

# Representation of Local Wisdom in Film (Semiotics Study of Aroma of Heaven Films)

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## ABSTRACT

Every form of art, such as music, dance, literature, fine arts, and acting requires appreciation from its respective audience. The artwork has developed from year to year until in the end, it creates a balanced and harmonious blend of literature, music, acting, and comedy which is packaged in the form of a film. This research examines the representation of local wisdom contained in the documentary film *Aroma of Heaven*. This study aims to examine the symbols or signs of Indonesian local cultural wisdom. The theory used in the film is mass communication theory, representation, local wisdom, and semiotics. The research method used in this research is descriptive qualitative with Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis study which divides signs into three elements, namely signs, objects, and interpretants. Data collection techniques are carried out by observation, documentation, and literature study. The conclusion of this research is that local wisdom in the film *Aroma of Heaven* provides a positive meaning and teaches the traditional values of an area that can be represented by the audience. This film depicts the reality of various signs on an existing object. Through the documentary *Aroma of Heaven*, it raises the audience's awareness that from a cup of coffee there is a closeness of traditions, historical records, and cultural diversity that become the national identity.

**Keyword:** film, semiotics, local wisdom

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Every form of art such as music, dance, literature, fine arts, and acting requires appreciation from its respective audience. Art appreciation is defined as an appreciation for the presence of a work of art. The artwork has developed from year to year until finally, it creates a balanced and harmonious combination of literature, music, acting, and comedy which is packaged in the form of a film. Films are used as a means of expression as a tool for artists and cinema people in expressing ideas or story ideas. Essentially films have power that has implications for public communication.

The strength of the film has unwittingly shaped the character of the audience. Films have now become a part of life because films are considered to have influenced the mindset, way of acting, way of speaking, and even the way the viewers dress. The world of cinema is now starting to look at cultural values as part of the elements of film production such as narrative and cinematic elements. The idea of a story about a film with nuances of local cultural values initiated by filmmakers is in line with the condition of Indonesia which has various cultural values as local wisdom.

Films containing local wisdom can be used as a deterrent to the penetration of foreign cultures that dominate the Indonesian film market. Films with local wisdom nuances

are also a means of promoting Indonesian culture in the eyes of the world and can be potential in various fields, for example helping the government to introduce or educate a culture that is not yet widely known considering that Indonesia is an archipelago and can be educational material for future generations to come.

The film that came to the attention of the author in this study was entitled *Aroma of Heaven*. This documentary-type film, directed by Budi Kurniawan, has been compiled since 2011, and released on June 3, 2014. The documentary *Aroma of Heaven* is a metaphor for presenting Indonesia's diversity and an effort to unravel the narrative of Indonesia's coffee journey. This film tells a story about the situation of several coffee growing locations in Indonesia, such as in Sumatra, Java, and East Nusa Tenggara. From a cup of coffee, people can see the closeness of traditions, historical records, cultural diversity, and at the same time the identity of a nation. This film takes audiences to places that have never been exposed before and present familiar phenomena in a completely different way. To be more precise, they want to introduce Indonesia through coffee. However, this film does not only talk about coffee, there is cultural value in it.

This film gives a message about a tradition from ancient times to the present that can be related to everyday life. For example, there is a section in this film that tells about how to grow Gayo, Flores coffee with mantras, songs, and

dances. This indicates that traditions, culture, art, faith, and indigenous beliefs have contributed to the historical flow of Indonesian coffee. Because coffee has been growing and developing in Indonesia for more than 300 years. From the background above, the author is interested in knowing more about the representation of local wisdom in the film *Aroma of Heaven* which can later be applied in everyday life. In addition, no research has been conducted on the film *Aroma of Heaven*. The purpose of this study is to determine the understanding of the representation of the meaning of local wisdom in the *Aroma of Heaven* film.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### 2.1. Mass Communication and Film

Mass communication according to Jay Black and Frederick C. Whitney in Nurudin [13] is the process of messages that are mass produced and distributed to a broad, anonymous, and heterogeneous mass of message recipients. Films by Marcel Danesi [14] are a means of mass communication using electronic media in their delivery. At first a film was a moving photo. The first successful moving photo was made in 1877 by Eadweard Muybridge, a British photographer who worked in California.

