

Social Hierarchy in Kinema Citrus's *The Rising of the Shield Hero* (2019)

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Abstrak

Studi ini meneliti representasi kelas sosial dalam anime The Rising of the Shield Hero dalam kerangka teori reproduksi kehidupan sosial Pierre Bourdieu. Studi ini meneliti komentar tentang struktur hierarki Kerajaan Melromarc yang memengaruhi para protagonis dan apa yang dapat dipertahankan dalam kelas penguasa, khususnya di Gereja Bangsawan dan Tiga Pahlawan. Studi ini menggunakan metode analisis konten kualitatif dan berfokus pada elemen naratif dalam anime, interaksi antara karakter, dan hubungan antara para pahlawan. Hasilnya adalah struktur hierarki Melromarc yang kaku, yang memperkuat modal ekonomi, budaya, dan sosial, membatasi mobilitas sosial, dan mempertahankan dominasi elit. Studi-studi ini konsisten dengan konsep kehidupan dan alun-alun Bourdieu, yang menggambarkan komentar kekuatan jalanan tentang mekanisme sosial yang terlihat dan tidak terlihat.

Kata kunci: hirarki sosial, gereja, naofumi

Abstract

This study examines the representation of social class in the anime The Rising of the Shield Hero within the framework of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the reproduction of social life. The study examines comments on the Kingdom of Melromarc's hierarchical structure that influences the protagonists and what can be maintained in the ruling class, especially in the Church of Nobility and the Three Heroes. The study uses a qualitative content analysis method and focuses on the narrative elements in the anime, the interaction between characters, and the relationship between heroes. The result is the rigid hierarchical structure of Melromarc, which strengthens economic, cultural, and social capital, limits social mobility, and maintains the dominance of the elite. These studies are consistent with the concept of life and Bourdieu's square, illustrating the street power commentary on visible and invisible social mechanisms

Keyword: Social Hierarchy, Church, Naofumi

1. Introduction

The social dynamics depicted in modern media often reflect real-life issues of inequality, hierarchy, and domination (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). In particular, The Rising of the Shield Hero illustrates how fiction reproduces the symbolic structures of class struggle through concepts such as the kingdom, heroic regimes, and social exclusion. Naofumi's experience of being falsely accused and exiled illustrates how symbolic power operates, where recognition and legitimacy prevail over truth. This symbolic injustice is not limited to fantasy stories. A similar example can be found in Miracle in Cell No. 7, where Yong-goo, a mentally disabled father, is falsely accused and convicted of murder by a judicial system that prioritizes power and appearances over truth. Both

characters suffer not because of their own actions, but because of their lack of economic, social, and symbolic capital. Their stories, both fictional and real, demonstrate how institutions maintain social hierarchies while disempowering the most vulnerable members of society (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Through these images, animation becomes a medium for demonstrating how symbolic domination operates beneath the surface of the social order.

"The educational system succeeds so perfectly in fulfilling its ideological function of legitimating the established order only because this masterpiece of social mechanics succeeds in hiding... the relations which, in a class society, unite the function of Inculcation... with the function of conserving the

structure of class relations characteristic of that society." (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990)

The Four Cardinal Heroes are ordinary people summoned from modern-day Japan to save the kingdom of Melromarc. For many years, Melromarc has suffered recurring disasters, bringing misfortune to its citizens. Each of the Four Heroes was given a sword, a spear, a bow, and a shield to repel these disasters. The otaku Naofumi Iwatani is nicknamed the "Shield Hero." Due to his weak armor, Naofumi is despised and ridiculed by the other heroes and the kingdom's citizens due to his weak attack power and apathetic personality. When the heroes were given resources and companions, Naofumi began training with the only person who would approve of him, Malty Melromarc. However, Malty Melromarc soon betrayed him and falsely accused him of taking advantage of her. Afterward, Naofumi faced intense discrimination and hatred from the citizens of Melromarc for a crime he did not commit. With a storm of resentment and mistrust brewing within him, Naofumi embarks on a journey to save himself and his honor. However, he suffers the pain of loneliness along the way, so Naofumi invites a demi-human slave named Raphtalia to accompany him on his journey. As the kingdom is battered by the waves, Naofumi and Raphtalia must fight for the kingdom's survival and protect the people of Melromarc from a bleak future.

