

POLITICAL MARRIAGE REFLECTED IN MIQUEL SAPOCHNIK'S *HOUSE OF THE DRAGON* (2022)

Irfin Najih, Muhamad¹; Widiyanti, Ana²

^{1,2}Universitas Sains Al-Qur'an

¹hadesbabi@gmail.com; ²anawidiyanti@unsiq.ac.id

Abstract

This descriptive qualitative research aims to examine how *The House of Dragon* Movie represent complex issues in political marriage practice. By using sociological theory and close textual analysis, this research examines how the movie presents political practice and how the effect of patriarchal system in political marriage over women's life. The film is indeed portrayed the condition of people, especially the ones who belong to high classes or powerful society in confronting political marriage. The research finding shows that political marriage is a common practice in classical era, especially in royal or high classes family, to secure their belonging, status, or power. The others finding are: 1) political marriage is usually set since the children of royal family or high classes society are still child; 2) patriarchal system often become the most influence to make political marriage practice happen; 3) political marriage under the effect of patriarchal system brings hardship for women in many aspects of life.

Keywords: Political Marriage, Patriarchal System, Sociology of Literature

Introduction

For modern people, film is not just something to intertain, but it also consider as a tool to educate people, to express ideas, to convey messages, ecetera. According to Wright and Charles (2011) film has a function that is divided into four, namely as entertainment tool, source of information, educational tool, and as a reflection of the socio-cultural values of a nation. Departing from the fourth function, along with the times and the evolution of the film industry, many films are made by exploring storylines based on social conditions or social phenomenon.

One of the social phenomena which is presented in some movies is political marriage. The practice of political marriage was very popular

since classical era until now. It happens everywhere, and usually conducted by powerful or high classes society. Political marriage is the concept of a strategic union between two individuals or families for political or economic gain, often without romantic love or emotional attachment. This phenomenon has been longstanding throughout history, especially among kings and the ruling class, where marriage was used to secure alliances, expand territories, and strengthen political positions (Singh, 2019). Muhammed, J.A., & Jacob, F. (2021) argue that marriage is often related to a romanticized image of love, since it is considered as the final union of two lovers or as the highest phase of a love relationship. But, on the other hand, very often marriage is prejudicial for women and represents a form of patriarchic exploitation.

The essential thing about marriage is that it is a stable relationship in which a man and women are socially permitted, without loss of standing in the community to have children. Marriage is a social union or a legal contract between people that creates kinship. The institution of marriage in which interpersonal relationship; generally intimate and physical are acknowledged in a different of ways depending on the culture or subculture in which it is found, and it is durable connection between male and female (Westermarck, 1921).

The reason behind every marriage is vary. Some people consider marriage as a legality of children, as emotional support, as economic goal, or as spiritual and religious propose. (Pokhrel, S., 2022). In ancient times, especially in continental Europe, the practice of political marriage was prevalent, where kings or the royal family will marry into other royal families to secure the nation's peace, protect their interests, and expand territories. While these political marriages can bring various benefits, they also come with risks and challenges, including issues of compatibility, royalty and potential conflict if alliances falter or interests diverge.

In accordance with the phenomena mention above, the researcher found a series in which the similar theme was raised. The title of the series is *House of the Dragon*. The series is a prequel to the HBO series *Game of Thrones* and the second entry in the George R. R. Martin and Ryan Condal-created franchise. The book *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R.R. Martin serve as the basis for both television shows. The showrunners were Miguel Sapohnik and Ryan Condal. The series which

is based on the novel *Fire & Blood*, takes place about 200 years before the events of *Game of Thrones*, 172 years before Daenerys Targaryen's birth, and 100 years after the Targaryen Conquest brought the *Seven Kingdoms* together. This tale recounts the events leading up to the Targaryen dynasty's demise, which included the battle of the Targaryen line, referred to as the *Dance of the Dragons*.

House of the Dragon is an interesting movie with its complex social issues in its story. One of the issues represented in the movie is about political marriage, thus, the researcher wants to examine how political marriage practice in patriarchal society and the impact of the practice toward the couple's life represented through the elements of the movie.

Literary Review

Cinematic Sociology

Durkheim defines sociology as the study of social facts, which include ways of thinking, acting, and feeling that are outside the individual but have a binding force. According to him, sociology must study social structures and norms that shape social life (Durkheim, 1982). The study of sociology no longer limited only to learn real life phenomenon, but also to examine the social phenomena represented in literary works and film.

