



Representation of *Junzi* and *Wen-Wu* as Confucian Hero in Character *Mei Changsu* on TV Drama *Langya Bang*

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Abstract

The Chinese television historical drama has attracted world attention. Langya Bang is a successful television drama serial that is considered a social media phenomenon. This research was conducted to explore the heroic aspects of Mei Changsu based on the concept of heroism according to the Confucian teaching. This qualitative descriptive research used John Fiske's television semiotics method that consisted of three levels: reality level, representation level and ideology level. The results show that at reality level analysis, looking from clothing, appearance, way of speaking, behavior, body movement, expression and environment codes, we can conclude that the protagonist Mei Changsu was represented as a warrior, a scholar and a prince, and can also be considered as a Junzi or a superhero figure with the concept of wen-wu who internalized the virtues in the Confucian teaching. At the representation level, the technical and conventional codes represent the five Confucian ethics are reflected through camera, lighting, music, and audio aspects and at ideology level we can conclude collectivism ideology and patriarchal leadership. Through a semiotic meaning study and the use of television code, we can understand that the television media Langya Bang is the medium to promote traditional Chinese culture and also indirect way to understand the Confucian teaching, in this case is about Confucian ideal of cultivating individual and responsible leader, who devoted to rules for the benefit of society. The representation of Confucianism in the storyline of Langya Bang is important in legalizing the unity of culture, that is Chinese culture.

Keywords: *confucian, representation, junzi, wen-wu, television semiotics.*

Paper type: *Research paper*

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INTRODUCTION

This research reviewed Chinese heroic values reflected in the television drama *Lang ya Bang* (Nirvana in Fire). *Langya Bang* is a drama of Chinese history produced in 2015 based on the book *Hai Yan Langya Bang*. This film tells a story of Lin Su (alias Mei Changsu) who returned to his hometown to seek for justice over the conspiracy that made him and his family deemed traitor, 12 years ago. This television drama was declared by the Peking University as “a new benchmark of Chinese historical TV drama”, also deemed to have successfully described Chinese traditional culture accurate, one of which was through clothing and etiquette (Ming xu, www.globaltimes.cn, 2015). The success of this drama can be seen from its rating on Douban (one of China’s most important film scoring sites) which reached 9.4/10, and 9/10 on IMDb (database information about movies, TV shows, home videos, and online streaming entertainment). *Langya Bang* brings high-quality visual experience for its audience in almost all aspect, such as traditional aesthetics especially costumes, history, storyline, cultural landscape, and music.

The heroic character shown in the television drama is used as a medium to improve moral education in China (Bandsuch n.d.), furthermore, researchers in social fields state that the popularity of television dramas is one of the factors for the rise of Confucius (Bell 2008; Zhu 2008). The concept of heroism is difficult to define and sometimes leads to debates because, among others, of different understanding depending on the social and culture, time and place where the hero is born (Allison and Goethals 2011), the experience or history of a country (Becker and Eagly 2004), and even the determination of who and how a person can be called hero (Franco, Blau, and Zimbardo 2011). As the result, the understanding of a hero is different for every culture (Walker, Frimer, and Dunlop 2010) and so are the heroic values that are the uniqueness of every culture (Wansink, Payne, and van Ittersum 2008). In general, we define hero as an individual who knows and does things for the community voluntarily regardless of the danger to himself, selflessly or not motivated by reward (Zimbardo 2007). The existence of risk makes heroism a different form of altruism (Franco et al. 2011). A hero means individual with important the character of virtuous values in daily life. One aspect that plays an important role in the conception of heroism is

value. There are various values deemed important in the community, one of which is the value of heroism. The concept of heroism can be defined different by every person. Every generation and every country have its own concept of heroism, and these values are instilled deeply in the cultures throughout the world.

Confucius and his teaching of philosophy play an important role in forming and creating the Chinese culture and spirit, and he is the symbol of Chinese culture. Confucianism teaches its followers how to pursue human ideal characters as individual and member of community. Confucius is a hero to the Chinese people (Stevenson and Stigler, 1992 in (Liu 2014) . The concept of hero in Confucian teaching is expressed with the term Junzi, referring to the concept of ideal man in Confucianism, an individual who internalizes and realizes the best moral values such as fortitude, courtesy, justice, love, and trust or as ‘a hero’ (Gaiimo 2020) and an ideal man or gentleman (Kresse 2018; Thu 2015). A Junzi is an individual who perform self-cultivation, for Confucius this is the highest level towards individual quality. Self-cultivation is the basis of anything and every human is required to be capable of self-cultivate to achieve his purpose of life. For the Chinese people who are influenced by Confucianism, the concept of heroism commonly refers to Confucian teaching.

An individual is deemed a Junzi when he is capable of applying the main values of virtue, that is Confucianism, covering the main virtues, including: rén (benevolence or humanness), yì (righteousness), lǐ (rite and ritual, courtesy), zhì (wisdom), xìn (honesty and trust), zhōng (loyalty), shù (reciprocity, altruism, and forgiveness), and xiào (filial piety). Benevolence reflects and integrates Chinese traditional values (Lam 2003; Romar 2002; Thompson 2010). Confucianism, as the core of East Asian ideological and cultural values is also stated to have significant influence on the East Asian leadership system (Chau-kiu and Chan Chi-fai 2005). The benevolence values are the important aspect in the moral system that is the basis to form a man of Junzi.

