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The Popular Culture of *Upin & Ipin and Adit & Sopo Jarwo*
Animated Series

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Abstract: Popular culture refers to a culture enjoyed by the mass because it is closely related to people's lives. One such pop culture product is film. In this paper, the the main data for discussion is a Malaysian animated series, *Upin & Ipin* and the Indonesian animated series, *Adit & Sopo Jarwo*. The first episode of *Upin & Ipin* and the two episodes of *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* are used to see how the series used popular culture strategies to maintain their popularity, and how through analyzing the plot, similar moral values are found. The method used to analyze is s Roland Barthes' semiotics. The result of the research showed that both animated series were the products of pop culture because the series fulfilled the characteristics of satisfying viewers, easy to obtain, showed an eagerness to please viewers, and reflected the culture of the Malaysian and Indonesian society. Two similar moral values which were obedience and gratefulness were found in those animated series. The obedience was shown through young characters who were not scared to confront older people, but also show how to respect elders . Gratefulness in the series in the animated series were found through seeing the characters see the positive sides of life..

Key words: popular culture, *Upin & Ipin*, *Adit & Sopo Jarwo*

Abstrak: Budaya populer merujuk kepada sesuatu yang dinikmati oleh massa dan berkaitan erat dengan kehidupan kita. Salah satu produk budaya populer adalah film. Dalam tulisan ini, peneliti menggunakan serial animasi Malaysia *Upin & Ipin* dan serial animasi Indonesia *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* untuk menemukan karakteristik budaya pop. Selain itu, peneliti hanya akan menggunakan episode pertama dari *Upin & Ipin* dan

dua episode dari Adit & Sopo Jarwo yang akan digunakan untuk menemukan nilai-nilai moral yang serupa. Metode yang digunakan dalam makalah ini adalah semiotika oleh Roland Barthes. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah bahwa kedua serial animasi tersebut merupakan produk budaya pop karena berkisah tentang kepuasan, kemudahan dalam memperoleh, keinginan untuk menyenangkan, dan cerminan dari masyarakat. Selibhnya, ditemukan ada dua nilai moral yang mirip yaitu tentang kepatuhan dan rasa syukur dalam kedua serial animasi tersebut. Kepatuhan bukan berarti bahwa mereka tidak takut pada orang yang lebih tua, melainkan karena rasa hormat terhadap yang lebih tua. Selain itu, bersyukur dalam berarti selalu melihat sisi positif meskipun akan ada saat-saat buruk di dalam kehidupan. Dengan demikian, nilai moral yang ada di kedua seri animasi mencerminkan budaya Indonesia.

Kata kunci: budaya populer, Upin & Ipin, Adit & Sopo Jarwo

INTRODUCTION

Popular culture is a cultural product that results from the happenings of society's lives. Forms of the products can be about society's leisure, education, food, lifestyle, travel (Wiana, 2013) music, art, fashion, literature, dance, television, and film (Crossman, 2019).

By definition, popular culture or pop culture is a cultural product that is enjoyed by middle-class people at a particular time. The product of popular culture is usually promoted through various forms of mass media (Dukut, 2018). The popularity of a particular product depends on how similar the product may be practiced by particular cultures, that a society can easily recognize the product and will accept that product more easily than a completely new product unrecognized by the society.

One kind of pop culture product that has a powerful impact on society is film. A film can deliver the values and beliefs of contemporary society (Cloete, 2017). In today's society where the use of digital media is at its peak, animated films are popularly enjoyed by many people. Ghani informs that films with animation is "a powerful medium for conveying complex ideas, dreams and emotions" (2015, p. 244), Films with animations are considered as a popular medium to promote the culture of certain countries (Febriyanti, 2018). Examples of popular film animations from different countries are as follows:

“Shiva, Super Bheem, and Little Krishna are from India; Upin Ipin, Pada Zaman Dahulu, and Boboiboy are from Malaysia; Pokemon, Naruto, and Doraemon are from Japan; Sofia the First, Spongebob Squarepants, and Sherif Callie Wild West are from America; Pororo the Little Penguin and Larva are from South Korea; Timmy Time and Shaun the Sheep are from the UK. While from Indonesia, there are Syamil and Dodo, Adit and Sopo Jarwo, Keluarga Somat, and Kiko (Febriyanti, 2018, p. 92).