In traditional social systems, society was typically divided into nobility, commoners, and outcasts. Nobility was typically determined by lineage rather than economic power, and honor was bestowed regardless of material wealth. In contrast, commoners, or the "third estate," were ordinary citizens, such as merchants, farmers, and laborers, and enjoyed a lower social status than the nobility or clergy. Outcasts, on the other hand, were on the fringes of society. Excluded from mainstream society, they often lacked recognized status or authority and were equated with slaves, serfs, and other subordinate groups who had historically suffered oppression without any influence or intervention. This tripartite structure reflected an entrenched system of privilege, subordination, and exclusion (Sanders, 1990).

"The structure of class relations, regarded as a field of forces which expresses itself both in directly economic and political antagonisms and in a system of

symbolic positions and oppositions..." (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990)

It is conceivable that a comprehensive understanding of the intricate mechanisms that perpetuate social hierarchies could facilitate a more profound examination of the dynamics of privilege, exclusion, and power relations across diverse social contexts. This theoretical framework could prove useful in analyzing hierarchical structures across disciplines, particularly literature and media, where stories can offer a perspective for examining and critiquing real-world social stratification.

In the interest of furthering our understanding of the intricate relationship between social stratification and social reproduction, this section offers a review of three previous studies that have explored this subject.

The initial study was conducted by Siti Zahara Putri in 2018. In her dissertation, entitled "Sekolah Formal sebagai Arena Reproduksi Kelas Sosial," Putri examined how formal educational institutions function as sites of social class reproduction. To this end, she employed Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction to explore the influence of habitus, capital, and field on students' opportunities, considering the impact of their social background. The study posits that school admission systems, competition, and unequal access to resources may play a role in the phenomenon under investigation.

The second study, entitled "Representasi Stratografi Sosial dan Aristokrasi dalam Film Ketiga Harry Potter," was conducted in 2024. While this study embraced Roland Barthes's semiotic approach, it did not draw upon Bourdieu's theoretical framework. Instead, the focus was on social class, exploring how class distinctions and nobility are depicted in the enchanting realm of Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.

The third study, titled "Dinamika Kekuasaan dan Kepentingan kepada Industri Komik Indonesia: Pendekatan Teori Produksi Kultural Pierre Bourdieu," was conducted in 2023. The present study employs Bourdieu's theory to analyze social class in literary works. The present study explores how different forms of capital—namely, economic, cultural, social, and symbolic— influence the interactions and status of characters in various stories.

While the three studies under consideration here adopt different approaches to the examination of social reproduction and class structure, they collectively advance our understanding of social stratification across a variety of media. A review of extant studies reveals a paucity of research specifically examining social class in the context of anime, particularly *The Rising of the Shield Hero*. This study endeavors to contribute to the extant discourse by exploring the manner in which anime depicts social classes through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction.

2. Methods

The present study draws from the anime *The Rising of the Shield Hero*, which was directed by Takao Abo and produced by Kinema Citrus. The series was originally broadcast in Japan in 2019, comprising 50 episodes across three seasons. The present study focuses on the initial 25 episodes of the inaugural season, examining both licensed and pirated content available through streaming platforms. The analysis examines episodes that depict social hierarchy, class differences, and power relations between different social groups in the story (Riley, 2017). The methodological approach was composed of four primary steps: The initial objective is to obtain and watch the complete English-subtitled anime series. Secondly, a preliminary investigation will be conducted to ascertain the fundamental themes of social stratification. This investigation will be conducted through a skim, exploratory viewing. Thirdly, a close and detailed observation will be conducted, with particular attention being paid to scenes depicting class interactions and social mobility. Fourthly, the collected data were analyzed based on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction. This analysis specifically examined the concepts of forms of capital (economic, cultural, social), habitus, field, and symbolic power. The analysis employed the TEEL (Topic-Evidence-Elaborate-Link) model to provide a systematic analysis of the anime.

3. Results and Discussions

This chapter will be divided into 2 sections, the first section will explain how 4 characteristics of Pierre

Bourdieu's social reproduction theory are portrayed in this anime. The second part will discuss how symbolic power influences the story in anime.