### 2.2. Representation

According to John Hartley there are three types of representation that are relevant to the study of communication, culture, and media. Namely: In language, media, and communication, representation is the means by which a sign is used for something outside the sign system, words, pictures, sounds, sequences, or stories that represent ideas, emotions, and facts. In politics, representation means that a few elected people represent the whole people as their "representatives" in congress or parliament. In the media, there is a system of representation such as stars and celebrities on the screen that represent desirable (heroic) or unwanted (villain) human characteristics, this encourages identification among the audience. Representations depend on learned and shared signs and images, on the reciprocity of the language learned and share a tagging or textual system. Through the function of this sign, humans know and study reality.

### 2.3. Local Wisdom

Local wisdom is explained by Syukri Hamzah [15] as a form of knowledge, belief, understanding, insight, and customs or ethics that guide human behavior in ecological life.

### 2.4. Semiotics

Etymologically, the term semiotic comes from the Greek word *semeion* which means sign. The sign is defined as

something which, based on previously developed social conventions, can be considered to represent something else. Semiotics according to Barthes in Alex Sobur [16] wants to study humanity, to interpret things. Interpretation, in this case, cannot be confused with communicating. Interpreting means that objects not only carry information but also constitute a structured system of signs. A sign signifies something other than the sign itself, and meaning is the relationship between an object or idea and a sign. This basic concept ties together a set of theories dealing with symbols, language, discourse, and nonverbal forms, theories that explain how signs relate to their meanings and how signs are structured.

## 3. METHODS

The author uses a qualitative descriptive research type in this study. According to John W. Creswell [1] research is an approach to a study that follows traditional methods of conducting social, behavioral and health sciences research. Qualitative research allows researchers to approach research from perspectives that may be different from previously studied perspectives. The author uses qualitative research to explain deeply the local wisdom that is in the film *Aroma of Heaven*.

In this research, the author used a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study method. According to Bruce L. Berg in A. Muri Yusuf [2] the case study method involves collecting sufficient information systematically about a certain person, social environment, event, or group to enable researchers to understand effectively what they want to research. The author uses the case study method because he wants to examine in depth the representation of local wisdom in the film *Aroma of Heaven* with the semiotic theory of Charles S. Peirce's model. Because Peirce's semiotic model is famous for the meaning triangle which consists of a sign, object and interpretant. The semiotic theory is used to examine the film *Aroma of Heaven*, which contains some local wisdom.

According to Ismail Nurdin and Sri Hartati [3] the subject of research is something the researcher or the unit of analysis aims to study which is the center of attention or the target of the researcher. In this research, the subject of research is a description of local wisdom that is represented in the scenes in the film *Aroma of Heaven*. Still from the same source, the object of research is an event, symptom or phenomenon that is the basis of a discussion or topic in research. In this research, the object of research is audio and visual in the *Aroma of Heaven* film.

In this research, the author processed the data through observations, documentation, and literature studies conducted by the author, then analyzed using Charles S. Peirce's semiotic theory to determine the representation of local wisdom in the film *Aroma of Heaven*. According to Sugiyono [4] data analysis is the process of systematically searching and compiling data obtained from the results of data collection such as interviews, observations, documentation, by organizing data into categories, describing them into units, synthesizing,

arranging into patterns, selecting the ones important and what will be studied, and make conclusions so that they are easy to understand.

In this research, the author measured the validity of the data using triangulation techniques. According to Moleong in Radita Gora, triangulation is a technique of checking the validity of data by utilizing and comparing it with something outside the data.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Picture 1 Dance Guel from Aceh



Source: Film *Aroma of Heaven*

Sign: Guel dance from Aceh which is being performed by a man with a background in a coffee warehouse from the colonial era.