In this article, the animated series *Upin & Ipin* from Malaysia and *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* from Indonesia will be discussed. The purpose of this study is to (1) analyze why the animated series are products of popular culture, and if it reflects the culture of a society the purpose is also to (2) find the similar cultural myth found in *Upin & Ipin* and *Adit & Sopo Jarwo*. The method to analyze is using the semiotic analysis theorized by Roland Barthes.

There are some previous similar research to mention. The first research is from Dianiya (2020) that studies the representation of social class in Parasite Film. He analyzed it using Roland Barthes's semiology to find out the denotation, connotation, and myth through several signs in the film. The second research is from Riwu & Pujiati (2018) that analyze 3 Dara films using Roland Barthes' semiotics. They describe the form of denotative, connotative, and myth in 3 Dara film. They examine the signs, signifier, and signified to get the denotative and connotative meaning. After acquiring the denotative and connotative meanings, they investigate the myth in the scene. Hence, in this research, Barthes' semiotics will also be employed to find the cultural myths shown in *Upin & Ipin* and *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* animated series.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Pop Culture

A culture is referred to popular culture when they are “well-liked by many people” and are set out “to win [the] favour” of the people who made the culture (Williams, as cited in Storey, 2009, p. 5). This definition is the same as Nachbar & Lause's who define pop culture as the product of human work and thought which is accepted by the public (as cited in Dukut, 2018).

To find out if a product is pop culture or not, there are some characteristics to fulfill. Dukut (2018, p. 13-17) asserts that pop culture is about satisfaction. It means that pop culture tries to make sure that people are satisfied with what they have obtained or bought. Second, pop culture is something that is easily obtained. People do not have to work hard to find pop culture products because they are made available in almost everywhere. What is found in big modern shops, may also be found in small shop vendors around someone's neighborhood. Third, pop culture is eager to please. Pop culture makes use of researchers to make sure the pop culture product is making people feel satisfied by owning the product. Fourth, pop culture promotions are manipulating. In this case, pop culture manipulates people to buy or use a particular product not because people need it, but because they have been influenced to want it. The reason for pop culture's efforts to influence people to purchase them is related to the fifth characteristic, that is the goal of making a profit.

B. Upin & Ipin

The film animation *Upin & Ipin* is produced by Les' Copaque Production which is firstly aired on TV9 in August 2007 (Djumala, 2018). It tells the life story of the twin brothers named Upin and Ipin who live in a Malaysian village with their grandmother and older sister. Upin and Ipin also live with their friends who come from different ethnic groups, such as Malays, Chinese, and Indians (Ghani, 2015). With their friends and neighbors, Upin & Ipin learn and explore new things in *Kampung Durian Runtuh*. The first episode of Upin & Ipin has the title *Esok Puasa*. It tells the story of when Opah, their grandmother, explains to Upin and Ipin why Muslim people must fast during the holy month.

C. Adit & Sopo Jarwo

Adit & Sopo Jarwo is an Indonesian animated series produced by MD animation in January 2014 and firstly aired on MNCTV (Febriyanti, 2018). In the series, Adit motivates his friends to become positive and virtuous. However, Adit and his friends always disagree with Sopo and Jarwo, the two adults. The animated series tells the story of Adit & Sopo Jarwo in Indonesia settings. The first episode entitled *Dompot Ayah Ketinggalan* tells the journey of how Adit and his friends gave the left wallet to his father.

D. Roland Barthes's Semiotics

Semiotics is the science on how human studies gives meaning. It is a method to analyze a sign so that a deeper information can be analyzed. Roland Barthes' semiotic consists of two stages. The first stage is to analyze the sign, signifier and signified. The sign is everything around us. From analyzing the signs, the signifier and signified can be examined. The signifier is the physical object, while signified is the mental concept or meaning transmitted by the signifier (Royani, 2014). In other words, the signified is the meaning. Studying closely the sign, signifier, and signified will lead to the denotative and connotative meaning.

