

The Representation of Javanese Culture in the “Knight Kris” Animated Movie

Charles Sanders Peirce’s Semiotic Analysis

Arjuna Bangsawan

Universitas Negeri Surabaya
Surabaya, Indonesia
arjunabangsawan@mhs.unesa.ac.id

Anik Juwariyah

Universitas Negeri Surabaya
Surabaya, Indonesia
anikjuwariyah@unesa.ac.id

Abstract—*Knight Kris* is an animated movie released in 2017 in fantasy genre. However, in the setting of the story, the characterization and the theme contain of Javanese cultural elements. The focus in this study is how the signs of Javanese culture were represented in *Knight Kris* animated movie and what are the meanings of it. The qualitative approach and the literature review used were movie as cultural texts, Javanese culture, and semiotics. The representation of Javanese culture in this movie was analyzed using Peirce’s semiotic model and movie analysis framework from Fiske. The results show that Javanese cultural elements in this movie were represented through scenes, characterizations, setting, and background music. Besides that, the representation of Javanese culture about *tata paugeraning urip* (a way to preserve life) was found as well in this movie. *Knight Kris* could also be used as media for character learning to introduce ethos and noble values to students.

Keywords—*movie; animation; semiotic; representation; Javanese culture; Knight Kris*

I. INTRODUCTION

Movie is one of the mass media produced to communicate a message, information, and entertainment to be conveyed by the director to the audience. Delivering a message through a movie is an easy and effective way to make the audience receive the intended information. The existence of movie is used to socialize culture, politics, education, natural beauty, and relationships. Movie also acts as an ideological development to enhance moral values or desired myths as a community psychological text about an interesting or tense subject, as part of a culture that represents a certain image, and as a visual text that offers a complex level of understandings and meanings.

Discussing the content of the story cannot be separated from the discussion of the message. The messages and symbols depicted either implied or expressed in the movie play a big role. When someone watches a movie, the message conveyed by the movie will indirectly play a role in forming one’s perception of the meaning of messages in the movie [15].

Movie as an audio-visual electronic mass media has advantages over other media, namely being able to do a graphic manipulation by handling the construction of complex artificial techniques. It basically means to influence the construction and the meaning of messages in the process of production and cultural reproduction of a movie. Thus, in every representation that is displayed will always bring ideas about social positions, experiences, and certain groups [13].

Movie can be used as a learning medium through visual communication. The symbols that appear in the movie is used to deliver the message [4]. The signs or symbols in a movie can be analyzed through semiotics study that concerns on studying the systems, rules, conventions that allow these signs to have meaning. Every sign that is displayed in the movie is a form of change from the message description. The symbols presented in the movie are representations of reality that enables a movie to shape and represent reality based on codes, conventions and ideologies of its culture [15].

Knight Kris is an animated movie that is taken from the story of *wayang*, which is generally better known in Java. Dedy Corbuzier as the producer also said that this movie is full of Indonesian cultural values that contains a very thick Indonesian nuances. It presents *wayang* characters, *keris* from Indonesia, as well as temples which are often found in Indonesia.

Each movie is packaged to convey a message to the audience or consumers through a sign. The stimulus delivered by producers through a movie produces different responses from audiences. This raises a question whether the audiences can capture messages from movie producers, or just watch and remember what is interesting but the intended message is not received. Are the audience aware of the elements of Javanese culture conceptualized in the animated movie by Indonesians, *Knight Kris*, is an interesting question. Therefore, an analysis of the *Knight Kris* animated movie representation should be done as an effort to see how the appearance of Javanese culture. Through the sign analysis, this study tries to describe the representation of Javanese culture in *Knight Kris* animated movie. The use of dialogue, properties, expressions, characters can reflect all that. This is the background of the study to examine the Representation of Javanese Culture in the *Knight*

Kris Animated Movie (Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Analysis). *Knight Kris* animated movie has a great opportunity to become one of the supporting media for learning Javanese culture.

II. METHOD

A. Research Design

The Representation of Javanese Culture in Knight Kris Animated Movie (Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Analysis) is a qualitative study presented in descriptively and interpretatively. The scenes in this animated movie were analyzed using semiotics approach.

B. Source of Data

Source of Data in *The Representation of Javanese Culture in Knight Kris Animated Movie (Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Analysis)* was obtained from two parts:

1. Primer data source was from the scenes in *Knight Kris* animated movie that contains symbols related to Javanese culture.