Cinema, similar to sociology, is regularly expanding the 'visible zone,' making the invisible visible, making the unimaginable imaginable. While the film takes on this task with the help of the 'camera,' sociology creates a whole range of 'theories' and 'empirical methods' - interviews, participant observations, etc. - to address social reality and thereby transcend the boundaries of what was considered reasonable until then. Thus, much of what we know about the society we live in, we know from the films and the 'second life' they offer us on screen. Denzin, N. K. (1995).

Sutherland and Feltey (2013) in their book entitled *Cinematic Sociology* argue that each academic discipline offers its own unique lens for analysing film. For example, a film course in anthropology probably includes ethnographic films to explore and understand different cultures. Film in classical era can serve as historical documents, revealing the cultural context of specific time periods. Documentary movie often

reflects anthropological interests by presenting the customs and practice of various societies. A history course focused on film would likely examine movies considered historically important, raising questions about their authenticity, accuracy, and historical interpretation. In film studies classes tend to emphasize the elements of production techniques. Meanwhile, in mass media and cultural studies departments, often explore how cultural and social power operate within films and the film industry which frequently unchallenged as social disseminators of cultural ideas. In addition, Sutherland and Feltey explain deeper about the relationship between cinematic form with cinematic content. They believe that sociological perspective draw from these traditional. Sociologist can use film to better understand the society in which people life. The core of any sociological curriculum revolves around four interrelated themes, namely identity, interaction, inequality, and institutions. Sociologist can use film as social texts to explore these core themes.

Film speak to us, exposing us to the ideas of writers, actors, and directors who use various techniques to explain, explore, or exploit our experiences. Applying the sociological imagination to film involves awareness of the economic, political, and social forces at the point in history when a particular film or set of films is produced. This is one of the strengths of film as a pedagogical tool.

Political Marriage

Geary considers political marriage as an evolutionary strategy used to strengthen social ties and alliances between groups. Political marriages help ensure offspring and strengthen power relations (Geary, 2010). Weber sees political marriage as part of a broader social structure that affects the distribution of power and resources in society. According to him, political marriage is one way to achieve economic and political goals (Weber Max, 1978). Political marriage has a variety of purposes and functions that have been studied by experts in various disciplines, including history, sociology, and anthropology.

Geary (2010) also examines the strategic role of political marriage in politics and diplomacy. He emphasizes that political marriages are driven not only by personal factors but also by political, economic, and

power dynamics involving different political entities or factions. Political marriage often comes with some purposes, such as:

1. **Securing Political Alliances**
Political marriages are often used to build and maintain alliances between elite groups or kingdoms. These marriages help secure political and military support from the other side (Gillis & John R., 1985).
2. **Expanding Power and Territory**
Political marriage is used as a tool to expand power and territory. By marrying off family members to other influential families, a kingdom or group can expand its influence (Goody & Jack, 1983).
3. **Establishing Peace and Ending Conflict**
Political marriages are often used to establish peace between two conflicting parties. These marriages aim to end hostilities and ensure political stability (Geary, David C, 2010). Weber & Max (1978) saw political marriage as a way to stabilize power in the social structure. These marriages help in maintaining power and securing social position in society.

Patriarchy and Patriarchal System Practices

Kate developed the idea of patriarchy as a system where men hold dominance across social, political, and cultural spheres (Millet, 1970). Another perspective on patriarchy comes from Walby, who describes it as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women. She identifies six key patriarchal structures: the household mode of production, paid work, the state, male violence, sexuality, and culture (Sylvia Walby, 1989). Historically, social scientists like Weber (1947) have used the term patriarchy to describe a form of governance where men lead society by holding authority within the household. Gilligan and Snider 5) defines patriarchy as a crude, mysterious, and powerfull force that can construct women into something that is seen as improper and shemfull in the eyes of the world. Millett (1970) examines how patriarchy functions as a system that sustains male dominance over women. She outlines various patriarchal practices, such as controlling sexuality, enforcing gender roles, regulating reproduction, employing violence, imposing heteronormative norms, and influencing cultural representation. These practices

reinforce power structures that elevate men to dominant roles while relegating women to subordinate ones.