3.1 Social Hierarchy

3.1.1 Economic Capital

According to Riley (2017), Pierre Bourdieu defines economic capital as a material resource that directly affects an individual's position in society. In the anime *The Rising of the Shield Hero*, king's second audience serves as the clear example of Economic Capital. The second audience was the moment where heroes form a party with adventurer.



Figure 1 (Mein nominate herself to join Naofumi's party, Episode 1, 16:10)

Mein: "Would you allow me to join the Shield Hero?"



Figure 2 (Mein nominate herself to join Naofumi's party, Episode 1, 16:10)

King: "This time, Naofumi-dono's payment will be higher than the others."

In figure 1 and 2, during the King's audience, Naofumi couldn't able to get a party member due to a rumor, where he was known nothing about the world as well as the system, but then Mein nominate herself to join Naofumi's party, then the king asks everyone again whenever they want to join Naofumi, in the end,

nobody wants to join Naofumi and Mein is the only one who wants to join Naofumi and the king gave an extra payment for the compensation just for Naofumi. This scene gives the impression that the king was a responsible person.



Figure 3 (Naofumi receives more silver coins than others, Episode 1, 16:53)

???: "Naofumi-sama gets 800 silver coins."



Figure 4 (The other heroes receive normal amount of silver coins, Episode 1, 16:55)

???: "The others get 600"

In figure 3 and 4, as promised by the king, Naofumi receives more silver coins compared with the other heroes; thus, the coins are used to buy necessary equipment and funds to embark the journey, along with payment for lodging, Naofumi was enjoyed every moment in another world, where monster, fantasy elements, and magic were exist, the citizen seems friendly as well, such as the weapon shop owner. This scene proves that Naofumi gain Economic Capital or so it was.

3.1.2 Social Capital

According to Riley (2017), Pierre Bourdieu defines social capital as the network of relationships and connections that provide individuals with support and

access to resources. In the anime *The Rising of the Shield Hero*, Naofumi's isolation after Mein's betrayal highlights his complete loss of social capital. With no allies and no one willing to believe him, he is forced to navigate the world alone.



Figure 5 (Mein secretly mocking Naofumi when their eye met, Episode 1, 32:10)

In Figure 5, the next day, Naofumi was accused after Mein reporting to the king that Naofumi sexually harassed her, and he lost everyone's trust, which he barely had in the first place, along with the equipment he just bought yesterday (which Mein was the one who stole it from the inn where Naofumi was and gave it to Motoyasu), he's also assuming that Mein is after the money he got from the king and decided to throw it away on her. Later on, he was pissed off until he exit from the gate, still nobody came to help or motivate him. This scene proves that Naofumi loses the Social Capital.



Figure 6 (An encounter with slave trader, Episode 1, 44:06)

Slave Trader: "I run a slave trading business."

In figure 6, after encounter the thief, someone wanted to approach him and gets invited to a place without knowing that it was a slave shop and then the slave trader explained about races that Naofumi did not

know in the first place after Naofumi said that there's not only humans, but right after the explanation finished, Naofumi were interested on the coughing sound of a slave and came to the source of that sound. This scene will be the first step for Naofumi to build a connection.



Figure 7 (Naofumi decided to buy a slave, Episode 2, 02:00)

Naofumi: "I'll take this one."

In figure 7, right before he was able to speak, the slave trader offers him to another slave who was the best slave he had, but Naofumi wasn't interested even tho its level is almost 20x higher than him and instead Naofumi was looking for a cheap and obedient slave, and then the slave trader guided him to the slave he had just met before since it was the most suitable slave. It was sick and traumatized slave due to previous owner that love to torture their slave, but Naofumi decided to buy her without any more question. This scene will be the second step for Naofumi to build a social relationship with someone else.

3.1.3 Cultural Capital

According to Riley (2017), Pierre Bourdieu defines cultural capital as non-material assets such as knowledge, skills, education, and behavior that influence an individual's social position. In the anime *The Rising of the Shield Hero*, Naofumi's lack of cultural capital such as knowledge of the world, social customs, and status norms initially causes him to be seen as inferior by the other heroes and society.



Figure 8 (Motoyasu told his opinion about Shield User, Episode 1, 12:35)

Motoyasu: "As far as I Know, the Shielder, the class that specializes in the shield is one for losers. No high-level gamers play it."

