



An Analysis of The Representation of Indonesian Cultural Identity in the Film *Raya and the Last Dragon*

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Abstract

This study analyzes the representation of Indonesian cultural identity in the animated film "Raya and the Last Dragon". Through a descriptive qualitative research approach, this study aims to explore how various elements of Indonesian culture are portrayed in the film, including traditional practices, values, and symbols. The analysis is based on Stuart Hall's theory of cultural representation, which allows for an examination of how Indonesian and global audiences perceive these cultural elements in a cinematic context. The findings reveal that the film incorporates important aspects of Indonesian culture, such as the traditional weapon keris and the art of batik, which serve as symbols of heritage and identity. This research focuses the importance of cultural representation in the media and its impact on the understanding of cultural Identity in a globalized world

Keywords - Indonesian cultural identity, cultural representation, *Raya and the Last dragon* movie, descriptive qualitative research

Abstrak

Studi ini menganalisis representasi identitas budaya Indonesia dalam film animasi "Raya and the Last Dragon". Melalui pendekatan penelitian kualitatif deskriptif, studi ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana berbagai elemen budaya Indonesia digambarkan dalam film, termasuk praktik, nilai, dan simbol tradisional. Analisis ini didasarkan pada teori representasi budaya Stuart Hall, yang memungkinkan pengkajian bagaimana penonton Indonesia dan global mempersepsi elemen-elemen budaya ini dalam konteks sinematik. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa film ini menggabungkan aspek-aspek penting budaya Indonesia, seperti senjata tradisional keris dan seni batik, yang berfungsi sebagai simbol warisan dan identitas. Penelitian ini berfokus pada pentingnya representasi budaya di media dan dampaknya terhadap pemahaman identitas budaya di dunia global.

Kata kunci - Identitas budaya Indonesia, representasi budaya, film *Raya and the Last Dragon*, penelitian kualitatif deskriptif

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INTRODUCTION

Literature is a means of shedding ideas or thoughts about anything using free language, containing something new and enlightening. The beauty of literature is not determined by the beauty of words or sentences but the beauty of the substance of the story (Amalia & Fadhilasari, 2019). Literature as one of the main media must have values including moral values so that a literary work not only gives pleasure to its readers but also provides values and lessons (Mahendra & Amelia, 2020). The main purpose of literature is to entertain readers or viewers and provide a clear and understandable message or point of view. There are several literary works such as; poetry, a short story (cerpen), novel, film (Amalia & Fadhilasari, 2019).

Film are considered literary works in the study of popular literature. Muller (2006, p. 33) states that "Using film as literature still supports students with a strong understanding of narrative analysis skills, as it mostly focuses on the elements that films share with literature, rather than on the unique ways films express their narratives." In a film, the storyline is the basis of the film, either linear (beginning, middle, end) or non-linear. For example, in the film "Raya and The Last Dragon" (2021), cultural identity is depicted through visuals inspired by architecture, costumes, and symbols from various countries in the region. In addition, the characters and narrative of the film also reflect values such as cooperation, trust, and the strong cultural diversity of the region. By incorporating cultural identity, the film becomes not only a means of entertainment but also a window for the audience to understand and experience different cultures.

Culture is formed from the customs that exist in Indonesian society so that each tribe has its own culture (Lathifah, 2019). Banks, 1974 (in Rudy et al., 2022) suggests that it is necessary to realize that culture can be in the form of behavior patterns, signs, norms, and everything created by humans that may be different and distinguish them from the culture of other communities.

The term "cultural identity" describes how a person or group perceives themselves in relation to a particular cultural setting. It encompasses aspects like social class, religion, nationality, ethnicity, and other components that influence how people view themselves and relate to others. Cultural identity is dynamic and changes as a result of an individual's or group's social, cultural, and historical experiences. Pebriani, et al. (2024) mentioned in their journal, there are several cultural identities that are owned by strengthening the social as well as a) Language; b) Values and Beliefs; c) Traditions and rituals; d) Art and the arts; e) Clothing and modes of living; f) Architecture and building design g) Social system and family structure; f) Food and cuisine.

The selection of the title Cultural Identity emphasizes the importance of exploring and analyzing how Indonesian culture is uniquely represented in *Raya and the Last Dragon*, as well as connecting it to the broader concept of cultural identity in a global context, besides that the author also wants all readers to become aware of the richness of Indonesian culture and therefore we must maintain and introduce Indonesian culture to a wide audience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural Representation

Cultural representation is the perception of meanings about identity, values and social groups. Stuart Hall (1997) in his theory of representation, states that the media not only reflects reality, but also plays a role in shaping it through signs, symbols and narratives. Barker (2012) in his journal states, cultural representation is part of the production of meaning that occurs through social interaction, media, and cultural practices. Barker asserts that cultural representations not only reflect social reality, but also help create it by introducing and affirming cultural values and norms to a wide audience. In the era of globalization, when media can disseminate cultural representations to audiences around the world, this is important. Dina Iordanova (2010) says that globalization has created changes in the way local cultures are represented in the global media.

Néstor García Canclini (2014) asserts that global culture is now characterized by hybridity where local and global cultures intermingle, creating unique and complex cultural forms. Hybridity is the mixing or fusion of two different elements, resulting in something new with combined characteristics of both. This hybridity is seen in various media, where global cultural components blend and mix with local symbols, stories and customs to create quite a diverse culture. For example, cultural representations in film often combine aspects of global modernism with traditional culture to create new, more malleable forms of identity.