Methods

The researcher uses qualitative methods as a research instrument. Qualitative methods are used by exploring phenomena which illustrate and explain the political marriage in the *House of the Dragon* (2022) series by Miguel Sapochnik. The object of this research is the series *House of the Dragon* (2022) by Miguel Sapochnik which was released on August 21, 2022 by HBO in the USA. This series consists of 10 episodes, with each episode lasting approximately 60 minutes. The method of collecting data in this research is by doing observation. The procedures are watching the movie and reading the scripts, identifying the data from the scripts and subtitles, and selecting the data. After the data are collected, the next step is analyzing data by following: Displaying the data, explaining data, and interpreting data.

Findings and Discussions

Political Marriage Represented in the House of the Dragon (2022)

As it has been mentioned before, political marriage is not something new, especially in classical era. Political marriage often considers as one of the strategic ways in gaining power, or status. In *House of the Dragon* Movie, this practice represented in various ways through the characters' action and the story line of the movie. The most significant evidence of political marriage practice presented through the marriage arrangement for the children. In numerous cultures, arranging marriages for children from an early age is a common practice. Families with substantial political or economic interests often set up these marriages to ensure long-term alliances. This idea is depicted in the following scene of the series *House of the Dragon* (2022):

King Viserys : "You will wed Ser Leanor Velaryon, and
you will do so without protest"

(*House of the Dragon*, 2022. Eps: 4, 0:50:00 – 0: 55: 00)

The above quotation is an utterance of King Viserys to her daughter Rhaenyra. He summoned Rhaenyra to his chambers, and he delivers a

degree. His daughter must marry Ser Leanor Velaryon, while he himself will marry Lady Leane Velaryon. This is an exchange marriage arranged to secure both parties. From the King's word, it can be seen that children of royal families, especially the daughter, should get married based on her parents' wish to. They have no reason or right to refuse the order unless they wish for punishment.

The following utterance of King Viserys also represents political marriage practice:

Lady Laena : Your Grace, it would be great honor to
Valeyrion join our houses as they were in Old
Valyria. I would give you many children
of pure Valyrian blood so that we might
strengthen the royal line and the realm,
King Viserys : Is that what your father told you to say?
Targaryen What did your mother tell you?
Lady Laena : That I wouldn't have to bed you until I
Velaryon turned fourteen.
(House of the Dragon, 2022, eps: 2, 0:21:22- 0:21:50)

The above quotation expresses the conversation between King Viserys Targaryen and Lady Laena Velaryon. In the quotation above Lady Laena Velaryon suggests that their marriage would uphold ancient Valyrian traditions by uniting their noble families. She pledged to bear many children of pure Valyrian descent to fortify the royal bloodline and ensure stability within the kingdom. This illustrates how political marriages are orchestrated to secure and reinforce both the political position and lineage of noble houses. The word "*That I wouldn't have to bed you until I turned fourteen*" said by Lady Laena Velaryon is the evidence that it is a common tradition for the royal families to set marriage for their children, especially their daughter since early age.

King Viserys inquired whether Lady Laena's words were influenced by her father, highlighting that this union encompasses not only familial unity but also broader political and strategic considerations. This reflects the pragmatic approach often taken in political marriages. The discussion regarding Lady Laena's readiness to consummate the marriage with King Viserys touches upon the cultural and traditional

context surrounding political unions, including matters of intimacy and inheritance within a patriarchal framework. While this conversation highlights the structured and cultural control inherent in political marriages, it also portrays how women are frequently seen as instruments in a political strategy orchestrated by men.

Political marriages are carried out not without reason, for the powerful or high class society, political marriage consider as something beneficial for both party. Political marriages are often used to build and maintain alliances between elite groups or kingdoms. These marriages help secure political and military support from the other side (Gillis and John R., 1985). This idea depicted in the following scene:

- Rhaenyra : "I know that whatever agreement...will not change your appetite, nor will it change mine."
Leonor : " We made an arrangement all those years ago to do our duty and yet explore happiness. But there are times when these thins cannor mutually exist."
Leonor : "I recommit myself to you and to strengthening our house as we prepare you for your ascension."

(House of the Dragon, 2022. Eps:5, 0:35:00 – 0:45:00)

The above conversation occur when Lady Rhenyra and Ser Leonor walk in the beach. From their conversation, especially the word uttered by Ser Leonor, "*I recommit myself to you and to strengthening our house as we prepare you for your ascension.*" can be seen as an evidence that one of political marriage purposes is to maintain or build alliances between elite groups or kingdoms.