A hero gives services to the development of a nation and heroism is internalized until now. Studying the figure of a hero, various things may come to mind, such as a knight who defends righteousness in fantasy figures superhero, or heroes related to the context of struggle for independence, and even the identity as a hero is also given to those who have given big contribution to humanity since

their findings have implication for human life. This figure can, for example, be conveyed through story, thus the heroic values will become his reference in his future. The figure of hero is generally perceived as an individual capable of facing risky situations, and capable of taking action to help others. The seemingly different idea of main aspect of heroic values is the typicality of every culture (Wansink et al. 2008). Therefore, the concept of heroism belongs to them who have different background of history, struggle, and situation, and even the concept of heroism cannot only be owned by a nation or community, but also by an individual.

Franco, Blau and Zimbardo (Franco et al. 2011), in their paper entitled *Heroism: A conceptual analysis and differentiation between heroic action and altruism*, distinguish in detail the definition of heroic action with other value such as altruism (help others without motive or expecting reward). Scientific study on heroism is extensive and varies, including interpretation of heroism, that in some views is mentioned as a figure capable of fighting against evil and involved in war. "Heroism can be viewed as a highly moral behaviour which has been explained as a form of sensation seeking, altruism, citizenship and bravery and as a desirable adaptive response" (Harvey, Erdos, and Turnbull 2009). In the context of behavior, there is individual difference making certain people take heroic actions in facing big danger, thus this describes heroism further. Heroic values can be owned by anyone without exception.

In Chinese culture, in regard to the concept of heroism, besides related to the concept of humans with noble character or Junzi, hero related narrations are closely related to the concept of masculinity. Many heroic figures displayed on televisions or popular films are male. The concept of masculinity in Chinese culture is called wen-wu. This term is known as the Chinese traditional concept explaining a perfect man, as the highest leader, true hero and a man with achievement (Loui and Edwards 1994). The concept of Wen is described as smooth and fine characteristic that is closely related to the level of education achieved through structured academic examination. Wu, meanwhile, has the characteristics of physical power and prowess in martial arts (Loui and Edwards 1994). In short, the concept of Wen-wu is also known with the term scholar-soldier. These two concepts play an important role in the construction of masculinity in Chinese culture. We can say that the balance between the two

concepts represents the highest level of masculinity. This is usually clearly described in Chinese traditional novels, that the main figures commonly have personal quality as a warrior, scholar, and prince.

Initially, the word Junzi refers to noble family. Literally, Junzi means ‘Son of Ruler’, or son of king. Besides, the word Junzi means an individual that has achieved high moral and intellectual level. In other words, Junzi can be defined as a moralist or individual with noble character. From some literatures on Confucius’s idea of humans, there are records of three levels of humans, the first is shenren 聖人 the most ideal type of humans, and it is revealed by Confucius that this type is difficult to achieve. This type can be stated as holy or wise man. The second type of human is called Junzi, that is quite likely to be achieved, since to achieve the level of junzi needs some requirements from moral, intellectual and also physical perspectives so as to be useful to surrounding community. The last type of humans is called xiaoren or common human (Husin, 2014: 52-53). xiaoren(小人) or small person (xiao 小 means small and ren 人 means person) is translated differently as small, bad or inferior person.

Confucius carries the concept of Junzi as an idea of individual’s personality, about an agent with resource and power to contribute to the dynamics of community transformation. The term Junzi is used to refer to individual that has power and becomes an important part of a country. The concept of junzi 君子 is the combination of the definitions of governance, freedom and historical-social context existing in an individual. This is one of Confucius’s concerns, that is to reconstruct government as a moral institution of a community through his teaching. The term Junzi refers to an ideal male figure who can internalize and realize benevolence that is Confucius’s teaching, such as moral fortitude, courtesy, love to learn, sense of justice, and trust, or, in other words, superhero figure (Gaiimo 2020). Junzi 君子 is deemed as a reachable level of humans, that can be reached through moral education and practice process. Confucius states that in order to become a junzi, one needs to have 3 (three) things, namely ren (love) without motive, having wisdom without prejudice, and brave-fearless. According to Confucius, in order to become an ideal human (junzi), one must be excellent

immoral, physical and intellectual aspects (Khairiah 2014). Etymologically, the word jun 君 means ruler or master. During Confucius's period, China was not an integrated country, but consisted of many kingdoms/countries. Every region or country or kingdom leader is called jun. The wordzi 子, meanwhile, refers to son. Therefore, the actual meaning of the word junzi refers to son of a ruler or to a prince. In Confucian writings, this term does not only refer to a prince, but also minister or governmental official assigned to govern a state and becoming example for his environment (Thu 2015), an ideal figure whose value and wisdom influence the governance, and can even be viewed from region in a governmental city (Kresse 2018).

Over time, the term junzi is used to refer to anyone who practice Confucian teaching and develop himself into a better person, citizen and ruler or official, regardless of birth or wealth. The idea of ideal human or an ideal gentleman is a very important concept not only in Confucianism but also along the history of China. Confucianism is the source of morality and philosophy of Chinese politics. Although the process of becoming an ideal human is called a process of self-cultivation, but becoming a junzi is not deemed as self-achievement or personal task completion. Self-cultivation until the level of junzi aims at increasing community's social relationship and giving benefits to the prosperity of nation and country (Thu 2015). The main principle of a Junzi that is the core of self-cultivation is as follows: change better, sue oneself, act without motive, and correct mistake.

