

Buginese Arranged Marriage in *Mappasitaro* Movie

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ABSTRACT

Finding a perfect match to marry is one of the most important concerns in someone's life. Some say that finding a perfect match to live with will define the quality of life. In some cultures, someone is considered mature enough to get married when he/she has turned into teenagers. Beside age, accomplishing school or college and having an occupation are also assumed as the markers for someone to get married. Bugis is one of the ethnics that consider marriage as a very essential part of life. It can be seen from the way the Buginese plan a marriage in the family from the matchmaking until the wedding ceremony. In the past days, parents generally determined their child/ren's match. Even the parents had arranged the matchmaking since their child/ren were kids. They arranged the marriage mostly with relatives or close friends with various reasons. It could not be identified whether this practice of arranged matchmaking or arranged marriage is still exist at this present time. Therefore, by using movie as a media for information, the writers investigate the audience perspectives about arranged marriage, the existence of arranged marriage and the reason for people conducting arranged marriage nowadays, particularly conducted by the Buginese. The data were taken based on audience responses through questionnaire and analysed qualitatively. The results show that there are various perspectives on arranged marriage as depicted in *Mappasitaro* movie. In addition, the practice of arranged marriage is still found nowadays with various reasons.

Keywords: *arranged marriage, Buginese, Mappasitaro, media.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the most important stages in everyone's life. People consider marriage to be the jolliest and holiest event in their lives since it is the time when two people unite as one. In some cultures, people marry their daughter even when she is still a teenager. In another place, people consider themselves suitable to be married when they have finished their school or already have a steady job. Buginese, as one of the ethnics in Sulawesi Selatan, Indonesia, assumes marriage as the most celebrated event. They have planned marriage long before the main event is conducted. Some of the parents even arrange their daughter/son's spouse since they were children. This arranged marriage is what we called *mappasitaro*.

In literal meaning, *mappasitaro* means *saling menyimpan*, or in English, keeping each other. Based on the context, *Mappasitaro* is a matchmaking activity done firstly by the Buginese aristocrats, which later followed by some high-class families from Bugis ethnic. The noble family did this to maintain the royalty blood in their descendants. This culture has been implemented for since long time ago and still exist until now, even though the number is small. At a later time,

Mappasitaro is not only conducted by the Buginese aristocrats, but also conducted by common people.

Mappasitaro is assumed not compatible in this modern era, particularly for the people who live in big cities. Parents have been open mindedly realized that their child/ren has/have the rights to choose the match for him/her. The child/ren is/are also more encouraged to speak up their mind about their choice to whom they will marry to. Although this tradition has existed since many years ago and rarer to find, *Mappasitaro* tradition is still an interesting topic to discuss nowadays. There are various ways to preserve this tradition. Beside doing the practice of *Mappasitaro* tradition, people can also take this Buginese arranged marriage theme to be provided in media such as stories or movies. The movie director takes the theme to implicitly inform the public that the tradition is still exist nowadays, though it is rarer to find.

One of the movies that took Buginese arranged marriage as the theme is *Mappasitaro* movie. The title of this movie is similar with the Buginese arranged marriage namely *Mappasitaro*. *Mappasitaro* movie is an indie movie produced by The Kalong Khalaq. The story started from the lead character, Jafar who wanted to find his true love. He lived in Soppeng, one of the regencies

in South Sulawesi. He no longer had parents, so he stayed with his uncle and aunt to help them organise a family business. He accidentally met Sitti, a woman from a wealthy family and be friended her. They then became a couple and decided to take the relationship more serious. However, one day, Sitti's brother introduce her to Tajuddin, a cousin from Kendari. Tajuddin was expected to marry Sitti as their parents already prepared before they passed away. Knowing this, Jafar and Sitti decided to run away, or in Bugis called *Silariang*. Sitti's brother found out about this and succeeded in preventing the action. The movie ended half-hanging as the audience are left behind wondering whether Jafar and Sitti love story ended happily or not.

The action when Sitti's brother asked his cousin to marry Sitti is what we named as *Mappasitaro* in Buginese Culture. This culture "forced" their children to marry someone who have been selected long before they become adult. There are cases that children accept the parents' will and follow what the family have prepared for them, but majority of the cases show the vice versa. Mostly, *Mappasitaro* happened between close relative, or between the family they have trusted with various reasons. The director of *Mappasitaro* movie leaves the audience with wondering thoughts whether Siti should marry Tajuddin and accept the *mappasitaro* tradition or live happily with someone whom she loves, Jafar. This half-hanging ending has emerged the writers' interests to find out more about *mappasitaro* tradition. Based on the ending of the movie, it can be assumed that this movie represents the reality of the people who experience arranged marriage, particularly in Bugis tribe with its positive and negative notions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Buginese (Arranged) Marriage