Denotation is "a level of sign explaining the correlation between signifier and signified in which the sign produce the explicit, direct, and real meaning" (Saifuddin, 2018, p 97). Meanwhile, Nadira (2018) defines denotation as a meaning that is used commonly by society. While connotation is "a level of sign explaining the correlation between signifier and signified in which it is explained as an implicit, indirect, unreal meaning" (Saifuddin, 2018, p. 97). The connotation is the second order of signification to find the hidden meaning.

However, Barthes' semiotic does not stop at the first level but continues to the second level. In the second level, the first connotation will be the second denotation. The second denotation evolves into the second connotation. After that, when a sign has a denotation meaning then the denotation develops into connotation meaning, whereby that connotation will be a myth (Nadira, 2018). With Roland Barthes semiotics, the myth believed by society can be revealed in the second level of sign interpretation.

METHOD

To collect the data, the researchers used Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis. There are two sources of the data collection. The primary data are *Upin & Ipin* episode 1 from season 1 entitled *Esok Puasa* and *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* episode 1-2 from season 1 entitled *Dompot Ayah Ketinggalan* and *Dompot Ayah Masih Ketinggalan*. The secondary data is journal articles about *Upin & Ipin* and *Adit & Sopo Jarwo*.

A. Type of Research

This research makes use of a qualitative type. Qualitative research deals with data that will be described and analyzed. Moleong (as cited in Demanty, 2019) defines qualitative research as observing and understanding a phenomena in human's life from the researcher's point of view. This type of research is qualitative because, the research done has to analyze the data by using Roland Barthes' semiotic to find out what becomes the background of the moral values given by the myth revealed from those two chosen animated episodes.

B. Research Procedure

The following procedures was made to make the research valid:

1. Watching *Upin & Ipin* and *Adit & Sopo Jarwo*

The purpose of this step was to collect the data that were used in the paper. The researcher watched the first episode of the *Upin & Ipin* animated series and the first and second episode of *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* to find the moral values.

2. Reading some articles about popular culture and Barthes' semiotic theory

To make the data reliable, the researchers read some articles to help understand, analyze, and interpret the data.

3. Analyzing the sign, signifier, and signified in the animated series

Analyzing the sign, signifier, and signified data of the animated series with Roland Barthes semiotics helped the researchers find the denotative, connotative meanings and myth of the culture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Popular Culture Characteristics Found in *Upin & Ipin* and *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* Animated Series

Upin & Ipin and *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* animated cartoon films are products of popular culture. Based on the popular culture characteristics, three characteristics are fulfilled in *Upin & Ipin* and *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* animated series.

The first two characteristics of popular culture are satisfaction and ease to obtain. According to Salikha (2017), *Upin & Ipin* have been screened in 17 countries in Disney Channel Asia. In Indonesia, it is aired in *Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia*, which is now popularized as MNC TV. Thus, it is easy for Indonesian people to watch the series. Because of its popularity, LC Merchandising SDN BHD made many kinds of merchandises of *Upin & Ipin*. Even in 2013, *Upin & Ipin* have been chosen by UNICEF to be the national ambassadors for children. Besides, *Adit & Sopo Jarwo*, the Indonesian animated series, also got the number 1 rate in Indonesia (Assegaf, 2015). Because of the good rate, in 2021, *Adit & SopoJarwo* will be made into a movie in Disney+ Hotstar (Azasya, 2021). The same as *Upin & Ipin*, *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* animated series also have some merchandises made from them. Not only are there dolls, but also hats and T-Shirts that have their cartoon characters are available for buying. Mothers tend to buy them for their children, thus once sold out, industries would often reproduce them because they are enjoyed by the mass.

Another characteristic of popular culture is the eagerness to please. Popular culture wants to please people, so they always find ways to fould out what the current public likes to have. People are understood to want something not because they need it, but just to satisfy their impulsive wants. Deil (2013) says that *Upin & Ipin*'s videos are selling well in many countries. The profit from the videos is 355,4 million rupiahs. It becomes an evidence that many people are geared to like watching *Upin & Ipin* animated series until it gives profit to the producer.