The Chinese also has the assumption that an ideal hero has a combination of qualities called wu (武) and wen (文). The term wu (武) refers to anything related to martial art or military ability as described as a warrior; while the term wen (文) refers to benevolence that is related to culture, literature and intellectual, that is later described as a scholar (Louie 2008). Louie also stated that the two terms can be understood as the representation of human body and mind. The figure of an ideal hero is a figure with the two qualities, even if wen is traditionally deemed more elite than wu (Louie 2008). Wu is the symbol of martial energy or desire or emotion such as heroic-macho in fighter or soldier, while wen represents masculine energy that tends to be literal, such as with royal

thinker or intellectual, calligraphers and poets. There was an era during the dynasty of Tiongkok Empire when the masculine wen and wu were placed at the same position, at the same height and the same value. This means that a poet at that time was deemed of the same level of masculinity with that of a soldier. As the times passes, however, the position of wu tends to dominate the ideal masculinity aspect that everyone needs to achieve. One example is a Panda in the film *Mulan* that is good at fighting.

Confucius is considered an individual with the concept of masculinity idealized by almost all Chinese people, that is having capability pursuant to the concept of wen-wu. Besides teaching the philosophy of science (wen) to his disciples, he also encourages them to develop and have martial art ability (Loui and Edwards 1994). Narrations related to the concept of heroism in the community are closely related to the concept of masculinity. Many heroic figures displayed on televisions or popular films are male. The concept of masculinity in Chinese culture is known as wen-wu. This term is known as the Chinese traditional concept describing a perfect man, the highest leader, true hero and a man with achievement (Loui and Edwards 1994). The concept Wen is described as a smooth and fine characteristic that is closely related to the level of education achieved through structured academic examination. Wu, meanwhile, has the characteristics of physical power and prowess in martial arts (Louie and Edward, 1994). In short, the concept of Wen-wu is also called scholar-soldier. These two concepts play an important role in the construction of masculinity in Chinese culture (Louie 2014).

Representation is the concept used in social definition meaning through the existing signifying system: dialog, writing, video, television drama, photography, and others. In short, representation is the production of meaning through language. The content or meaning of a television drama can be said capable of representing an existing reality since according to Fiske, representation refers to the process whose reality scene is conveyed in a communication, via words, sound or their combination (Fiske, 2004:282). Representation is an important practice that produces culture (Hall, 1997:25). Culture is a very extensive concept, regarding "sharing experience". An individual is said to be originated from the same culture if the humans there share the same experience,

share the same cultural codes, talk the same “language”, and share the same concept with each other. Hall (1997:15) also states that representation is the production of a concept of meaning in mind through language. This is the relationship between concept and language that describes object, person or even event into object, person or fictional event.

Based on the explanation, we can say that representation is the production of meaning through language as the medium. In representation process, the construction of an idea or opinion uses signs, which are then arranged into different languages, used to communicate with others. Representation means using language to say something meaningful or represent the meaningful world to others. In this research, the researcher assumes that the film *Langya Bang* has its own purpose and intention related to the message of communication conveyed through the film. Semiotics is a study of sign processes and meaning of a sign system, how meaning is built in medium text or a study of how sign of any type of work in the community that consumes meaning (Fiske 2004). There are three main mandatory elements in every study of meaning, namely sign, sign reference and sign user. Sign is something physical and can be perceived by humans; sign refers to something outside the sign itself; and depends on user’s introduction that it can be called sign (Fiske 2004). In semiotics (study of sign) there are two main concerns, namely: relationship between sign and the meaning and how a sign is combined into a code.

Fiske (2004) is known with his theory that discusses the codes used in television world (television codes). He states that the codes emerging or used in television program have relationship that creates meaning. This theory reveals that a reality does not necessarily appear, but is processed through imaging that is loaded with the audience’s reference, thus the same code will be perceived differently by different audience. The frequently appearing signs used in television program can be categorized into three levels (reality, representation, and ideology). In this research, there are three codes of reality level that draw the attention, namely the behavior, appearance, dress and expression of the main character Mei Changsu. This level analyzed elements such as character’s appearance, style, environment, how they act, what they say and even how Mei Changsu says it. These elements of reality are often easy to identify since the meaning related to each element has been determined by us, by the culture of

where we live in. Fiske emphasize this idea - that reality “has been coded, or more appropriately the only way we can feel and understand reality is through our cultural code.”

The second level is representation. The elements in the first level are signified technically. In written language, they are expressed in words, propositions, sentences, photos, captions, graphics and others. On television, meanwhile, representation level covers the work of camera, lighting, editing, music, and sound that later transmit representational codes, including narrative, conflict, character, action, dialog, and setting. The elements are transmitted into representational codes that insert, such as, how an object is described (character, narration, setting, dialog, and others). In this research, the study at the representation level was conducted on how Mei Changsu as the protagonist is described through the work of camera. The third level is ideology, that is the result of study from the reality level and representation level organized for social acceptance and relationship by the ideological codes, such as individualism, patriarchy, race, class, materialism, capitalism, and others.

Embedding Confucian values in television drama media has been the concern of several researchers, such as researching values and family relationships (Kang and Kim 2011); examines the Confucian values of collectivism and masculinity in the drama White Tower (Khiun 2011); and construction of the concept of heroism which concluded in the values of Confucius in Chinese television dramas (Li and Saskia Witteborn 2012). It is said that persistence to spread Confucius' ideas through television broadcasts in East Asia will continue into the next decade (Lai and Khiun 2020). That is feasible that the production of heroic figures aimed at enhancing moral education in China (Bandsuch n.d.; Tjaturrini et al. 2022) through Confucius' teachings will reach audiences outside of China.