Another evidence of political marriage shows in the following quotation:

- Lord Corlys : "This eludes a storm you can either
Velaryon sail into it or around it. But you must never await its coming."

King Viserys : "Do you have a specific course of
Targaryen action to propose...., my Lord?"
Lord Corlys : "Join our families. Wed our daughter,
Velaryon Laena. Unite the two great surviving
Valyrian houses. With Targaryen
dragons and the Velaryon fleet bound
in blood you can show the realm that
the crown's strongest days are ahead
not behind."

King Viserys : "I must admit...I haven't given
Targaryen marriage much thought. It hasn't
even been half a year since Aemma
passed."

Princess : "The realm expects you to take a new
Rhaenys wife soon of late, Your Grace. To
Targaryen strengthen your line and produce
more heirs. You could not ask for a
strongest match than Laena."

(House of the Dragon, 2022, Episode 2, 0:15:05 - 0:15:58)

The above quotation shows a conversation between Lord Corlys Velaryon, King Viserys Targaryen and his Princess Rhaenys Targaryen. The three of them talking about the prospect of conducting political marriage between the two alliances for the shake of their kingdom's sustainability and stability. This is proven by Lord Corlys' proposal to King Viserys, *"Join our families. Wed our daughter, Laena. Unite the two great surviving Valyrian houses. With Targaryen dragons and the Velaryon fleet bound in blood you can show the realm that the crown's strongest days are ahead not behind."*

Lord Corlys Velaryon proposed a marriage between his daughter, Laena, and King Viserys Targaryen to unite two powerful Valyrian noble families. The goal was to strengthen their political power by merging the Targaryen dragons and the Velaryon fleet through blood ties, demonstrating to the kingdom that the future of their power was promising. Despite King Viserys still grieving the loss of his wife, Aemma, Lord Corlys and Princess Rhaenys emphasized the importance of considering a new marriage soon. They stressed that this decision wasn't

solely personal but crucial for the stability and continuity of the Targaryen dynasty.

Princess Rhaenys underscored the public's expectation for King Viserys to remarry to fortify the bloodline and produce more heirs. Marrying Laena was seen as a robust and strategic alliance benefiting the political and hereditary interests of the kingdom. This proposed marriage exemplifies the practice of political marriages where alliances between noble families are formed to enhance their political, military, or economic influence. In this instance, the union between the Targaryen's and Velaryon aimed to bolster the kingdom's overall position.

The Impact of Patriarchal System over Women in Political Marriage presented in the House of the Dragon (2022).

Patriarchal system and classical era are like two perfect combos. Patriarchal system that put men over power and put women as the subordinate individual often bring bad effect to women life. In addition, the impact of patriarchal system in political marriage level up toxic relationship to the couple. As a result, women as the wife mostly impacted both physically and mentally.

In *House of the Dragon* movie, the impact of patriarchal system over women in political marriage represented through the characters conversation or statement as follows:

Queen Aryyn	Aemma	:	You will lie in this bed soon enough, Rhaenyra. This discomfort is how we serve the realm
Princess Targaryen	Rhaenyra	:	I'd rather serve as a knight and ride to battle and glory.
Queen Aryyn	Aemma	:	We have royal wombs, you and I. The childbed is our battlefield. We must learn to face it with a stiff lip.

(*House of the Dragon*, 2022, Episode 1, 00:06:35-00:06:58)

The conversation above highlights the influence of the patriarchal system on women's roles and expectations in *House of the Dragon*. Patriarchy significantly impacts women, particularly through the often-

toxic nature of political marriages. Queen Aemma's remark, "the childbed is our battlefield," indicates that royal women are expected to bear children as a demonstration of their loyalty to the kingdom. This reflects a patriarchal view where a woman's worth is largely determined by her ability to produce heirs.

Queen Aemma's comments that "this discomfort is how we serve the realm" underscores the expectation for women to endure pain and discomfort for political and dynastic purposes. This showcases the sacrifices women are expected to make, often disregarding their personal desires or well-being. Rhaenyra expresses her wish to become a knight and seek glory in battle. However, Aemma's response highlights that such opportunities are not available to women within this patriarchal framework. Women's aspirations and desires are frequently restricted by traditional gender roles imposed by a patriarchal society

Another quotation showing the impact of patriarchal system in political marriage is presented below:

- Daemon : "Marriage is only a political arrangement. Once you are wed, you can do as you like."
Rhaenyra : "For men, marriage might be a political arrangement. For women, it is like to be a death sentence...my mother was made to produce heirs until it killed her. I won't subject myself to the same fate."

