the center of control in the social system. Pinem (in Antini, 2021) also justifies that patriarchy is a social system that places men's power as the central authority figure in social organizations. Such power produces gender-discriminatory behavior.

Movie of *Mulan* 2020 is an action drama movie that tells the story of a girl who is given the power of chi in the tradition of Chinese society, chi is a spiritual power such as martial arts that is amazing and has been owned since birth, however, this power must be hidden because girls are forbidden to have the power of martial arts and are considered witches and will be excluded from society.

The author feels interested in researching the movie of *Mulan* 2020 because there are some similarities between the discrimination experienced by Chinese women in the movie of *Mulan* 2020 with the discrimination experienced by women in Indonesia, that there are still many women in Indonesia who do not understand the various forms of discrimination that exist in their environment. The theory, as well as the analysis method used in this study, is the semiotics of Roland Barthes (in Jane & Kencana, 2021), which reveals that there are three levels or levels in the sign, namely denotation, connotation, and myth. So from the result of the analysis, it can be known the forms of gender discrimination such as subordination, marginalization, stereotypes, and violence (Rustanto. B, 2015) including also its representation of patriarchal culture.

Based on the literature review, the state of the of previous research that the author considers relevant to the author's research has been conducted by Fairuzzahra (2021), Ramdhani (2022), and (seven) studies related to the same film title conducted by Jane, M.R., & Kencana, W.H. (2021), Harinanda, S.A, & Junaidi, A. (2021), Detania & Widodo, Y.S. (2021), Muthighaida, R. (2021), Akbar, A. & Ardi, M. (2021), Nadia, S & Hidayat, O. (2022), and Holipa, D.S, Asnawati & Narti, S. (2022). Some of the results of previous studies can be summarized, namely the shift in gender stereotypes, patriarchal hegemony, and feminist values in the media. The author feels that the research in this movie of *Mulan* 2020 movie needs to be continued because the author sees other structural indications of violence against women.

The research conducted by the author is different and more interesting than previous studies because this study focuses more on representation, namely gender discrimination, and patriarchal culture, it is not just the values of feminism and gender equality as researched by previous researchers and this study used Roland Barthes' theory different from previous studies that mostly use other semiotics

theories. Thus, the authors felt the importance of this study, considering that in almost every country, all wanted gender equality. However, this problem is not easy to realize, because there is a patriarchal cultural construct that distinguish the roles of men and women who have been complaining about hereditary traditions. But, it does not mean that gender equality cannot be realized, it can be through education in movies about gender equality, fairness in terms of profits between men and women, and the placement of participation in activities for both men and women. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the representation of gender discrimination and the patriarchal culture contained in the movie of Mulan 2020. With this study, the author hopes that the Indonesian people will no longer be discriminated against by women and that women can also understand the forms of discrimination that occur in their environment.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research used a qualitative approach with semiotic analysis methods. According to Kusuma & Setiawan (2020) in semiotics, there are two main concerns, namely the relationship between signs and their meanings and how a sign is combined into a code. The semiotics used in this study is the semiotics of Roland Barthes, which are used to analyze the meanings and symbols contained in a message or text. The object in this study is movie of Mulan 2020 directed by Niki Caro. The data collection technique are observations, documentation, and literature reviews. The data is taken from the movie of Mulan 2020 which covers all aspects such as dialogue(text), setting, and verbal and nonverbal signs which will then be analyzed by meaning denotation, connotations, and myths.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Findings Based on Roland Barthes' Theory and Methods of Semiotics

Semiotics is the science that learns about marks, Roland Barthes (in Jane & Kencana, 2021), reveals that there are three levels in signs, namely denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation is the level of a sign that explains the relationship between a sign and a sign. The next sign is connotative, namely the cultural meanings inherent in a terminology (the cultural meanings that become a term). The meaning of this sign is built on a pre-existing system of first-level or denotative meaning. In the second stage, this is closely related to the content, and the sign works through the myth which is the third stage. Myth is how culture explains or understands some aspects of the reality or symptoms of nature (Piliang, 2010). Similarly to the opinion (Budiman in Sobur, 2009) which states that within the framework of Barthes, the connotation is closely related to the operation of ideologies that he refers to as "myths", and serves to express and provide justification for dominant values applicable in a given period.

First, the author describes the information about the movie of Mulan 2020. The movie is titled "Mulan" (2020), a Walt Disney Pictures production, directed by Niki Caro. The producers in this movie are Chris Bender, Tendo Nagenda, Jason Reed, and Jake Weiner. While the author is Rick Jaffa, Amanda Silver, Elizabeth Martin, and Lauren Hynek. With a duration of 115 minutes. The release date is September 4, 2020. The main cast is Hua Mulan (Liu Yifei), Hua Zhou (Tzi Ma), sang kaisar (Jet Li), Tung Yong (Donnie Yen), Honghui (Yoson An), Bori Khan (Jason Scott Lee), and Xianniang (Gong Li).