Object: A man who is dancing the Guel dance using a traditional Gayo dress called an openwork shirt. The distinctive feature of this outfit is the additional *opoh ulen-ulen* cloth worn on the back of male dancers.

Interpretation: Guel dance according to Sa'adah and Siti Rahma [12] is one of the traditional dances owned by the Gayo tribe community. Guel dance is a dance that tells the story of Sengeda trying to invite and bring a white elephant to be presented to the Princess of the Sultan of Aceh Darussalam at the Center of the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam. Guel dance originates from the Takengon district in Central Aceh. Located at 4 ° 10 '33 "- 5 ° 57' 50" North Latitude and 95 ° 15 '40 "- 97 ° 20' 25" East Longitude with an area of ± 4,318.39 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 214,828 people ([https:// www1-media.acehprov.go.id](https://www1-media.acehprov.go.id) accessed on 7 December 2020 at 18.18 WIB).

Guel dance is performed at wedding ceremonies or at welcoming ceremonies for regional guests. Guel dance is performed in groups by one to four male dancers and six to ten female dancers. For the Gayo community, Guel dance is not just an ordinary dance because this dance has values and philosophies that represent their culture. So that every stage and movement in this dance contains messages and special values in it. The symbolic meaning of the Guel dance according to Jemadi Iwan Nara [7] depicts the story of a white elephant being awakened from a bed accompanied by traditional arts. In the Guel dance there is a procession of *semah* greetings, *munatap* movement which is self-existence and awareness, because white elephants do not want to budge (kneel). Self-existence and self-awareness crystallized after being stimulated by Sengeda with motion accompanied by a rhythm for the white

elephant to rise up and testify, turning silence into action breaking the ice of the soul to dissolve and unite and make dreams come true.

*Redep* motion, namely the shoulders and hands move very flexibly and the fingers are immersed in *opoh ulen-ulen*. This movement means thinking and moving fast. Then the *ketibung* motion is the kicking of the two feet alternately to the ground while lifting, lowering and rotating both hands combined with a sharp glare. This is the stage of knowledge and understanding. Then *cincang nangka* is the last movement of action by inserting oneself into diversity [7].

There is a symbolic meaning of the traditional clothes used in the Guel dance show, including the *emun berangkat* motif that describes the ability to navigate various trials. The *puter tali* motif depicts sturdiness, unity, and oneness. The motif of *pucuk rebung* describe steadfastness of opinion, strong faith, humble heart, and good character. *Sarak opat* has four elements in this motive, the first element is *reje musuket sifet* which means that the leader must be fair and responsible as a role model for the community. The second element is *petue musidik* which means carrying out fingerprints and tactics. *Petue* is the spearhead in various activities, looking closely at all the negligence/progress that occurs from the lower layers to the upper layers. The third element is *imem muperlu sunet*, which means the leader must practice and teach knowledge to the people. The fourth element is *genap mupakat*, which means that the people are advised to be loyal, share, or obey all the provisions that have been outlined and heed the advice of *Sarak Opat* [7].

Picture 2 Musical accompaniment to Guel dance from Aceh



Source: Film *Aroma of Heaven*

Sign: People gathered and each played traditional musical instruments and wore traditional clothes against a background of hills.

Object: The music group accompanying the Guel dance wearing traditional clothes and also using traditional musical instruments.

Interpretation: According to Indah Nirmalasari and Ahmad Syai [9] the musical accompaniment of the Guel dance is divided into two, namely the ancient musical accompaniment model and today's accompaniment music. In the accompaniment of ancient Guel dance music, only using typical Gayo lyrics, the grooves or contents of the lyrics tell a picture that is in accordance with the situation at that time and with the Gayo rhythm which has

characteristics, namely *guk*, *gelduk*, *surak*, *sarok jangin*, and *janyun* accompanied by with traditional *rapa'i* musical instruments and *canang* instruments. However, with the progress of the times, the music artists added traditional and modern musical instruments to accompany the Guel dance so that the presentation contained more aesthetic value without removing the grip of traditional Guel music. Modern and traditional musical instruments are added such as *gong*, *soleng*, *teganing*, guitar, and flute □9□. Previously, the Guel dance lyrics were sung by Senggeda with the aim of awakening the white elephant from its hideout. The composition of the singing lyrics to accompany the Guel dance uses the term or *sampiran* a lot. The style of language in these verses is usually difficult to understand when interpreted directly. Even so, the essence of the lyrics of the Guel dance song is trust and advice □9□.