Television drama Langya Bang has achieved international success as a Chinese cultural product, with viewer in Tanzania Africa (Tai, Eai, and Brief 2020), South Korea (2016), and Indonesia (2016). As one of the three television dramas with the most viewers, received public praise and good reputation in China between 2015 to 2018 (Mou 2020), and also being commented as “a new benchmark of Chinese historical TV drama” and came to the attention of many

Chinese researcher. There are about about 32 scientific articles in Chinese (Cheng 2018), focusing on communication (Fang and Xin 2017), literature (Luo 2017) and clothing culture (Ma 2018). But no one has studied Langya Bang as a medium for moral education, in this case examining the values of Confucius. It becomes interesting, considering that Chinese television dramas, especially costume dramas set in the dynastic era, have been at the forefront of articulating political and legal principles based on traditional Chinese culture that influenced Confucianism. Based on this idea, in this research, this research will explore the values of Confucius, through the study of the character of the main character, Mei Changsu. Through Fiske's system of searching for meaning at three levels (reality level, representative level, and ideological level) is used to find the implied meanings in the television drama Lang ya Bang. It would review the representation of "Confucian Hero" through the character Mei Changsu in television drama Lang ya Bang.

METHOD

This research was carried out using qualitative descriptive design with semiotics analysis unit. The researcher attempted to interpret the existing messages in the television drama Nirvana in Fire (Lang ya Bang) that represented heroic attitudes and behaviors. The Confucian Hero's representation in the television drama was searched through analysis on the protagonist Mei Changsu John Fiske's semiotics analysis technique in three aspects, namely reality, representation and ideology.

Research subject has important position (Arikunto 2006), which in this is the television drama Langya Bang the ones to be used as the instruments of research on the television drama of 54 episodes each with duration of 40-45 minutes, directed by Kong Seng and Li Xue and produced by Shandong film & television, with the unit of analysis is the main character Mei Changsu. The research objects (Sugiyono 2012) as the object or activity with certain variation that can be learned and from which conclusion be made, were the dialog and visual of the television drama Langya Bang.

The data used as the basis of this paper are primary data and secondary data. Primary data is obtained from observations of the object, in this case is all the content of the television drama Langya Bang. Especially in the form of

behavior, characters, costumes, setting, scenes, and dialogues performed by the main character Mei Changsu. The author will observe thoroughly in order to get an explanation of the meaning in accordance with Fiske's semiotic study. Secondary data was obtained from a book on the theory of communication semiotics, films, and media, and several sources obtained from the internet and writing journals which contain information related to Confucianism, concept of heroism, and Chinese culture.

The data analysis technique in this research was carried out by defining the objects, collecting texts, explaining texts, interpreting texts, explaining the cultural codes (Stokes 2003) in this is case concerning the concept of heroism according to Confucian teaching, generalizing, through making conclusion. Analysis of the data used is the analysis proposed by John Fiske. The steps in data analysis were divided into three stages, namely the reality stage, the representation stages, and the ideological stages, where there three stages will be described based on the author's interpretation of the true meaning behind the signs on television drama Lang ya Bang.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this discussion, the researcher tried to study the Confucian Hero representation in the television drama Langya Bang. In attempt to prove it, the researcher analyzed the visual narrative in the television drama Langya Bang as the object of study into three level of analysis unit, namely reality level, representation level, and ideology level. The discussion was focused on the protagonist Mei Changsu or Master Su Zhe or Lin Shu. Lin Shu was the protagonist's real name, Mei Changsu was the name in concealing his real identity Lin-Shu. The name Mei Changsu was used when he became the leader of Jiangzhou alliance-as a renowned reliable strategist. Jiang zhou alliance was an association of martial artists. This research would study the Confucian hero representation in the protagonist Mei Changsu.

Giaimo (2020) in his writing states that the term Junzi can be called 'superhero', while (Khairiah 2014) states that becoming a junzi (chun tzu or ideal human) requires one to excel morally, physically and intellectually, so as to benefits the community. Giaimo (2020) also states that if the term Junzi refers to

an ideal male figure who can internalize and realize virtue into Confucian teaching, including: rén (benevolence or humanness), yì (righteousness), lǐ (rite and ritual, courtesy), zhì (wisdom), xìn (honesty and trust), zhōng (loyalty), shù (reciprocity, altruism, and forgiveness), and xiào (filial piety) or, in other words, superhero figure (Lin Thu, 2015; Giaimo, 2020). Furthermore, Louie (2008:13) adds that an ideal heroic figure is a figure with two qualities wen and wu. Further, discussion on the Confucian Hero representation of the figure Mei Changsu would be carried out based on the concept of Confucian virtues, intellectual quality (wen), and physical quality (wu).

Reality Level Analysis

At reality level, Confucian ethics that influenced an individual to be Junzi with wen-wu qualities or a Confucian hero by the protagonist Mei Changsu were described in the appearance, way of speaking, behavioral, body movement, expression, and environmental aspects in the television drama *Langya Bang*.

Appearance Aspect

Based on appearance aspect, the protagonist Mei Changsu was represented as an individual with contrast between physical and spiritual appearances. Spiritually, Mei Changsu was represented as an individual with extreme intellectual proficiency, and by cognition he was very smart, as proven that he became the leader of martial art alliance Jiangzuo and ranked first in *Langya* (Episode 1). Physically, however, he had bad body condition (frequently getting ill, thin and fragile), caused by the toxin in the torment incident 12 years back.

Figure 1.

Mei Chang Su's appearance in some conditions



The appearance aspect from the clothing perspective (Figure 1), the television drama Langya Bang tried to display the Chinese way of dressing in the 6th century in the period of Liang Dynasty. The way of dressing mostly followed that of Wei, Jin, and Northern-Southern Dynasties (Ma 2018). The clothing model of this period greatly depended on user's background or status. Loose and elegant clothing was fashionable at that time; besides, jade accessories were an important aspect that also showed an individual's status, in this case the status as a scholar. Through his clothing, Mei Changsu was represented as a man in plain white with a flute on his hand, with his costume fairly plain (without any ornament), with good texture, and visible hem, white smooth-textured scarf on his neck. In addition, Mei Changsu also always wore a small crown made of white jade (as shown in Figure 1). Mei Changsu's hair accessories were jade crown and jade hair clip. Based on clothing style, Mei Changsu was of modest category, which means it was a very simple way of dressing, covering all parts of the body and not showing belly.