In figure 8, Motoyasu said that Shielder are weak due to they're specializes at defense and weak at offense, it implicitly mocks Shield User as a scaredy player who hides behind the shield, Rin and Itsuki has no doubt, thought the same thing as Motoyasu, before the Motoyasu's opinion, Naofumi wasn't even know about game world even tho he's a weeb unlike the other heroes that know it even tho the game, the era, and the country lore were different each other. In other words, since Naofumi didn't know about the game, he knows nothing about the systems along with the world that he currently in.



Figure 9 (The other heroes struggled with Naofumi's request, Episode 22, 12:02)

Itsuki: "What do we do?"

Rin: "Do we have a choice?"

Motoyasu: "Fine..."

In figure 9, there was a meeting between heroes with the queen to teamwork against catastrophe, while negotiating to teamwork, the other three questioning a

weird question to Naofumi about how he got the cheat type shield, Naofumi were confused about the question but he still answers it logically even tho the others didn't trust him, in exchange the other three have to give information to Naofumi to get information from Naofumi. In this meeting, Naofumi gains the basic thing such as Copy Skill that limited to the weapon as Naofumi inherit, Shield, then auto alchemy, which allow the user to automatically make a potion as long as the material was right, and lastly teleportation which only works to the city or place that has been visited before and only works as long as the city or place were registered. The meeting went smoothly until the negotiation came. Naofumi still knew nothing about the hero-exclusive skills until they explained it, along with those who knew nothing about Naofumi.

3.1.4 Habitus

According to Riley (2017), Pierre Bourdieu defines habitus as a system of ingrained dispositions shaped by one's past experiences and social background, which guide how individuals think, act, and perceive the world. In the anime *The Rising of the Shield Hero*, the first catastrophe encounter became a good example of Habitus, where the church forgot or intentionally forgotten about Lute Village's Evacuation, followed with Itsuki and Ren Encounter in the bar and the debate in Church vs Heroes war in which Naofumi had become the one who clean up other hero's mess and had to lecture them.



Figure 10 (Naofumi's reaction after the flare from Lute Village, Episode 3, 11:28)

Naofumi: "They think their job's done once they let the knights know where they are?"

In figure 10, Naofumi were pissed off because the church member seems forgot or intentionally forgotten the nearby village such as Lute Village that wasn't evacuated yet during the catastrophe, which made Naofumi to rushed toward Lute Village in order to save the village from catastrophe since knights won't come in time. And there's still villager in the village, gladly Naofumi came earlier so there's no casualties on that village, but the knights recklessly cast village-scale fire arrow rain without knowing there was Naofumi still on the village, Naofumi pissed off even more if he's not in time to go to Lute Village, the whole village will be destroyed and there will be a lot of casualties by not only the catastrophe, but also the reckless act of the knights. This trains Naofumi's Habitus more, and Naofumi gains reputation soon after, along with gratitude not only from villagers but also from knights from Lute Village.



Figure 11 (Itsuki expresses his complain, Episode 10, 16:37)

Itsuki: "I overthrew a despot in the country to the north. But when I went to the guild, they'd already paid the reward out to someone else"

Ren: "Same Here. Somebody stole a job request from me."

Itsuki: "Looks like someone's going around pretending to be us."

In figure 11, Naofumi overheard Itsuki and Ren's complain about the quest that they completed but someone else stole the reward, when Itsuki talks about nonsense, Naofumi surprised and spit out his drink and laugh a bit since it seems impossible for Itsuki to do it until Itsuki and Ren came to Naofumi's table, then they accuse Naofumi stole their reward by became them, then Naofumi admit it that he's the one that doing it while explaining how it happens, which ended

up they felt a bit guilty by what they do on their quests even tho Itsuki didn't believe what Naofumi said. This scene proves that Itsuki and Ren were still Naïve since they thought that the logic was still the same as in-game, while Naofumi accepts that this is reality.



Figure 12 (Naofumi lectures three other heroes, Episode 19, 17:08)

Naofumi: "it just goes to show how immense the people's trust in the heroes is, you should've more aware of that. You three let your hero's welcome go to your heads and didn't spare a thought for anybody else."