2. Second data source was from literature reviews or internet in accordance of the study.

C. Data Collection Technique

1) Literature Overview

The references of this study include: *Nusa Jawa Silang Budaya* (Denys Lombard), *Etnologi Jawa* (Suwardi Endraswara), *Animasi; Pengetahuan Dasar Film Animasi Indonesia* (Gotot Prakosa), a semiotic study book, and other supporting books.

2) Documentation

The data was collected through the process of archiving the audio visual of *Knight Kris* animated movie in which certain parts were captured and analyzed.

3) Observation

Observation was done by observing the recording of *Knight Kris* movie and analyzing any symbols that appear in this movie.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Representation Of Javanese Culture In The "Knight Kris" Animated Movie

Knight Kris is a three-dimensional (3D) animated movie that makes the *keris* (Kris) as the focus of the storyline. This animated movie was produced by Viva Fantasia Animation Indonesia and produced by Deddy Corbuzier. The movie that aired in theaters on November 23, 2017 and cost 18 billion of production was 104 minutes long and went through a two-year production process.



Figure 1. *Knight Kris* Animated Movie Poster

The representation of Javanese culture in the *Knight Kris* animated movie were analyzed through several scenes chosen to answer the research questions. Among them are the symbols that appear in the representation of Javanese culture. The analysis of the relationship of various codes that appear in each level of the predetermined film analysis used Peirce's semiotic study.

The analysis contains of three levels, namely the level of reality, the level of representation, and the level of ideology. The analysis that has been done includes environmental conditions, characters, scenes, camera editing, and all other codes that are considered as cultural codes that are captured electronically through technical codes.

1) The Level of Reality

Asura is an evil giant portrayed in the *Knight Kris* movie resembles the figure of Batara Kala in a Javanese puppet story. Asura was once a prince of a kingdom, but because of his greed who wanted to rule the world, he learned all the evil powers that exist in all directions. It was what turned Asura into a giant, the wrathful Asura.

The knights did not remain silent; they gathered strength to defeat Asura. The only way was to unite the strength of the six knights in a Kris, which later the Kris had to be plugged into Asura's head.

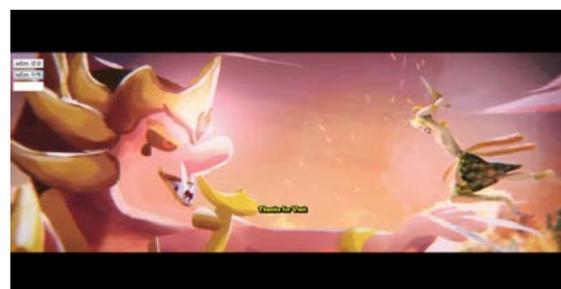


Figure 2. The Knight fights Asura

- a) *Sign* : Asura's defeat
- b) *Object* : Battle of knight against Asura

(1) Icon : Asura did a massive attack and ordered all his forces to take control of all the creatures in the world. The knights did not remain silent, they made a magic Kris to conquer Asura. The efforts of the knights succeeded and Asura was successfully paralyzed to stone. Then, Asura stone was covered by temple so that no citizens would know the figure of Asura.

(2) Index : From the scene shown, it appeared that Asura's face was very large compared to the knight who was jumping about to put a dagger on Asura's head. Through these two icons, it indicates that there is a battle going on, where Asura was defeated using a Kris that has been given power by the six knights.

(3) Symbol : Cooperation and persistence of the knights can defeat Asura.

c) *Interpretation* : No matter how strong Asura is, there are still other powers that can match it. It was like a proverb 'there is sky over sky', so do the knights who try with all their power to defeat Asura's. Because of the cooperation between the knights, they can create a Kris that combines all the knight's powers to defeat Asura. Their efforts bear fruit, evil powers can be defeated with goodness.

2) The Level of Representation

The knight's attack on Asura was enraged in the prologue which told by reviewing the past so that camera editing used a simple picture that only shaped images that were moved, seemingly broken. It often uses the zoom in technique to emphasize the expression of each character, Asura and the Knight.

The background music used is Javanese music, people's screams as well as background music which gives the impression of a battle or war. Besides the background music, there is also a background sound that tells the event. Thus, Asura attack scene is presented with Storytelling technique. The lighting in this scene emits a lot of the element of fire to show a great battle is ongoing. Many elements of light are used to strengthen the character. When a prince will turn into Asura, there is a light in the background that makes Asura look very strong, as well as the scene of the prince sticking a dagger on the Asura's head, there is a light that shoots out from where the Kris is embedded.