In episode 54, Mei Changsu released his attribute as a scholar by replacing his plain linen clothing with luxury jacket that could only be worn by senior warrior or general, symbolizing his return to battlefield as a soldier, descendant of Lin. From appearance perspective, Mei Changsu's costume was dominated by bone white color, and white coated with brown for external clothing and furry cloak. Mei Changsu's simple appearance shows simplicity. Mei Changsu's physical body appearance, meanwhile, was represented with heroic body of average category, that was the type of body with normal weight, normally not too slim or not too oversized. Besides representation through clothing, Mei Changsu's character as a scholar was represented through the use of writing tools, books and ideas and knowledge as the instrument to create strategy to achieve his purpose.

Way of Speaking Aspect

In the drama Lang ya Bang, Mei Changsu was displayed in a calm way of speaking, full of consideration, and authoritative over all people. This conformed

to the character he played, a scholar as well as a strategist. He was also represented as a figure with complex character and complicated emotion. As a figure with strong determination, he barely expressed his emotion, but patiently and diligently implemented his plan. In addition, as a strategist who worked in the fully intriguing world, Mei Changsu could plan a strategy carefully, analyze his opponent, background and so on, and even seek for their weaknesses. He patiently managed any conflict, kept calm and thinking clearly, since mere emotion would not give solution. In Confucian teaching, there is a term Tianxia or under the heaven, that is defined that the whole world is an integral part. There are two concepts, first the concept of Son of Heaven (天子) that means a leader, and an individual who serves as a leader, who is an individual who has accepted the fate of being a leader or Mandate of Heaven (天命).

Behavioral Aspect

The representation of Confucian virtues can be observed through the representation of Mei Changsu's behaviors. The representation of the concept of rén is friendliness in human relationship (Khairiah 2014), bearing the meaning of love. The concept of rén has two meanings, namely "special virtue" and "general virtue". For special virtue, he refers to good things for others, while for general virtue it means kindness, or moral perfection. The reflection of rén can be observed in Figure 2, in Episode 2 (Figure 1a), in Mei Changsu's behavior towards a little slave, Tingshen, his behavior as a lover towards Ni Huang (Figure 1b, Episode 11), his loving attitude towards Feng Liu with jokes and helping wiping food left on Feng Liu's mouth (Episode 34), Mei Chang Su's behavior when he met a ferocious, hairy and dirty man who was put into an iron cage, but Mei Changsu was not afraid, but even felt pity as he moved closer to the cage (Episode 45), and Mei Changsu gave an order to release the Daughter of Concubine Yu, immediately after her son, Prince Jing Huan, committed suicide. A female prisoner died because of the disease in her body, while she was moved to a safe outside the kingdom (Episode 46).

Figure 2.

Scene of Langya Bang : Representing the Concept of Ren

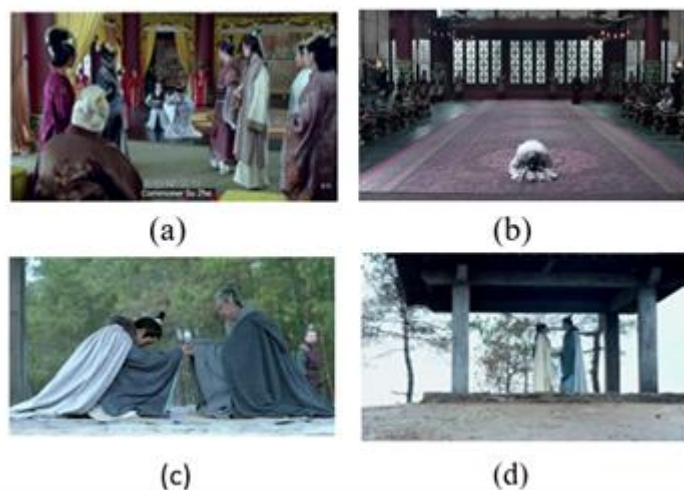


Furthermore, the virtuous value *yì* is an attitude of upholding righteousness, compatibility between words and actions (Yearley, 2003). Some researchers state that *yì* is related to good or bad moral actions and informing other of what to do in a condition (Cua, 2003). It is said that if we can distinguish what is correct and what is wrong, and align them with our attitude and behavior, justice will be created. Mei Changsu had the concept of *Yi* in him and aligned it with his attitude and behavior, as shown in the plot of story of his return to the kingdom territory, that was none other than to disclose the fact that had been covered up all this time. It was to disclose the fact in Lang ya Bang. From episode 1 to the last episode 54, Mei Changsu tried to disclose the fact of 70 thousand Chinyan troops led by his father getting massacred. He told how his body was nearly destroyed because of the toxin that was difficult to cure, and how he managed to return even if he had to be through excruciatingly painful treatment, making him totally physically changed and lose the martial art skill he was so proud of.

Further, reality level that represents the concept of *lǐ*. According to Confucianism, *lǐ* is a norm system norm covering anything (Hershock & Ames,

2006) where there is tradition, social habit, etiquette, courtesy, and rule of law. Schwartz (1985:67), meanwhile, states that *lǐ* is the ‘adhesive of all socio-political normative orders’ since it involves behavior towards others regarding an individual’s rank, status, and position in a hierarchically structured community order. In the TV drama *Langyaa Bang*, Mei Changsu was represented (Figure 3) as an individual who was guided by behavioral rule pursuant to the code of ethics of interaction between humans in accordance with his status, as a grandson (Episode 2), as a folk against his king (Episode 2), as a disciple against his teacher (Episode 12), as a man against his lover (Episode 12) and as a human against his late ancestors (Episode 53).