Shot locations in New Zealand and China are known for their geographical appeal. This film is lifted from the legend of the land of bamboo curtains which tells the story of a girl named Hua Mulan who has an adventurous soul and huge chi energy that is usually owned by men. Unlike other girls who

are gentle and gentle. Based on the results of the identification of denotations, connotations, and myths from several scenes movie of Mulan 2020 according to Roland Barthes's theory that the author did, the forms of gender discrimination in Mulan movie 2020 are as follows:

2. Analysis of Forms of Gender Discrimination Found in Movie of Mulan 2020

From the author's analysis, it can be concluded that the movie of Mulan 2020 represented gender discrimination through images and text. There are (Nine) scenes in movie of Mulan 2020 that contain depictions of gender discrimination in the form of negative labeling of women. There are 4 (Four) elements of gender discrimination found in form of subordination, marginalization, stereotypes, and violence.

First, subordination or the aging of women is a form of discrimination that restricts women to certain affairs. Women are considered weaker than men so all forms of position, roles, and functions of women seem to be lower than men (Syafe'i, 2015). The form of subordination is depicted in the first scene of the 14.44th minute of Hua Mulan which shows a surrendered expression with eyes on his family while saying "*it's the best*" (Denotation). In Chinese community culture in the Tang dynasty era, women married through family matchmaking, women brought honor to the family by marrying men from high social status families (Connotations and myths). From this, the author concludes that there is unfair treatment such as women must obey marriage in the family, where women have no right to refuse.



Figure 1. The Form of Subordination
Source: Movie of Mulan 2020

Another subordination was also found in the seventh scene of the 1.18.04th minute and the eighth scene of the 1.18.06th minute, namely the discrimination committed by the commander against Hua Mulan made Hong Hui brave to oppose the wish of the commander who wanted to execute Hua Mulan because he dared to return to the army headquarters. Hong-hui questioned the commander's decision which was considered unfair by saying "*you trust Hua Joon. Why don't you trust Hua Mulan.*" (Denotation). The discrimination made by the commander against Hua Mulan made Hong Hui brave to question the commander's decision which he considered unfair (Connotations and myths). Such subordination practices are often found, where men make rules but apply to men and women. There should be women's involvement in it so that the rules are fair for both men and women because their position is the same.

Second, marginalization is an act of discrimination that views women as part of a group that is different from most others, such as poor, ugly, disabled, helpless, and others (Rustanto. B, 2015). The form of marginalization in the movie of Mulan 2020 is depicted through the scene seen in the second scene of the 12.45th minute Bori Khan's hand squeezing a wet cloth while saying "*you proved useful to the witch*" (Denotation). Xianniang was known to those who had the power of chi and eventually expelled from their village and was taken as a slave by Bori Khan (Connotation and myths). The form of marginalization is also found in the the third scene of the 13.03th minute of the Bori Khan scene that looks at Xianniang saying "*like a scorned dog*" (Denotation). Bori Khan makes Xianniang a pet dog another term is utilized (Connotation and myths).

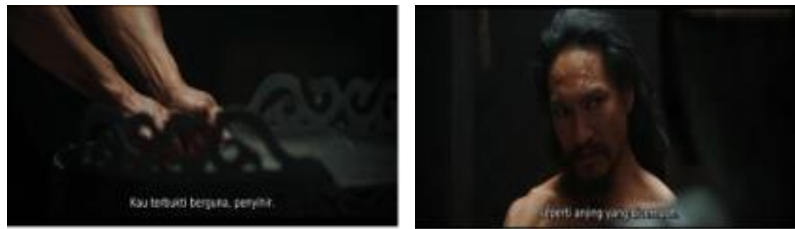


Figure 2. The Form of Marginalization
Source: Movie of Mulan 2020

Third, stereotypes are beliefs about a person's characteristics (personality traits, behavior, personal values) that are accepted as a social group truth such as weak women, unable to do anything, stupid, and others. The form of stereotype in the fourth-minute scene 44.02th appears that the Rouran do not agree with the presence of Xianniang in their members by saying "*a witch cannot be trusted*" (Denotation). A woman with chi power is considered an evil witch who cannot be trusted and is cunning (Connotation and myths). Men think that women are not worthy of fighting, and women who have advantage of martial arts are considered to be the bearers of disaster for them.



Figure 3. The Form of Stereotype
Source: Movie of Mulan 2020

Fourth, forms of discrimination in the form of violence. Violence according to KBBI is the act of someone who causes injury or death to another person or causes physical damage or goods to another person. However, violence not only causes injuries to a person physically but also to the person's psyche. This form of violence was present in the ninth scene of the 29th minute, namely Xianniang sacrificed his life while getting an attack from Bori Khan before exhaling his last breath, Xianniang said "*take your place Mulan*" (Denotation). Xianniang helps Hua Mulan show the whereabouts of the emperor that Bori Khan framed so that Hua Mulan can save the emperor (Connotations and myths). The violence in this film is described by Xianniang's death to help Mulan's fellow women who were excluded for having chi power. The struggle of women in this film shows their resistance to gender equality.