3) The Level of Ideology

Knight Kris is a movie that has many implied messages. At first glance, it is only about the journey of a child named Bayu along with his knightly Kris. However, every scene that is displayed contains many ideological elements, especially Javanese ideology which includes noble values and *tata paugeraning urip* (a way to preserve life).

Bayu is a clever and critical child. When Rani comes and greets Bayu without knocking on the door first, he reminds Rani about politeness or visiting manners. Rani's attitude of being willing to accept criticism from Bayu is a reflection of the *tata Paugeraning urip* of the *Tresno marang sedoyo kawoyo mudo* (love of the youth).

As Bayu insists on accepting Botak's challenge, Rani tries to remind him to *bekti marang wong tuwo*. It means that in any case a child should remain devoted to the parents. Not only help or respect parents, but also obey what they say. Bayu insists to fill Botak's challenge until there is a havoc that waked Asura the King of Darkness Rengka up. Darkness begins to rise and scorches Bayu's hometown until it condemned all citizens to a stone. Bayu felt guilty because he had pulled a knight's Kris that cursed Asura into a stone, and now Asura is free and hurts the entire human race. Bayu cries and throws the Kris away, until Empu Tandra emerges. He is the knight of a forbidden forest guard who turns into a monkey.

Empu Tandra has been waiting; guarding the forbidden forest until the bead of the knight was born, which is Bayu. Empu Tandra's loyalty reflects the value of True Responsibility, which is able to take responsibility in carrying out each position and fight to the end.

Empu Tandra is a role model for Bayu. He has a characterization of the Value of True Wisdom, which is a leader who always tries to use his mind or experience and knowledge carefully, deliberately, and thoroughly in making every decision. In addition, Bayu also has the value of true greatness, which is always trying to be a human with big soul, honorable, and noble.

Bayu is the main character who is both the cause and savior of the threat of Asura's darkness. He was destined to be the reincarnated knight who would defeat Asura. Bayu has *tresno marang sapadaning manungso* (love for humanity). In addition, Bayu also has a character of noble values, including the value of true purity, true faith, true compassion, and the value of happiness, peace, well-being and true serenity.

These values are reflected in every Bayu's behavior. True faith and affection is shown when Bayu defends the truth but still cares for the safety of his friend. While the value of happiness, peace, well-being and true sincerity is done by Bayu by fighting in the right way to free all people, especially the villagers from the evil Asura. The last is the value of true purity; Bayu tries to shape himself into a holy human being and helps people to create a holy life as well. So that peace is not only for him, but also for everyone.

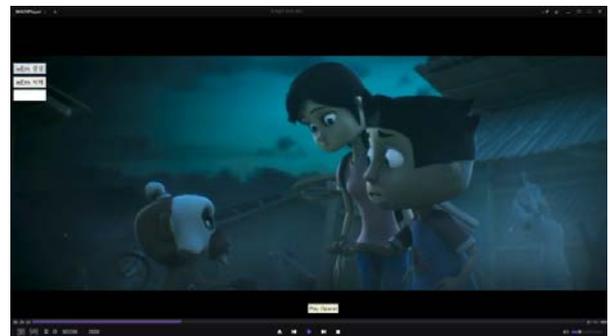


Figure 3. The Appearance of Empu Tandra

IV. CONCLUSION

Javanese cultural representations revealed in the *Knight Kris* movie are including sound, visuals and scenes. Sound consists of dialogue and background music, visuals consist of characters, settings, and properties, while scenes consist of roles and stories.

There are several icons and properties that represent Javanese culture in this movie such as the use of *caping* (farmer's hat) and hoes which have a meaning of the work ethic of the Javanese people who are known to be very persistent and hardworking. Likewise, the use of Kris as the main weapon in the movie which is a representation of weapons originating from Java. The attributes and accessories used on some of the characters in this animated movie also represent Javanese *wayang* (puppet) elements. For instance, the accessories used by Asura, Bayusekti, and Nahwara. All three characters wear accessories as portrayals of Javanese puppet characters. Fantasy characters that include Asura and Nahwara also have forms of characters in Javanese puppets. Asura's face was shaped like Betara Kala who was equally large as a giant and had an evil character, while Nahwara is an embodiment of Rahwana whose character resembles the original Javanese puppet mask.

Javanese culture sees humans as social creatures who have a way to maintain life as *tata paugeraning urip*. The presentation of the results of the analysis confirms that other than properties used, this animated movie also contains of a representation of Javanese culture that includes noble values and *tata paugeraning urip*.

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