Figure 3.
Scenes representing the concept of Li



The next is at the reality level that shows the concept of *zhì*. The word *zhì* is translated into to know, understand and wisdom, that is one of the Confucian main virtues of a leader (superior person). *Zhì* is one of the important qualities a wise leader needs to have. Confucius states that an individual with *zhì* (either male or female) is an individual who is knowledgeable and free from doubt. From the behavioral perspective in Figure 4a, he arranges a strategy of how to free the three little children from the world of slavery by training them so that they would be capable of defeating The Bear. Meanwhile, Figure 4b shows how Mei Changsu felt that something was wrong with the Mandarin orange he received as small gift from Yujin. Mei Changsu’s wise attitude or *zhi* as shown in Figure 4a was when Mei Changsu was in a long thought and considered well of any possibilities, so as to find the best solution to any problems.

Figure 4.

Scene representing the concept of Zhi



The concept of *xìn* (honesty, righteousness, or loyalty) is the other main virtuous value in Confucianism that up holds honesty, expresses righteousness, and keeps promise. Honesty or loyalty is considered by Confucius as the basis in interpersonal communication and to regulate and manage community and state. The representation of *xìn* value refers to loyalty in the moral principles and social rules, such as towards superior, subordinate, friend, and business partner. The representation of the concept of *xìn* in Mei Changsu in reality can be observed in Figure 5, when Mei Changsu still used the name Lin Su, falling into the cliff immediately after he slipped off from his father's grip, and just before he fell off into the cliff he hears his father's words, that was to keep alive and defend Chinyan Clan's good name.

Figure 5.

Scene representing the concept of Xin



Zhōng and Shù are the virtuous values related to loyalty and reciprocity. These two virtues are the way to practice rén. Zhōng (loyalty, do the best an individual can do) represents the positive aspect of the implementation of rén. This virtuous value requires an individual to have conscience for others and always take others into consideration. The point is to do for others as what we wish to do for ourselves. Meanwhile, shù is the opposite aspect of zhōng, that is to suggest others to follow Confucian virtuous values, but never force anything that they even do not want to do. We can say that a true leader will let others keep their opinion despite the difference and never violate others' rights. A leader respects differences, embraces diversity and pluralism. Dictionaries usually translate Zhong into devotion, which means loyalty. The other understanding of Zhong that can be obtained from the television drama *Langya Bang* is regarding 'devotion' which has a deeper meaning than 'loyalty'. The concept of devotion Zhong was actually practiced by Mei Changsu, that he devoted himself for his country (by attempting to overthrow the emperor and replace him with Prince Jiang), devotion to family (by regaining Clan's good name), devotion to friends, lovers and especially oneself. The initial meaning of zhong, especially before the third century BC was about treating other correctly, 'being honest with oneself when dealing with others,' and 'completing case fairly' (Goldin 2008).

Xiào—Filial piety. Confucius states that xiào (filial piety) is the root of all virtues, thus it is deemed as the most important virtue. Xiào refers to respect for and obedience to living parents and late ancestors. Xiào is the initial point of rén in family relationship. The virtue of devotion to ancestors and parents was carried out by Mei Changsu that with determination he disclosed the truth behind the tragedy of the death of 70 thousand Chingyan soldiers led by his father who were massacred on Meiliang hills since they were accused of being rebel. In addition, devotion was also shown by Mei Changsu by clearing the name of Prince Qi (older brother of Prince Ji, his friend, and all of Lin Shu's family accused of conspiring with the Crown Prince (Prince Qi) and that they were the victims of vicious slander.

Figure 6.

Scene in Television Drama Lang ya Bang : Representing the figure Mei Changsu with his wen-wu characters.



At this reality analysis level, the figure Mei Changsu was represented as a warrior (a young Marshal exposed to deadly poison during the war, altering his face and body, including having his martial art skill lost), a scholar (he became the leader of Jiangzhou alliance and a reliable strategist) and also a nobleman (being close friend of Prince Jing, Mei Changsu was the son of a General). Figure 6 is the representation of figure Mei Changsu with his wen-wu characters. Based on the analysis on the reality level, the depiction of the Confucius Hero concept can be seen in Mei Changsu's character. A man with virtuous character or Junzi who is depicted in the figure of Mei Changsu who is simple in appearance but has the quality of thinking, and becomes someone who is used as a role model.

In addition, the concept of heroism is also closely related to the concept of Wen-Wu, namely this term is known as a traditional Chinese concept which

describes a perfect human being, as a supreme leader, a true hero, and an accomplished man (Louie 2014). Wen's concept describes concepts related to the soul, closely related to the level of education achieved through structured examination. While Wu has characteristics of physical strength or related to the body and especially in self-defense (Louie and Edward, 1994). The concept of Wen-wu, a part from being a mind-body concept, is also known as a warrior-scholar. These two concepts play an important role in the construction of masculinity in Chinese culture (Louie 2014). These two things are depicted in the figure of Mei Changsu who is described as having personal qualities as a warrior, scholar, and prince.

Representation Level Analysis

In this analysis, the researcher concludes that the existing technical and conventional codes in the television drama *Langya Bang* describing the five Confucian ethics were reflected through camera, lighting, music, and audio aspects. In the camera aspect, the representation of Confucian ethics was carried out by Mei Changsu as shown in the extreme long shots, long shot (ELS), medium long shot, two shot, medium shot, medium close up and close up shooting techniques.