The last characteristic of popular culture is in the animated series, the product is a reflection of a society's myth. Both *Upin & Ipin* and *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* animated series contain Indonesian culture. Even though *Upin & Ipin* originated from Malaysia, it has adopted some Indonesian cultures. For example, in one episode, Opah, Upin and Ipin's grandmother, are chewing betel leaves. These leaves are considered healthy for the teeth and contains natural anti-biotics, thus it is a traditional custom to do that whenever possible. Some of the episodes in *Upin & Ipin* also shows the myth of the Indonesian proverb of "*Berakit-rakit ke hulu, berenang-renang ke tepian; bersakit-sakit dahulu, bersenang-senang kemudian*" which means that it is customary for people to follow the society's values of working hard first before achieving happy, final outcome as the results of the achievements (Djumala, 2018). It is interesting to note that Upin and Ipin have many friends from different ethnicities. There are Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, and Malaysian ethnics. This adheres to the Indonesian

society that has many people from multiple islands with different ethnics, but they can be in unison by respecting everyone's differences. .

Interestingly, *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* represent the multiethnic life of the Indonesian culture. It can be seen from the description of the characters' origins. Although the characters live in the suburbs of Jakarta in Karet Berkah village, Jarwo is originally from Semarang, while Sopo comes from Brebes. . Other people from different ethnicities in Indonesia are also described. The characters are from the cultural background of Betawi, Java, Sunda, and Chinese (Febriyanti, 2018). The origin of the Ethnic origin is also represented in the characters' language dialects and their names, which are Adit, Sopo, Adel, Jarwo, and Denis.

B. Scenes Containing Values of Obedience in *Upin & Ipin* and *Adit & Sopo Jarwo*

The popularity of the animated film series is influenced also on the cultural values that contains moral teachings in *Upin & Ipin's* first animated episode entitled *Esok Puasa*. Here is the scene.



Figure 1:
Upin & Ipin (<https://youtu.be/GWMyRli1sss>)

From analyzing the scene, there are some signs that can be examined. The signs are evident in the twin brother's existence, who are playing marbles, in a farmyard with friends, underneath a dawning orange sky.

Table 1:
Moral Value 1 *Upin & Ipin*

Sign	Signifier	Signified
Twin brothers, playing marbles, farmyard, friends, orange sky, farmyard	The twin brothers are playing marbles in the farmyard with their friends	The twin brother named Upin and Ipin are using their yellow and blue singlet to play marbles with their friends who is the tall boy and the girl seen in the farmyard.

From the signs, the researchers then analyzed the signifier and signified. The signifier is the twin brothers playing marbles in the farmyard with their friends, whereas the signified is the twin brother named Upin and Ipin, who are using their yellow and blue singlets are playing marbles with their friends who are the tallboy and the girl in the farmyard. Thus, the analyzed signifier and signified can lead to a denotative and connotative meaning. The denotative meaning from the scene is Upin and Ipin playing with their friends. After that, they hear the mosque's azan, which makes them quickly run to go home when Kak Ros starts calling them. The scene is then focusing on Upin and Ipin instead of their friends, who looked at the color of the sky that implies that the sun will set very soon, which explains for why the two boys ran quickly to get home once hearing Kak Ros's call.



Figure 2:
Adit & Sopo Jarwo (<https://youtu.be/GCleyN06nqA>)

The connotative meaning can be examined from the conversation between Upin and Kak Ros. Upin and Ipin show their obedience to their older sister. This conclusion has become the second denotation. Meanwhile, the a discussion of *Adit & Sopo Jarwo*'s can be examined from the first episode entitled *Dompot Ayah Ketinggalan*. Picture 2 shows one of the cinematic scenes that contains a moral value.

Using Barthes semiotics, the sign, signifier and signified can be laid out like seen in Table 2, which confirms that the signs that are in the scene consists of a house, a boy, mother, little sister, and a bicycle.