In figure 12, during the fight against Church, Motoyasu pissed off to Naofumi due to he didn't want to teamwork and Naofumi turn the table by briefly explain the root of the problem to them along with the problem that they made one by one along with the root which is Mein, then Naofumi Emphasize about they should aware with their status since people could easily have high trust toward them and would believe anything that they do would result positive even tho the one who know the truth already warn them. In this scene, it proves that Naofumi's Habitus is better compared to the other three in accepting reality, not being naïve, and thinking before doing something.

3.1.5 Field

According to Riley (2017), Bourdieu's terms, a *field* is a structured arena of social relations governed by its own rules and power dynamics. The political field in this case is shaped by the monarchy, the Church, and the heroes, each competing for influence. In the anime *The Rising of The Shield Hero*, queen's movement is a good example, where queen finally made its move to exterminate Church faction's traitor, such as The Pope and his followers.



Figure 13 (Queen's Speech, Episode 20, 00:56)

Queen: "We shall now put down the traitorous Three Heroes Church's Pope, Bisca T. Balmus, and his followers!"

In figure 13, the queen reclaiming her authority to manage the kingdom, then shout out and declare to the knights to put down The Pope and his followers as the betrayal upon the Melromarc kingdom, the queen herself as the commander of the armies, charge upon the war between Church and Heroes along with the knights, and even tho she went late, she managed to stop The Pope from murdering the Heroes by interrupting him which make The Pope surprised since it was inside Catedral and Naofumi was able to dealt the final blow to The Pope, even it cost a lot of blood to activate the skill. This scene proves Field by the queen, where she reclaims her authority and being able to control the armies without any problem.



Figure 14 (Queen's Arrival, Episode 20, 20:48)

Queen: "This battle is over. Accept your defeat and surrender."

In figure 14, the queen shouts to everyone that the battle is over with the heroes as the winner and The Pope's decease, then she came to Naofumi to not allow him to die, which she prioritize to take care Naofumi

first and then she introduces herself in front of Naofumi's party, and the episode ended up with Naofumi's eye that doesn't seem happy to hear that since he hates royal family so much since Mein's betrayal incident. This scene also proves that the queen is not only able to reclaim her authority but also able to calm down the situation on the battlefield.

3.1.6 Symbolic Capital

According to Riley (2017), Pierre Bourdieu defines symbolic power as the ability to impose meaning and shape perception through recognition, legitimacy, and authority. In the anime *The Rising of the Shield Hero*, the Pope's declaration of Naofumi as a heretic is a classic example of symbolic power, using religious authority and sacred imaginary to manipulate public perception. Without resorting to physical force, the Pope positions himself as a moral figure and uses his faith as a weapon to justify violence and maintain control over the kingdom.



Figure 15 (The Pope, Episode 18, 18:40)

Pope: "Then you must be aware of your sins as well"
Naofumi: "My sin?"

Pope: "You not only showed no gratitude for the holy water God bestowed upon you, but also deceived the people and led them to turn against the country. Hence, I shall purify you all in the name of God"

In figure 15, the Pope declares that Naofumi is a heretic, by telling lies to his followers for a long time ago and telling it again in front of Naofumi and the Pope gains power as easily as flipping hands, then the "Judgement" begins toward Naofumi and the other heroes, such as Motoyasu came up with Rin and Itsuki that came later on, along with the princesses, and both Naofumi and Motoyasu's party. The Pope himself came with an abundance of wizards to supply his mana

pool to use the replica of the sacred weapon either on offense or defense which later on, he's also summoned his domain "Catedral" by ritual magic that has been cast by the wizards, but it's not like it has absolute power, since it drains a lot of mana from the wizards to maintain it and cast healing magic for the Pope himself.



Figure 16 (The end of The Pope, Episode 20, 19:50)
Pope: "Why? Why is this happening to me?! I am God's Apostle! The Pope! This can't be!"