The characteristics of shooting technique (Figure 7) are very distant, long, wide and dimension-wide. This ELS technique was used to show setting and temporal space setting in the scene of television drama *Langya Bang*. The camera technique was shown as how the setting and social setting were clearly visible on the mountain where Mei Changsu all the time recovered and the place where he acquired the capability as a strategist, a thinker and a scholar. The representation of kingdom city area, meanwhile, was the place where Mei Changsu was born and grew in as a member of the kingdom, and acquired his martial art training.

Figure 7.

Capture of Television Drama *Lang ya Bang* : Very distant, wide and dimension-wide representation



In the shooting technique for scenes that were centered on the protagonist Mei Changsu using medium shot, it showed Mei Changsu's upper half, and here the audience was engaged to just know the object by slightly representing the scene where the cameraman's direction was (Figure 8a).

Figure 8.
Some shooting techniques



(a)



(b)



(c)

The close-up shooting technique using emphasizes attracting the attention to some aspect of the figure (Figure 8b). In Figure (8c) there was emphasis on Mei Changsu's hands and face. The representation of hand and face has strong effect, causing emotional feeling since the audience only sees one point of interest. The audience was required to understand the object's condition, the representation technique emphasized on Mei Changsu's face that represented the emotional struggle he had. Further, the long shot shooting technique tried to engage the audience to watch all objects in its surroundings, introducing subject and his

activities based on the scope of surrounding setting. Besides, the shooting techniques of the television drama *Langya Bang* also used full shot technique aiming to show the interaction between the main subject and the other subjects, such as interaction between Mei Chang Su and Prince Lingyan.

Figure 9.

Indoor lighting technique



The lighting technique that represents indoor scene is artificial light where the light was made with hard light and high key and soft light effects to give an impression of soft light and low key and back light to create a night scene with little lights so as to support each of the figures' behaviors and expressions (Figure 9). The outdoor light was natural light using sunlight with key light and fill light techniques since each scene in the setting represented the scene of busy palace life, both inside and outside yang, and focused on the figures' expressions (Figure 10).

Figure 10.

Outdoor lighting technique



Meanwhile, in the music aspect, in the television drama *Langya Bang* some figures, besides becoming the main characters, also sang the theme songs of the drama, as Mei Changsu who was played by Hu Ge who sang the main song 夙

起时 "When the wind is blowing", Ni Huang who played as Mei Changsu's lover also played the song "Faded Beauty" (红颜旧)" and Prince Jiang who sang the song 赤血长殷 "The Blood of the Faithful is Eternally Red" (赤血长殷). The soundtrack of the television drama Langya Bang consisted of collaboration of traditional music instruments, such as flute that greatly supported the storyline, revealing each character's feeling. The beautifully collaborating songs and musicsuccessfully built a beautiful scene of drama, full of bitter life.

The analysis of the representation level is an act of presenting or presenting something through something other than itself, usually in the form of a sign or symbol (Amir 2010). Representations in television shows are related to technical codes, such as cameras, lighting, editing, music and sound, these elements are then transmitted into representational codes that can actualize reality in television shows. Based on the analysis of the level of representation, technical and conventional codes contained in the television drama Langya Bang, especially those that highlight the figure of Mei Changsu as a depiction of the figure of Confucius Hero. A figure who is close to the concept of a Junzi and has the quality of Wen-wu's masculinity, is shown through the aspects of the camera, lighting, music, and sound. In the camera aspect, the shooting techniques are extreme long shots, long shots (ELS), medium long shots, two shots, medium shots, medium close ups and close up shooting techniques.

Ideology Level Analysis

Through the representation of the reality and representation levels, the author can say that Mei Changsu was a figure of human who managed himself and became a Junzi (ideal human), since he had had advantages both in moral, physical, and intellectual fields, thus he could benefit the community, in this case Mei Changsu successfully disclosed the truth. Giaimo (2020) also states that the term Junzi refers to an ideal male figure who can internalize and realize virtues that are the Confucian teaching, such as moral fortitude, courtesy, love to learn, sense of justice, and trust, or, in other words, superhero figure (Giaimo 2020; Thu 2015) Giaimo, 2020). Besides described as an ideal hero, Mei Changsu was also represented as a character with two qualities wen and wu. The duality of wen-wu

qualities can be seen from his extreme mental sharpness and bad physical body. Based on this, the television drama *Langya Bang* talked about Chinese old philosophy, as revealed by Sunzi (544-496 BC) related to the Art of War, stating that physical power is not the determinant factor of victory since there is nothing in this world that is everlasting or constant forever.

The concept of heroism inherent in the character Mei Changsu as represented through an ideal human Junzi and the concept of masculinity Wen-wu was part of his role as a human who was related to other humans. The role of the Emperor in the television drama *Langya Bang* was represented as an individual who had betrayed the five special relationships in Confucianism that was the basis of social-community relationship (wulun principle), namely relationship of (1) King with minister, or superior with subordinate; (2) father with son; (3) husband with wife; (4) son with son; and (5) between friends. In Confucian view, government and the community will be at peace if every individual is willing to do self-introspection and correction from bad actions, arrange anything in fair proportion and act as per their respective ability.

Whoever able to behave as the five noble character and five virtues and able to have human relationship pursuant to the moral hierarchical principles (wulun principle, five norms of courtesy in the community regulating human relationship) moral guidance in Confucian teaching, he can become a Jun-zi. Related to all roles and all individuals in human relationship, there is one inherent moral obligation, that is the virtuous value Zhong (Loyalty). The whole storyline of the television drama *Langya Bang* talked about one of the Confucian concepts, namely Zhong.