Table 2:
Obedience Value in *Adit & Sopo Jarwo*

Sign	Signifier	Signified
A house, a boy, mother, little sister, bicycle	A boy is getting ready to ride his bicycle in front of his home. However, his mother calls him. The mother is carrying the little girl.	The boy named Adit is getting ready to ride his bicycle to meet his father because he wants to give the wallet to his father. However, his mother asks him to bring his little sister, Adel, because the mother wants to cook. Adit obeys his mother.

The signifier is a boy who is getting ready to ride his bicycle in front of his home. However, his mother calls him. The mother is carrying a little girl with her. The signified is the boy named Adit, who is getting ready to ride his bicycle to meet his father because he wants to give the wallet to his father. However, his mother asks him to bring his little sister, Adel, because the mother wants to cook. Adit, then obeys his mother.

Based on the signifier and signified, the denotative meaning is that Adit is getting ready with his bicycle to give the wallet to his father who has gone to work. Adit wanted to take the wallet to his father because his father unintentionally left it at home. However, his mother asks him to bring Adel with him because she needed to cook in the kitchen, thus cannot simultaneously look after his sister. Here, the connotative meaning is Adit, who shows his obedience to his mother, and has become the second denotative meaning.

Both scenes above from the animated series of Upin, Ipin, and Adit wants to show how the Eastern culture from Malaysia and Indonesia praise highly the value of younger people's obedience towards the older people. From this second denotative sign, the researchers then continue to find the second connotation. In this case, the second connotation is the children, who must obey older people. It is a cultural consensus that children obey their parents not because they are scared of their parents, but because they want to show respect their parents. For this reason, in *Upin & Ipin* animated series, Upin and Ipin quickly ran home because they know they must go home when the sunset of Maghreb time comes.

The several denotations and connotations above leads to some cultural myths. The first myth is in Asian culture, where people believe that children must not stay outside of the home at Maghreb time. Another myth is to never object Asian parents' wants, thus makes Adit also obeys his mother to directly bring with him his little sister. This obedience can actually be related to the Biblical story of God that has asked Adam & Eve to be obedient to receive rewards. In other words, Adit's obedience to following the myth of being good to his mother's instructions will allow him to receiving all the gift of life's goodness.

Adit's obedience is also followed by Upin and Ipin who also followed their older sister's instructions of going home before darkness comes. The twins believe if they obey their older sister to go home before the Maghreb, their sister will reward them with something good rather than be angry with them.

C. Gratefulness Value in *Upin & Ipin* and *Adit & Sopo Jarwo*

The second moral value of *Upin & Ipin* is from the first episode entitled *Esok Puasa*, which discusses about the importance of being grateful while fasting. From the scene shown in Picture 3, the signs received are twin brothers, grandmother, older sister, and dining room. The signifier is the twin brother, grandmother, and older sister who are eating in the dining room. In the scene, Opah is telling Upin and Ipin that they will start fasting the next day.

The first denotative interpretation is, therefore, about Upin, Ipin, Kak Ros, and Opah, who are eating in the dining room. When Opah tells Upin and Ipin that they will fast, Upin and Ipin responded by asking Opah why they must fast.



Figure 3:
Upin & Ipin (<https://youtu.be/GWMyRli1sss>)

When Opah explains the reason to them, the connotative interpretation received is how Opah tells Upin and Ipin to be grateful by fasting. The sign, signifier, and signified process of the above is laid out in Table 3 below:

Table 3:
Greatfulness Value in *Upin & Ipin*

Sign	Signifier	Signified
Twin brothers, grandmother, older sister, dining room	The twin brothers, grandmother, and older sister are eating in the dining room. They are talking to each other while eating.	They are eating in the dining room. Opah is telling Upin and Ipin that tomorrow they will fast.

The second episode of *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* entitled *Dompêt Ayah Masih Ketinggalan* also contains the value of gratefulness.