In marriage, finding a perfect match to marry to is the early step before getting into the marriage itself. In this present time, before deciding to get married, people generally start dating someone he/she likes and get to know each other deeply. The people who immediately feel that he/she has already found a perfect match to marry will need a short time to date and plan to get married soon. Meanwhile, it will take longer time to date for the people who are still in doubt about his/her girlfriend whether he/she is the one for them to marry. Sometimes people date someone whom they have already know—friends or colleague, or being introduced to someone by any friends. There are also people who marry his wife/her husband through a matchmaking or arranged marriage in their family. The importance of marriage can be identified from two perspectives. First in social life, people who have been married are honoured more than those who haven't been married. And from religious side, marriage is considered as a

sacred institution due to its connection with worship toward God (Sarwono, 2018).

Reflection of kinship, gender, and status systems can be seen in Bugis Marriage. The basis for Bugis marriage system is *siala*, a concept which means "to take each other" (Pelras, 1996). When a man and a woman take each other in a marriage as a spouse, automatically, the families, by marrying their son and daughter, is joining kinship alliance.

Bugis is one of the tribes that set arranged marriage. In the past times, when parents assumed that their child/ren were already teenager, the parents would start to plan marriage for their son/daughter. Various terms are used to indicate the Buginese arranged marriage. The first is *mappasiala sappu sisseng*, to marry within family (between cousins) (Rofifah, 2020). Second, tradition of marrying children when they were born (*mappasitaro*) (Hidayat, 2003). Eventually, there is a slight change in the definition of *mappasitaro*. Initially, *mappasitaro* was conducted by the Buginese noble, but nowadays, any people in Bugis tribe can possibly set *mappasitaro* within their family. Moreover, if the Buginese aristocrats set marriage for their newly born child in the old days, the term of *mappasitaro* is limited into arranged marriage nowadays (Idrus, 2004).

The Buginese keep *mappasitaro* tradition for some reasons. The main reason is to keep wealth within family (Idrus, 2004). The families will no longer be worry about the family inheritance because it will stay among the relatives. Arranged marriage with cousin relates to assets preservation and social status conservation among the Buginese (Version & Online, 2016). Still related to economic reason, the second reason is the parents are engaged in debt. Oftentimes, the debt agreement mentions when the people who borrow the money is failed to pay debt, it is their child/ren who has/have to 'pay' the debt. In other words, the son/daughter of the family who borrow the money must engaged into a marriage with the lender. The other reason is to strengthen the family kinship (Abdullah, 1985).

When a man marries his mate from his inner family circle is assumed as an ideal marriage for the Buginese, either from mother or father side (Hidayat & Ramadhani, n.d.). Mattulada in Abdullah stated that there are three types of ideal arranged marriage for the Bugineseas follows:

- a. *Assialang-Marola* or *siala massapposiseng* is a marriage between first cousin, parallel or crosscousin. This type of marriage is commonly conducted by the Buginese particularly within close relatives. The Buginese, particularly the aristocrats has had this tradition for generations since the ancient times.

- b. *Assialana Memeng* is a marriage between second cousin, from both parents' side. It is also called *siala massappokadua* or *assiparewekenna memenni*, which means back to or re-connected to relatives (N.Nurnaga, 2001).
- c. *Ripaddepe Mabelai* or *siala massappokatellu* is marriage between third cousin from both parents' side. This type of arranged marriage is aimed to reconnecting a far kinship. (Abdullah, 1985),

2.2. Audience Reception Theory

Reception theory is a version of the literary theory of reader reaction that emphasizes the reception or interpretation from the meaning of a text. In the analysis of communication models, the theory of reception is generally called audience reception. The most famous theory of media came from Stuart Hall with his encoding and decoding theory. Stuart Hall's audience reception theory (encoding-decoding) shows that receptors are not only receive messages conveyed by message sender, but can also reproduce the message conveyed. (Hall, 1993) Encoding is the structure of meaning that is dominated and interpreted from the point of view of the producer as the creator and sender of the message (Hall, 1993). So, the movie's messages are portrayed based on social phenomenon which the movie marker wants to focus on. On the other hand, decoding is the structure of meaning from receiver points of view. Viewers have access to interpret the messages from the dialogue, the symbols and the cinematography shown from the movie. (Aligwe et al., 2018). The interpretation of viewers may vary based on their understanding, background, and experience (Larashati, 2019).

Based on Hall's theory of reception (Ross, 2011), there are three categorizations of respondents.