Throughout the film, there were emphases on the concept of 'li' that was freely translated into 'courtesy'. However, the concept of 'Li' has more specific meaning in Confucian philosophy, since the principle of respect and courtesy is hierarchical. This means that a child must abide by and take care of his parents (filial piety), an individual must obey the emperor (and his sons), and a wife must obey her husband and her oldest son after he gets to adulthood. Therefore, Mei Changsu along his life worked for Zhong and even when he manipulated his superior through his strategy, he often used the practice determined by 'Li'. He used the hatred of those persecuted by government officials to implement his plan—instead of organizing them to protest or create commotion, but Mei

Changsu made them the actor on stage that he had made to create the result he desired.

The concept of Zhong and Li give a representation of rule about human relationship in Confucian teaching that is the basis of social-community relationship that has effect on the state and governance as the reflection of Chinese social system. Chinese people have since old times had a social system that emphasizes respect for those older and taking care of those younger. The core of this system is that the community must prioritize family, family must prioritize clan and clan must prioritize state and the whole nation. We can say that a community has higher value than an individual. Chinese community believes that community is the most important thing, and group is a unit of community, thus individual should be subject to public interest, as in line with the collectivism ideology. Confucianism considers state and family as a unity called *Guó Jiā* that states that family is the microcosmic state, while state is the extension of family). In the concept of “state-family” the relationship of ruler with the folk is like that of a father and his children. Xiao (filial piety) and Zhong (loyalty) play an important role in maintaining and balancing various social relationships between parents and children, and ruler and subordinates. In a community with close bond, the rulers act like parents who keep the welfare of his subordinates, forgives their mistakes and helps improve their virtue, while in return, subordinates must show obedience and promise of loyalty to ruler.

Besides the collectivism ideology, the character Mei Changsu also represented a paternalistic leadership style, that was a leadership style typical to East Asia with a nuance of special Eastern culture. Confucianism as the core of ideological and cultural values of East Asia significantly affects East Asian leadership style). The paternalistic, bureaucratic, and authoritarian leadership approaches are rooted from the Confucian values, especially *li* (rites and rituals, rules of propriety), *zhong* (loyalty), and *xiao* (filial piety). The core of obedience *li*, *zhong*, and *xiao* is the effort to apply the Confucian ideology in respecting authority and accepting hierarchy that is the basis of leadership.

Each code in these three stages of analysis carries a positive meaning, builds and inspires, supported by data that is strengthened through impressions or narration. The television drama *Langya Bang* provides inspiration from various

sides. The first is the figure of Mei Changsu who approaches the primacy of Confucius' teachings, which is to encourage the creation of a balanced and harmonious society through human relations according to their position. The emphasis on the balance of human relationships can be seen from the character Ren which means love is a symbol that means two people, stating that virtue can be found through interaction between two people. Through self-cultivation, anyone can reach the Junzi level. Self-development which is the fundamental goal of Confucianism is a tool to achieve collective goals or community goals. Here we can see that Confucianism carries the ideology of collectivism and is group-oriented but is also very concerned with the individual.

CONCLUSION

Based on the reality level analysis, in the clothing, appearance, way of speaking, behavior, body movement, expression and environment codes, we can conclude that the protagonist Mei Changsu was represented as a warrior, a scholar and a prince, and can also be considered as a Junzi or a superhero figure who internalized and realized the virtues in the Confucian teaching, such as: rén, yì, lǐ, zhì, xìn, zhōng, shù and xiào and had two qualities: intellectual (wen), and physical (wu) qualities. On the representation analysis, the researcher concludes that the technical and conventional codes in the television drama *Langya Bang* that represents the five Confucian ethics are reflected through camera, lighting, music, and audio aspects. In camera aspect, the representation of Confucian ethics was carried out by Mei Changsu as shown with the extreme long shots, long shot (ELS), medium long shot, two shot, medium shot, medium close up and close up shooting techniques. In the music aspect, there were some songs as the soundtracks, such as "When the wind is blowing", "Faded Beauty" and "The Blood of the Faithful is Eternally Red". These soundtracks were also equipped with traditional music instruments such as flute which supported the storyline, revealing what each character revealed from their feeling. Based on the ideology level analysis, the TV drama *Langya Bang*, the character Mei Chang Su was represented strongly in practicing virtuous values Zhong, Li, and Xiao. The three virtues gave a representation of the rules of human relationship in Confucian

teaching that was the basis of social-community relationship that affected the state and governance as the reflection of Chinese social system. Chinese community believes that the community is the most important, and group is a unit of community, thus individual should be subject to public interest, as in line with the collectivism ideology. Besides the collectivism ideology, the character Mei Changsu also represented a paternalistic leadership style, which is a leadership style typical to East Asia with a typical nuance of Eastern culture. Human with noble character junzi, according to Confucianism, is an individual who has conducted self-cultivation, before he can do his tasks of regulating family and state. The concept of heroism in the Langya Bang was not only framed with Confucian junzi, but also the ideal frame wen-wu. The concept of Wen-wu was used to evaluate the concept of heroism in film, since a hero is required to have extraordinary achievement in the two concepts. This is considered important, since this film tried to represent not only the unity of China through Confucianism, considering that Confucianism was not only the ideology of China in almost all of its dynasties, but had become guidelines in their social-cultural life. The representation of Confucianism in the storyline of Langya Bang is important in legalizing the unity of culture, that is Chinese culture. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher suggests that further study is research on audience perceptions of the presence of Chinese popular culture presented through entertainment media, how does the influence of audiences on understanding perceptions and views of the Chinese nation after watching entertainment media originating from China. Especially for the Indonesian people, it will be interesting to study considering that the Indonesian people have a number of negative perceptions towards China.

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