**Picture 3** Gayo Coffee Farmers in Bener Meriah, Aceh



Source: Film *Aroma of Heaven*

Sign: Gayo coffee farmers who are in the coffee plantation.  
 Object: A Gayo coffee farmer who is observing and reciting a mantra to the coffee tree.  
 Interpretation: The Gayo farmers and coffee plantation featured in the screenshot of the film *Aroma of Heaven* are from the Bener Meriah area. Bener Meriah is an area resulting from the division of Central Aceh district which is located at 4 ° 33 50 - 4 ° 54 50 North Latitude and 96 ° 40 75- 97 ° 17 50 East Longitude with an area of ± 1,941.61 km<sup>2</sup> and has an average height 100-2,500 meters above sea level (<https://www1-media.acehprov.go.id/> accessed on 8 December 2020 at 18.38 WIB). Coffee in Aceh began to be planted in the 18th century with robusta and arabica types of coffee. Central Aceh District has an area of 48,500 hectares of coffee gardens, 39,000 hectares of Bener Meriah and 7,000 hectares of Gayo Lues. The total Gayo highland coffee plantation is around 94,5000 hectares, most of which are planted with Arabica coffee with an average production of 50,774 tonnes per year (<https://amankuba-coffee.co.id> accessed on 8 December 2020 at 18.44 WIB). Growing coffee in Gayo land is done with a special ritual. According to Teuku Kemal Rasya □11□ this tradition is carried out to honor the coffee plant which has given a lot of life to the Gayo people. Male and female farmers chant mantras when the coffee flowers bloom. The mantra reads "Orom Bismillah Siti Kewe, Kunikahen ko orom kuyu, Wih kin Walimu, Tanoh kin saksimu, lo kin saksi kalammu" which means "With Bismillah Siti Kawa, I marry you to the wind, water becomes your guardian, the land becomes your witness, and the sun is a witness to your kalam". The mantra

is actually a prayer, a solemn ritual surrounding the coffee plant or Siti Kewe. So that coffee produces the best-known quality fruit and seeds in the world, especially for the Arabica type. This tradition in the view of the Acehnese people is considered strange. But in the Gayo highlands, this is commonplace. The cultural model of the Gayo highland community when understanding religion is a context that is related to the things that live around it, including the coffee plant as a magical plant. Something that is considered good by the Gayo highland community is what has been agreed upon and declared as a valid value.

**Picture 4** Coffee Farmers Takengon, Aceh eating palm sugar



Source: Film *Aroma of Heaven*

Sign: Coffee farmers is eating palm sugar.  
 Object: The Takengon man wants to eat the palm sugar from Gayo which has been cut into small pieces.  
 Interpretation: This scene explains that in the highlands of Central Aceh, in Takengon there is a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation called *kertup* coffee. During the struggle, the Gayo people created other ways to enjoy coffee. They brought coffee and palm sugar during the guerrilla in the middle of the forest. During the guerrilla, coffee was enjoyed without steeping. Roasted coffee beans are just chewed in the mouth with palm sugar. You can hear a crackling sound when the coffee beans are eaten. So that is called the *kertup* coffee. As supplies, coffee beans and palm sugar are very durable because they can last up to six months. Only managers from Gayo descent have preserved the tradition of drinking *kertup* coffee and it can be interpreted that enjoying *kertup* coffee is enjoying Gayo coffee as a whole (<https://j Explorer.kompas.id/> accessed on 9 December 2020 at 03.17 WIB).

**Picture 5** The people of Manggarai, East Nusa Tenggara are harvesting coffee



Source: Film *Aroma of Heaven*

Sign: Three men in the coffee garden.