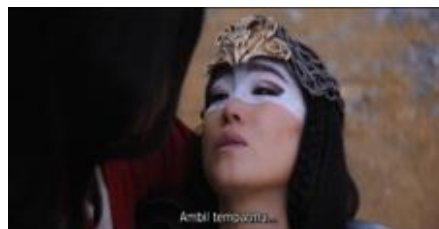


Figure 4. The Form of Violence
Source: Movie of Mulan 2020

3. Analysis of Forms of Patriarchal Culture Found in Movie of Mulan 2020

From the author's analysis, it can be concluded that the movie of Mulan 2020 represents patriarchal culture by describing the condition of Chinese society in the Tang dynasty, where Mulan was raised, and dominated by men. There are 7 (seven) scenes in the movie of Mulan 2020 that contain depictions

of patriarchal culture. The forms of patriarchal culture found in 2 (two) are restrictions on women's movement and women's productive power or labor.

First, the limitation of women's movement is seen in the tenth scene of the 01.07th minute "Can you tell her, that only a son can use chi ?" (Denotation). Women are prohibited from having chi power and only boys may have chi power (Connotations and myths). In this case, the women's movement has clear limits in patriarchal societies.



Figure 5. The Form Limitation of Women's Movement
Source: Movie of Mulan 2020

Furthermore, there is also in the twelfth-minute scene 10.36th the emperor rejects the existence of women with chi power by saying "*there is no place for witches in this kingdom*" (Denotation). Patriarchal culture is evident not only in the family and society but also in the state (Connotation and myths). The last restriction on the movement of women is found in the fifteenth-minute scene to 21.11th and the sixteenth scene of the minute to 21.15th when Hua Mulan's father is seen dominating and organizing the family by saying "*you daughter!*" *learn your place*" (Denotation). Women cannot refuse because the honor and dignity of the family lie upon them. (Connotations and myths). Women must accept and carry out their role as objects over men and must accept all the rules that are more favorable to the male side.

Second, the depiction of patriarchal culture through the productive power or labor of women, namely in the eleventh scene of the 5:59 a.m Mulan's father is angry and says "*your job is to bring honor to the family*" (Denotation). In Chinese culture, women will bring honor through marriage matchmaking with men from families of high social status (Connotations and myths). The decision lies with the men as leaders in the family and the women cannot resist it. Women who marry wealthy men will then help improve the social and economic status of their families. The form of productive power is also present in the thirteenth scene of the 6.36th minute and the fourteenth scene of the 6.42nd minute which is when the makcomblang speaks in a high and harsh tone accusing the Hu Family by saying "*disgrace to the Hu family*". "*They fail to educate girls well!*" (Denotations). Women are not allowed to show a firm, courageous, agile, and lively attitude like Mulan but women are required to have a calm, elegant nature and are prohibited from expressing their emotions. (Connotations and myths). Every individual has the right to make the best decisions for himself, both men and women, without coercion from any party, not based on patriarchal cultural decisions. Feminism in decision-making is a form of gender equality effort in fighting female stereotypes which have been considered irrational and only depend on emotional feelings.



Figure 6. The Form of Women's Productive Power or Labor
Source: Movie of Mulan 2020

In this movie of Mulan 2020, the author saw the character of Mulan is able to show that she has a freedom which refers to the flow of existentialism feminism, which is a flow that tends to show the

struggle of a women both in the domestic domain and choosing freely to express herself according to her conscience and free herself from the shackles of patriarchal culture.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Patriarchal culture believes that men are the dominant power holders in various areas of society. The emergence of certain assumptions about women affects the restriction of women's rights and freedoms. Based on these restrictions, give rise to forms of gender discrimination. Gender discrimination is a manifestation of the patriarchal culture that still prevails in society. Mapping between the two sexes can make women shackled in stereotypes that limit women's rights and opportunities. So the movement of women is increasingly limited and difficult for women in fulfilling the rights they deserve. The authors found forms of gender discrimination and patriarchal culture in the movie of Mulan 2020 which is illustrated through fourteen scenes consisting of seven scenes of gender discrimination, namely subordination, marginalization, stereotypes, and violence. While the other seven scenes are a form of patriarchal culture, namely restrictions on women's movement and women's productive or labor power. In this Mulan movie, the author saw the character Mulan showed that she has the freedom that refers to the flow of existentialism feminism. So, the author can conclude that the movie of Mulan 2020 represents women who free themselves from gender discrimination and the patriarchal culture that has been inherent in the family, society, and country.

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