Figure 4:
Adit & Sopo Jarwo (<https://youtu.be/N38auFfURxY>)

From the scene in Picture 4 above, the signs are three children, a bicycle, two adults, and a small bridge. When put into the table categorized under sign, signifier, and signified it is found as follows:

Table 4:
Greatful Value in *Adit & Sopo Jarwo*

Sign	Signifier	Signified
Three children, bicycle, two adults, a small bridge	The three children are on the bicycle. The two adults try to chase them. Thus, the three children have to cross the small bridge. while eating.	The boys named Adit and Denis with a little girl named Adel are on the bicycle. Sopo and Jarwo are the adults who want to chase them. Adit, Denis, and Adel should cross the small bridge to arrive on the other side. In the end, they can cross it safely.

The signifier is the three children that are on the bicycle. The two adults try to chase them. Thus, the three children have to cross the small bridge. The signified is the boys' named Adit and Denis with a little girl named Adel that are on the bicycle. Sopo and Jarwo are the adults who want to chase them because the children are carrying a wallet that interest them to have. To get away from these adults, Adit, Denis, and Adel should cross the small bridge to arrive on the other side. Fortunately, in the end, they can cross it safely.

The scene that contains the first denotative meaning is when Adit, Denis, and Adel should cross the bridge to arrive on the other side. They have to avoid Sopo and Jarwo, who are thieves. Even though they are scared, they can arrive safely. The first connotative meaning of when Adit, Denis, and Adel should cross a very small bridge is to show how Denis is scared, but Adit tries to comfort him. After they successfully cross the bridge, Denis says, "Alhamdulillah, thank you, Dit, thank you." It shows that they are grateful for the chance of escaping the thieves.

Reading the data with Barthes' second level of interpretation, the second denotation from *Upin & Ipin's* scene is learning how to be grateful by fasting, whereas Denis in *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* is showing gratefulness for safely crossing the bridge. The second denotation leads to the second connotation which is people have to be thankful for any situation.

It can be interpreted that the first myth is: There are many ways to be grateful. One of the ways is by fasting. The fasting culture is mostly performed by the Muslim, who people believe that fasting reminds people to be thankful. When people are fasting, they will feel hungry and thirsty. From that, they will know how it feels to be poor and hungry, and thus appreciate and be grateful for having enough food and beverage. However, people are also reminded to be grateful in every situation, not only when fasting.

The second myth of being grateful is when we accept everything that we have in a particular situation. When we are thankful, we try to look at the positive side of our life. Even though there will be some bad times, grateful people will always see the bright side of their lives.

The interpretation from the myth related to the animated series in the fasting scene is Opah wants to remind Upin and Ipin to be grateful because they have food and drink to eat. Thus, if they must undergo a difficult situation one day, they will remember that they have done some good deeds before. Denis also showed his gratefulness when Adit and him can cross the bridge safely so that they can run away from Sopo and Jarwo. Even though it is simple, but Adit's gratefulness can remind him that if he takes the wrong decision to not cross the bridge, Sopo and Jarwo can eventually capture them and have the money in the wallet that should have been delivered to Adit's father.

CONCLUSION

The Malaysian *Upin & Ipin* and Indonesian *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* are examples of popular culture. Both of these animated series are products of popular culture because, as the animated series are easily obtained by having people turn on a TV channel or YouTube film that contains the two film series. They are popular culture products for the reason that they also provide satisfaction to the society that wanted to see the series, due to some parts of the stories that reflect their daily lives.

Reading the data using Barthes' semiotic, it is found that obedience and gratefulness are depicted cultural values of Indo-Melayu society that must be passed down to the next generation. First, the obedience of the older people is not because Upin, Ipin, and Adit are scared, but because they respect the older people. Moreover, ever since Biblical times God has asked Adam and Eve to be obedient to receive rewards. So, the characters in the series are shown to believe that they will get some rewards after showing their obedience. Second,

gratefulness means looking at the positive side of life even though there are some bad times. Upin, Ipin is showing their thankfulness by fasting, and Denis is showing his thankfulness after safely cross the bridge. Thus, *Upin & Ipin* and *Adit & Sopo Jarwo* have similar cultural values that are related to the Indonesian culture.

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