Object: Three men are pouring coffee into baskets from their harvest/extract.

Interpretation: East Nusa Tenggara Province, is one of the best Arabica coffee producing provinces in Indonesia. Arabica coffee production in East Nusa Tenggara averages 23,729 tonnes per year (<https://ntt.bps.go.id/> accessed on 9 December 2020 at 15.20 WIB). Coffee production areas in East Nusa Tenggara are centered on the mainland of Flores Island, namely in Ngada Regency, Manggarai Regency, Nagekeo Regency, East Manggarai Regency, and West Manggarai Regency [6].

In this scene, coffee farmers from the Manggarai Regency are shown. The capital of Manggarai Regency is Ruteng. Geographical location of Manggarai is located at 8° N - 8°30' South Latitude and 119°30' - 120°30' East Longitude and an area of 4,188.90 Km<sup>2</sup>. The Northern Territory is bordered by the Flores Sea, East is bordered by Ngada Regency, West is bordered by West Manggarai Regency, and to the South is bordered by the Savu Sea. Manggarai Regency has a population of 324,014 people (BPS East Nusa Tenggara in 2016 figures) The Administrative Region consists of 9 sub-districts, and 132 villages and 17 wards (<https://ntt.bpk.go.id/> accessed on 9 December 2020 at 17.19).

In the behind-the-scenes film *Aroma of Heaven*, it is explained that male and female coffee farmers harvest coffee together by singing folk songs. They have been taught since childhood to really pay attention to coffee trees in the plantation and make this activity a tradition. Manggarai coffee farmers believe the words said by their ancestors, that if you want to pick or harvest coffee, you must do it in a ritual manner by gathering, singing, dancing and having to read *wada* or prayer. Sings traditional songs and dances traditional. The purpose of reading the *wada* before picking is so that the coffee plant has good properties so that it is able to maintain the health of those who consume it and get blessings. This signifies their gratitude to God Almighty. This activity has been a tradition passed down from generation to generation of residents of Manggarai, East Nusa Tenggara (Source: found in the behind the scenes film *Aroma of Heaven*).

Picture 6 Dance Gandrung from Banyuwangi



Source: Film *Aroma of Heaven*

Sign: Two women are demonstrating traditional dances with a background like in a traditional house.

Object: The Gandrung dance from Banyuwangi is being performed by two women wearing traditional clothes.

Interpretation: Gandrung dance is a traditional dance from Banyuwangi, East Java. According to Mamiek Suharti, the word Gandrung can be interpreted as being charmed or enchanted. It is said to be the Gandrung dance because this dance is a form of fascination for the agrarian Blambangan people to Dewi Sri. Dewi Sri, who is believed to be able to bring prosperity to the people of Banyuwangi. Gandrung dance is a traditional art that is held by the community as an expression of gratitude at every harvest.

Gandrung dance dress according to Nofia Nindi [8] Banyuwangi is a fashion that has a meaning contained therein. Like the *omprog*, it is the same as the crown which means the beauty of the dancer. *Geter* can be called a flower rocking or *cundhuk mentul* which is an *omprog* decoration which is located at the top of the *omprog*. The decoration is in the form of a leather wrapped around a wire. On the inside of the wire there is a support which will become a spring when it is designed. Then the top of the wire is formed with a decoration in the shape of a jasmine flower so that both of them can generate vibrations when the *geter* is attached to the *omprog* and worn by Gandrung dancers. *Geter*, who is often referred to as *cundhuk mentul*, has a meaning to thrill the hearts of those who watch the show.

The ornament depicted by the figure of Antasena is none other than the son of Bima who is in the form of a giant human head but has the body of a snake. This ornament is located on the right and the left side of the *omprog* which has cultural significance and will continue to descend like a long snake tail. Glass ornament is an ornament arranged in the *omprog* section. The glass ornaments are neatly arranged on the *omprog* which means to reject dark magic and witchery. The carved ornament is in the form of a kalpataru tree which is a tree that lives in the mountains, located at the back of the *omprog*. Kalpataru tree has the meaning of a life [8].