With the queen's help, Naofumi dealt the final blow to The Pope at the cost of his health points to cast the sacrifice spell. The domain "Catedral" slowly vanished, which means the Pope's losses that implicitly informed everyone else outside of the "Catedral" domain. The scene continues with the queen's declaration that the battle is over, with the Church faction's loss. At the same time, the other heroes recognize her, they immediately sheathe their weapons, and the scene continues with the queen walking to Naofumi, who is half-conscious from the aftereffects of the sacrifice spell. She introduces herself, and the episode ends. This scene proves the end of Symbolic power abuse by the Pope, and there might be a new Symbolic power born after the Three Heroes Church's collapse.

3.2 Symbolic Power

There is no kingdom without a king, and without him, the norms that bind the people collapse, leading to chaos and inevitable crises. Therefore, the king must lead the country's development with his subjects and fulfill his responsibilities. According to Riley (2017), "Symbolic power derives from the misrecognition of historically contingent social relations, especially the

rules that govern particular fields, as if they were given by nature." Instead of taking unnecessary measures to control the kingdom, the Church spread a doctrine that drove the Shield Hero into heresy, with the personal hatred of the King, the Church controlled society, and made it hate the Shield Hero. Initially, the Shield Hero didn't seem hated, but the Church falsely accused him.



Figure 17 (The summoning book reacts to Naofumi and shines, Episode 1 02:47)

In figure 17, the opening scene of the anime focuses on the summoning scene, while the story of the Shield Hero, in which Naofumi was chosen to be the Shield Hero, is omitted. Upon his arrival and their first encounter, the King doesn't seem he like the Shield Hero. He deliberately forgot about Naofumi. In the cut scene, the guards' conversation suggests that the Shield Hero is hated. In the Night Heroes' conversation, the other three heroes seem to think they don't know anything about Naofumi because he is the Shield Hero. In other words, it's safe to assume that the other three heroes know a lot about Naofumi. There is also a second audience scene with the king, attended by the nobles, church members, and adventurers who accompanied the heroes



Figure 18 (Church Followers, episode 1, 16:24)

In figure 18, there are the followers of the Church of the Three Heroes, they hold their amulet, and there are symbols of a spear, a sword, and a bow, but no shield. In other words, there are no believers in Shield Hero. The adventurers don't seem to care about the Shield Hero until the adventurer Mein nominates herself to accompany Naofumi. But the next day, Mein betrays Naofumi. After this, everyone loses trust in Naofumi, including the king, who has hated Naofumi from the beginning.

In the second act, adventure turns from loneliness to joy. Naofumi sets out on a journey alone, but a slave trader appears and offers him a slave. At first, Naofumi shows no interest, but after discovering the demihuman, half-beast girl, he is completely captivated and decides to buy her. He trains her daily, and she becomes a great help to Naofumi, who needs a trustworthy companion. The night the heroes averted disaster, a party is held. There, Motoyasu, the spear hero, challenges Naofumi to a duel and presents his baseless claims. The heroes are opposed to buying a slave and attempt to free her. Naofumi almost wins the duel, but Mein intervenes, and Motoyasu wins. Of course, according to the rules, the slave, Raphtalia, should be freed, but she refuses and decides to return to her place before Naofumi's wrath erupts in the arena. The story continues, but hate toward Naofumi remains the same. The heroes, the king, the nobles, and even the church. The heroes and nobles hate Naofumi because of their different perspectives and naivety, and the church has hated him from the beginning because of their teachings, following the king, who personally hates the Shield Hero.



Figure 19 (The Three Heroes Church's amulet, Episode 12, 14:05)

???: *Virtuous on the surface, conniving and conspiring behind the scenes...*"

In figure 19, it shows that the Church hates Naofumi not out of hatred, but because he is the Shield Hero, and created new rules to make it appear as if Shield Heroes are hated by lying in the name of God's teachings, which also took a chance while the king personally hates Shield Hero.



Figure 20 (Malty/Mein Compilation, Episode 4, 09:25; Episode 5, 11:03; Episode 13, 12:46; Episode 18, 09:27)

The reason for the Shield Hero's hatred becomes clear in the third act. In Figure 20, the first princess, Malty, also known by her adventurer name, Mein, repeatedly interferes in Naofumi's affairs: the First Duel, the village suppression, Melty's fake kidnapping, and finally the unexpected Second Duel. Malty receives the Church's support, but they have a more ambitious plan than she imagined. Although her intervention is not very effective, her sweet words leave a psychological impact, and the Hero and the community tend to trust her more than her sister. This is because the Church's teachings are very useful in defeating Naofumi. The Church not only helps Malty take the throne, but also attempts to take over the kingdom in her place.