(House of Dragon, 2022. Eps. 4, 0:30:00 – 0:40:00)

The above quotation occurs between Daemon and Princess Rhaenyra while they walked through the city in disguise in the night on the Street of Silk. From Princess Rhaenyra's word, the viewers are shown the psychological condition of a woman who is entering political marriage situation. Woman will potentially experience fear, shock, or anxiety in confronting political marriage.

The following quotation also another evidence of the patriarchal system's impact over women in political marriage:

Princess Rhaenyra : "If I were born a man, I could bed whomever I wanted. I could father a dozen bastards, and no one would blink an eye."
 King Viserys : "You are right...but you were born a woman."
 Princess Rhaenyra : "So, you'll step me of my titles and name Aegon in my stead."
 King Viserys : "I would. But it is mine to hold the realm together, not show it with further division. Your courtship is at an end. You will wed Ser Leonor Velaryon, and you will do so without protest."

(House of Dragon, 2022. Eps: 4, 0:50:00 – 0:55:00)

The impact of patriarchal system toward women is mostly psychological. It happens because in patriarchal system, women have been constructed to be the others, to be someone submissive that almost all the decision in their life are decided by their father, their big brother, or by the men around them. This situation will influence the way a woman behaves, thinks, and decides something. A woman who lives in patriarchal system often experience inner psychological conflict. Princess Rhaenyra's words, "*If I were born a man, I could bed whomever I wanted. I could father a dozen bastards, and no one would blink an eye.*" In the above quotation reflect the imbalance power of men and reflect the position of woman in patriarchal system.

Besides not being able to decide important thing such as marriage for themselves, women also often have to budge for a greater interest. This situation represented in the bellow quotation:

Ser Leonor : "You did not choose me. He chose for you."
 Princess Rhaenyra : "That's True."
 Ser Leonor : "If there were another path, one that led to freedom, would you tread it?"
 Princess Rhaenyra : "I am the crown, Ser Christon...Or I will be."

(House of Dragon, 2022. Eps. 5. 00:35:00 – 00:45:00)

The above quotation shows the conversation between Ser Leonor and Princess Rhaenyra. They share a private moment just before their public ceremony. From the answer of Princess Rhaenyra in the last line, it can be seen that sometimes a woman should surrender her feeling or interest for the sake of another bigger interest, such as in the name of public or social necessity.

Patriarchal system's influence in political marriage is not only often devaluing woman; it also often brings complex emotional state that placed women in confusion. political marriage sometimes is like a time bomb that led women to do unexpected thing, or to behaved irrational. The following quotation, reflect the issue.

Daemon : "This is not for you. Leonor is a good man;
He will bore you."
Rhaenyra : "Then take me. I'm not yet married."
(House of Dragon, 2022. Eps.: 5, 0:50:00 – 0:55:00)

The above quotation shows the scene where Daemon and Rhaenyra were talking to each other during her wedding day with Ser Leonor. Daemon is Rhaenyra's uncle, but they love each other. Meanwhile, Rhaenyra's wedding has been set by his father with other man. In the scene, Daemon tried to persuade Rhaenyra not to marry Ser Leonor, instead, he wanted her to marry him. Daemon's action made Rhaenyra in confusion. So far, she has been stuck in the feeling of responsibilities for her kingdom, but also, she did not think will be able to leave Daemon, her lover. The feeling finally becomes time bomb for her that she did something dangerous for her life.

Conclusion

The House of Dragon Movie, portrays the practice of Political Marriage and shows the influence of Patriarchal System over women. The political marriage practice is resulted from the point of view of most high classes society who considered that political marriage is a strategic way to secure their power, status, and possession. For that reason, political marriage is often set for the daughters since they are child, and unfortunately, the daughter or children must accept their parents' or the

elderly's decision without protest. This practice of course brings about inequality in women's life. In addition, women who live in political marriage mostly suffer for psychological conflict. *The House of Dragon* movie also shows how the patriarchal system in political marriage affects women's situation. Women are getting submissive, desperate, and have no voice to express their desire of will.

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