*Pilisan* which consists of two different parts, the first part has a shape like a leaf which is eight pieces and in the middle there is an isosceles triangle shape. The first part is made of cowhide. The color contained in the *pilisan* part is the gold color obtained from a technique called *prodo*. *Prodo* uses gold-colored aluminum foil which means giving a radiant life. Shoulder gauze is a type of bracelet jewelry worn on the upper arm near the shoulder. The way to wear a shoulder strap is to wrap your arm like a bracelet but pull it up close to the armpit or base of the arm, the shoulder strap has the meaning of describing the beauty of the Gandrung Banyuwangi dance [8].

The typical *sewek* that must be in Banyuwangi batik is the Gajah Oling motif, which is shaped like a question mark and is in the form of plant tendrils. Gajah Oling's philosophy is taken from the elephant animal because the elephant is the largest known animal form. Oling in Oling means remember. And illustrated by plant tendrils is the meaning of fertility. *Sewek* Gajah Oling has the meaning of describing the characteristics of the city of Banyuwangi and means a form of gratitude to God Almighty. *Oncer* are small pieces of white, green and yellow cloth because they represent the colors of Hinduism. Currently it is replaced by red and white because it has a sacred meaning and courage. [8].

Picture 7 Shadow Puppets



Source: Film *Aroma of Heaven*

Sign: Shadow puppet show.

Object: Boat-shaped puppets in the ocean.

Interpretation: Shadow puppets is a show that presents a shadow, namely a jagged painting. The puppet is performed by a puppeteer on a screen or screen made of white cloth. When the puppet prototype is highlighted with a *blencong* light, its shadow will appear in front of the screen with an abstract shadow. It is commonly said by the audience as a shadow show or *wayang* which contains a very magical value [5].

*Wayang* is a communication medium that uses traditional performing arts that were born and developed in communities in various regions of Indonesia. *Wayang* is one of the arts, culture as well as traditional performances that are born and developed in the midst of society. Therefore, it can be said that *wayang* is one type of traditional media that has high artistic quality. By watching a quality *wayang* performance, the audience will be treated to art offerings that display aesthetics, ethics and philosophy. *Wayang* performances are actually able to become a symbolic communication medium appearing as a spectacle, guidance, and an arrangement that can entertain and convey teachings as a reference for personal, social and state life [5].

In this scene the puppet show is used at the end of the film, as if to summarize the contents of the film's story. Tells the story of the journey of coffee from Europe to being grown and developed in Indonesia. The author summarizes that *wayang* was chosen because in ancient times *wayang* performances were a medium for telling stories. In the puppet show contains the values of life with various interpretive meanings and symbols that can be interpreted by humans. *Wayang* can provide an overview of human life plays with their various problems, *wayang* as a display of values with meaning and symbolism that can be used as a source of life's teachings to deliver the whole Indonesian people. Through *wayang*, humans can gain a new understanding of life's views and attitudes in choosing between good and bad, right and wrong (Source: found behind the scenes in the making of the film *Aroma of Heaven*).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The author summarizes some of the conclusions that are the result of the author's research, namely: The object in this study is a scene that displays local wisdom from Budi

Kurniawan's film *Aroma of Heaven*. This scene featuring local wisdom is studied using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis. The film *Aroma of Heaven* shows local wisdom from various regions. Starting from the Aceh area, it was Gayo who recited mantras to coffee trees when they flowered. The tradition is typical of the Gayo people who drink *kertup* coffee. Guel and Gandrung dance with various meanings in their clothing and musical accompaniment. The ritual of the ancestors when they want to harvest coffee in East Nusa Tenggara. The shadow puppet show at the end of the film *Aroma of Heaven* has the meaning of telling a story.

Local wisdom in the film *Aroma of Heaven* gives a positive meaning and teaches the traditional moral values of a region. This film can describe reality from various signs on an existing object. Through the documentary *Aroma of Heaven*, the audience can realize that from a cup of coffee there is a closeness of traditions, historical records, and cultural diversity that become the national identity.

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