- Dominant-hegemonic position
The audience included in this classification understand the contents of the message. In other words, the audience is in line with the dominant code that from the start trying to be built by sending of the message. This is the ideal form of message delivery because the audience response considered in accordance with the expectation of the movie maker.
- Negotiated position
This position called combination position. On one side, the audiences are able to capture the general message from the text (television show/ movie). However, at the same time, the audience also reject certain messages. In other words, the audiences filter the message they received.

- Oppositional position
The audience rejects the dominant message from the sender. In this position, the audience finds alternative references that are more relevant rather than the message they obtain from the movie maker.

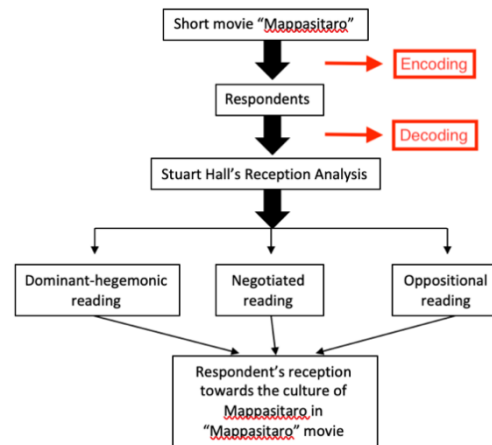


Figure 1 Encoding- Decoding's process of thinking.

Based on the picture above, we can see the logical thinking of Hall's Encoding and Decoding theory. First, we break the code from "Mappasitaro" movie (encoding), create some questions related to respondents' background and their understanding on the concept of Mappasitaro after they have watched the movie. Next, the analysis of respondents' answers results three categorisations of audience which will be discussed in the next chapter, along with the audience reception of the movie.

2.3. Mappasitaro Movie

Mappasitaro movie is an indie movie which produced by The Kalong Khalaq Production. The Kalong Khalaq Production is a local production house in Soppeng Regency, South Sulawesi. The casts of the movie were also regional actors and actress from Soppeng Regency, South Sulawesi. Similar with the title, the movie theme is about Buginese arranged marriage that still exist in particular regions in South Sulawesi.

This movie is begun with Jafar (male lead character) who is hanging out with some friends. In the meeting, they discuss about their current life including having job and finding a match. Jafar is an orphan who live with his uncle and aunt. He runs his uncle's business, a grocery shop in the market. Jafar used to have a girlfriend, but she left him for the other guy. Jafar has moved on and he intends to find the right match to marry to. As the time goes by, Jafar meets Sitti. Sitti is also an orphan who lives with her older brother.

Jafar and Sitti fall in love each other and they want to take their relationship to a more serious step, marriage. But Sitti's brother disapproves their relationship. The problem emerges when Sitti finds out that her parents had set an arranged marriage with their relative before her parents passed away. Finding hard to accept her parents' will for her to married someone that she doesn't know very well, Sitti commits to runaway with Jafar. In Buginese, when a couple decides to run away due to the disapproval of their families on their relationship is called *silariang*. In the middle of their way of *silariang*, Sitti's brother successfully catches them up. The movie ends with Sitti is going back with her brother and leave Jafar at the side of the road.

As movie function and role that can be used as a learning media for the community or audience (Suroko & Muktiyo, 2018), through this movie, the messenger (movie director) implicitly does not show its tendency whether to campaign arrange marriage or against it. Since its first presence, movie has become an increasingly important communication media. Occasionally, movie is used as a communication tool to achieve particular goal of its maker (Ardianto, 2004). By showing the hanging ending in the movie, it is assumed that the movie director is neither pro nor against arranged marriage.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The data in this study were collected in the form of audience responses. The authors applied purposive random sampling in determining the respondents. There are 57 respondents and they were categorized into Buginese and non-Buginese respondents. Respondents' perspectives on Buginese arranged marriage, the existence of Buginese arranged marriage, and the reason for setting arranged marriage are the focuses of this study.

The respondents were provided the movie link and asked to watch *Mappasitaro* movie. After watching the the movie, the respondents filled the questionnaire that had a set of questions related to the focuses of this study. The audience responses were analysed through descriptive and qualitative method.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Findings

This study explores audience reception toward arranged marriage tradition in *Mappasitaro* movie. The audience responses were grouped based on three categories namely dominant-hegemonic reading, negotiated reading, and oppositional reading. Dominant-hegemonic reading refers to the audience responses who stated that they agreed if their parents set arranged marriage for them. The respondents who were doubtful

whether they agree or disagree toward arranged marriage are categorized into negotiated reading. And oppositional reading category is for the respondents who disagree about arranged marriage.

Most of the respondents were disagree about arranged marriage. 23 respondents (40,3%) said that they would oppose arranged marriage. While there were 22 respondents (38,5%) were doubtful whether they agreed or disagreed on arranged marriage. There were only 2 respondents (3,5%) who agreed to be set on arranged marriage. The audience reception responses were based on various perspectives about arranged marriage. Besides, the various perspectives about arranged marriage proof the existence of arranged marriage with its reasons.