Figure 20 (The Pope's scenario plan, Episode 18, 19:28)

The Pope: "The Spear Hero's party and the next queen were killed by the Devil of the Shield. Or, well, that's how the script goes"

In figure 21, they hatch an ingenious plan to assassinate the Shield Hero, also making him out to be the princess's and the heroes' killer. They also frame the King for abusing his power and betraying the Church, which the people trusted so easily. The plan is brilliant, and with the arrival of Itsuki and Rin, it becomes even more ingenious. However, in the end, Naofumi, with the help of the Queen, overthrows the Pope, and the Church begins to show signs of collapse. Finally, the discrimination is gone, and it seems that the persecution of the Shield Hero has come to an end.

In the final act, the question of why the Shield Hero is hated finally receives a decisive answer. After the battle between Church and Hero, Naofumi is escorted by the Queen.



Figure 21 (The queen's answer, Episode 21, 04:23)
Queen: "Aultcray already hated the Shield Hero for a certain reason. The Three Heroes Church took of that to manipulate him"

In Figure 22, Naofumi took the opportunity to ask why the Shield Hero was hated. The Queen replied that it was the King who hated the Shield Hero, and that the Church was using this opportunity to make everyone hate him. Naofumi was hated for being the Shield Hero, not for who he was. The next day, the trial began, with the King and Malty as defendants, and the Queen as judge. Malty was sealed with a slave contract so she wouldn't lie, and as Malty's lies were exposed one by one, the Church's betrayal of the kingdom was

revealed. The King wasn't questioned, as summoning the four Heroes had proven to be a grave mistake. Instead, he revealed his true intention: to destroy the Shield Hero. Both were about to be executed, but Naofumi intervened in the trial and saved their lives. He considered the punishment too light for the chaos they had caused. Instead, he offered them not only survival but the inheritance of a new, truly shameful name and to live a shameful life.



Figure 22 (The new church's Crest, Episode 22, 00:30)

In Figure 23, after accepting Naofumi's offer, the queen dissolved the Church of the Three Heroes and established the Church of the Four Heroes. Ultimately, the queen resolved the misunderstanding between the people of Melromarc and the Shield Hero, and the hatred toward him disappeared, but slavery continued. The Domination Party dissolved, and a new party emerged. The persecution of the Shield Hero also ceased. However, since slavery had been permitted in the Melromarc kingdom from the beginning, it continued despite the new rules.

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

4.1 Conclusion

This study examines the depiction of social hierarchy and power dominance in the anime "The Rising of the Shield Hero" from a perspective that combines Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction. The anime's narrative demonstrates that hierarchical structures are maintained not only through economic and political means but also through symbolic systems that define legitimacy, power, and social value. Through the experiences of the protagonist Naofumi, the anime

explores the inequalities in the real world formed by class, recognition, and symbolic power.

Despite the strength of the nobility, their power begins to crumble as Naofumi attempts to establish a new social legitimacy. His influence grows not because of his noble status but because of his moral leadership and consistently respectful behavior. His role in saving the village, supporting Ain, and guiding Raphtalia demonstrates a new form of power: symbolic capital based on life experience and moral integrity. This shakes the legitimacy of the nobility and demonstrates that power can shift as the population begins to redistribute recognition outside the governing structure.

4.2 Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, several directions for future research can be suggested. This study analyzes the anime *The Rising of the Shield Hero*, focusing on the dynamics of capital, power, field, and Symbolic Power using the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu. Future research could expand this approach to include comparative analysis with other anime that explore alternative worlds and fantasies and depict hierarchical conflicts, such as *When I Reincarnated as a Slime* and *Seirei Gensouki*. This would allow for an examination of how the protagonist overcomes or challenges institutional power structures in different narrative situations.

Another area worthy of exploration is the intersection of symbolic power and gender representation in anime. Malty's manipulation of Naofumi and systematic bias reflect not only political hierarchy but also gendered power structures. A feminist interpretation could examine how symbolic dominance is reinforced by gender stereotypes and expectations, particularly in fictional worlds depicting monarchical states.

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