4.2. Discussions

4.2.1. Perspectives about arranged marriage

The first point that investigated in this part is the audience perspectives about arranged marriage, *mappasitaro* tradition. In analysing this part, the perspectives were categorized based on the audiences' tribe, whether they were Buginese or non-Buginese. There were 39 Buginese respondents and 18 non-Buginese respondents. Most of Buginese respondents said that *mappasitaro* was Buginese tradition. 7 respondents (17,9%) stated this tradition was aimed to strengthen kinship and 9 respondents (23%) stated that this tradition has been conducted by the Buginese for years. The next perspective that given by the Buginese respondents can be assumed as disagreement toward arranged marriage. 7 (17,9%) respondents said that arranged marriage did not comply with the present time. There were also 7 (17,9%) respondents who stated that arranged marriage was forcing and adverse. 2 respondents delivered their perspectives by saying that arranged marriage left no choice for woman to speak up her will to whom she will marry to. There were 6 responses that provided both positive and negative perspectives toward arranged marriage. 2 respondents (5%) stated the positive side of arranged marriage was the kinship was strongly tied. Meanwhile, the negative side was woman did not have the right to choose her husband. In addition, 4 respondents (10,2%) said that arranged marriage was neither right nor wrong depended on the agreement of parties involved in the arranged marriage.

The perspectives about arranged marriage were also analysed from 18 respondents who were non-Buginese. They also shared their perspectives on arranged marriage, particularly *mappasitaro* variously. There were 8 respondents (44,4%) who said that *mappasitaro* was arranged marriage tradition particularly conducted by the Buginese. A disagreement toward arranged marriage was given by 9 respondents. 7 respondents

(17,9%) said *mappasitaro* was forcing and adverse. 1 respondent disagreed on arranged marriage due to its bad effect on the health of the child/ren who was/were born from parents who married to close relatives. Meanwhile, 1 respondent disagreed because everybody had the right to choose his/her future wife/husband.

4.2.2. The existence of arranged marriage

Furthermore, after investigating the respondent perspectives about *mappasitaro* tradition, the authors examined the existence of arranged marriage in the society nowadays. This part was also categorized based on the respondent's tribe, whether they were Buginese or non-Buginese. There were 39 respondents (68,4%) of the respondents experienced arranged marriage within their families. The respondents who found arranged marriage in their family consisted of 27 Buginese and 12 non-Buginese. Meanwhile, there were 18 respondents (31,5%) who did not experience or found arranged marriage in their families. These respondents consisted of 11 Buginese respondents and 7 non-Buginese respondents.

4.2.3. Reasons of arranged marriage

There were diverse reasons of arranged marriage given by the respondents. The most frequent reason was for the parents who conducted arranged marriage tradition due to finding the best match for their son/daughter (26 respondents (45,6%)). The second most frequent response was to strengthen the kinship (10 respondents (17,5%)). Tradition is the third reason for conducting arranged marriage that given by 7 respondents (12,2%). 6 respondents (10,5%) said that people conducted arranged marriage because the parents' doubt for their child/children's choice. The other reason was the parents assumed that their son/daughter age was mature enough to get married (4 respondents (7%)). In addition, 4 respondents delivered their ideas about the reasons of arranged marriage was due to economic issue. 2 respondents (3,5%) said arranged marriage was set to pay debt and 2 respondents (3,5%) stated that arranged marriage can elevate a family social status in the society.

5. CONCLUSION

The audiences' responses were grouped into three categories namely dominant-hegemonic reading, negotiated reading, and oppositional reading. The respondents who agreed on arranged marriage are categorized as dominant-hegemonic reading. Respondents who neither agree nor disagree on arranged marriage is named as negotiated reading. And the respondents who disagreed on arranged marriage is called oppositional reading. Most of the respondents are against the concept of arranged marriage. The audience said that everyone has the right to choose his/her match

because it is related to his/her happiness, particularly nowadays in which people are given the chance to speak up their mind and fulfil their will. The interesting result is also shown from the audience responses who stated that they decided to be neutral. They mostly choose to be neutral as they see that *mappasitaro* is a tradition, in which this tradition is hard to change or adjust with the present time. Also, it has its values of local wisdoms.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors carried out the experiment (delivering the questionnaire to the respondents). The first author analysed the submitted responses and interpreted it into discussion and conclude the whole results of the study. Further, the second author gathered the data and recapped it into excel file format. Later, the second author reviewed the first draft of the full paper. The third author did the second proofread of the full paper.

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