Cultural identity

Culture is a whole system of ideas, actions, and human works in the context of community life that is made by human beings by learning (Koentjaraningrat, 1992 in Mulyadi dkk, 2023). Then, culture itself has seven elements, namely: religion, art, society, knowledge system, living equipment system, and language. Culture is formed from the customs that exist in Indonesian society so that each tribe has its own culture (Lathifah, 2019). Banks, 1974 (in Rudy, et al, 2022: 100) suggests that it is necessary to realize that culture can be in the form of behavior patterns, signs, norms, and all things created by humans that may be different and distinguish them from the culture of other communities. As we know, globalization has had a very strong influence on human life, including in the territory of Indonesia. Starting from culture, food, style of dress, music, film, to the style of speaking that began to mix with foreign cultures. This phenomenon is very natural because Indonesian people are very enthusiastic about welcoming new cultures and lifestyles (Nirwana, 2023). Culture is one of Indonesia's wealth and every culture from various tribes in Indonesia is an ancestral heritage that needs to be preserved. Culture helps individuals to understand who they are and gives meaning to the formation of their identity in a group (Pawestri, 2020).

Etymologically, the word identity means (1) a state or fact about something that is the same, a state that is similar to one another, (2) a state or fact about something that is the same between two people or two objects, (3) a state or fact that describes something that is the same between two people (individuality) or two groups or objects, (4) in a technical level, the etymological understanding above only shows a habit of understanding identity with the word 'identical' (Webster New World Dictionary in Darmastuti, 2013, p.94). Identity is discursive, meaning that it is formed through language and narratives that exist in society. There are several types of identity, namely; 1) Self-identity is how a person sees and defines themselves personally. German psychologist Erikson (1968) explained the notion of self-identity as a comprehensive psychological condition for individuals. Erikson (1994) in the work of Uswatun Hasanah (2013) states that self-identity is an individual's awareness of placing oneself in the context of life, including various types of identities such as career, religion, and social relationships; 2.) Social identity is the way a person identifies himself in the context of a particular social group and how to interact in various social environments. It involves chosen or assigned roles in society, such as family member, friend, coworker, or citizen; 3.) National identity is the way a person identifies as a citizen and how they see themselves in the context of their country. It includes the values, political, economic, social beliefs that shape national identity, and personal experiences that shape their worldview as a citizen; 4.) Cultural identity is the way individuals identify themselves in the context of their culture. It includes the values, traditions, language, and cultural practices that shape everyday life.

Cultural identity is a culture that is in a village or in the midst of a community whose existence is recognized and owned by the surrounding community, because a culture is a differentiator from other areas (Aisara et al., 2020). Cultural identity (Liliweri, 2002, pp.95-96) is the characteristics that arise from being a member of a particular ethnic group. This includes learning and accepting the traditions, innate traits, language, and ancestry of a culture. Cultural identity is a person's feeling (emotional meaning) to have a sense of belonging or affiliation to a particular culture. People who are

divided into groups then carry out cultural identification, where each person considers himself as a representation of a particular culture (Darmastuti, 2013, p.94)

Indonesian Cultural Identity

Indonesian cultural identity is the result of complex interactions between different ethnicities, languages and traditions that make up Indonesian cultural diversity. Cultural identity refers to the characteristics that distinguish one cultural group from another, including the values, norms, symbols and practices that are passed down from generation to generation. In the Indonesian context, cultural identity is strongly influenced by ethnic diversity and a long history of intercultural interaction. The characteristics of cultural identity are to distinguish one cultural group from another, such as customs, values, symbols, and behaviors that are passed down from generation to generation. Ethnic diversity and a long history of intercultural contact have a significant impact on cultural identity in Indonesia. One of the main factors in the formation of Indonesia's cultural identity is the preservation of local culture. Yulianto (2021) highlights that amidst the strong influence of global culture, traditional cultural elements such as art, music and rituals still have a significant role in shaping the identity of Indonesian society. This research reveals that the recognition of local culture has a very important role in strengthening national identity, especially in the context of a multicultural society. Local culture not only acts as a heritage, but also as a source of strength that can provide meaning in people's daily lives.

Cultural Messages

The message is what is communicated by the source to the receiver. A message is a set of verbal and nonverbal symbols that represent the feelings, values, ideas or intentions of the source. Messages can also be formulated non-verbally, such as through actions or gestures of the limbs (thumbs up, head nods, smiles, eye gaze and so on), as well as through music, paintings, sculptures, dances and so on. (Yusuf, 2013)

Cultural messages influence social behavior and communication and they are essential to comprehending how language and culture interact. The main tool for communicating cultural identity and values is language, which reflects the ideas, attitudes, and convictions of its speakers. Furthermore, language's ability to express culture is crucial for good communication because it connects language and meaning, emphasizing that language serves as both a tool and a system for communicating cultural meaning.

Media and films have a significant role in conveying cultural messages by visualizing cultural values, norms and symbols (Riswandi, 2019). Movies are not just entertainment, but also serve as a cultural education tool that brings audiences to different cultures. Through characters, dialog, and visuals, films convey cultural messages that introduce cultural values and identities to the audience. Herman (2009) explains that narratives or stories in movies are effective tools in conveying cultural values.

METHOD

This research uses descriptive qualitative methodology to analyze the representation of Indonesian cultural identity in the film "Raya and the Last Dragon." The research began with repeated viewings of the movie to identify and document culture-related details that reflect Indonesian culture, such as traditional clothing and architecture. Visual documentation was also used, where screenshots or recordings of relevant scenes were collected to support the analysis. The analysis is based on Stuart Hall's theory of cultural representation, which emphasizes that representation is a process of meaning construction rather than a mere reflection of reality. By examining how various elements of Indonesian culture are presented in the film, including customs and social values, this research aims to uncover the cultural messages conveyed and how they resonate with Indonesian and global audiences. This

comprehensive approach enables a nuanced understanding of the portrayal of Indonesian cultural identity in the film

DISCUSSION

Indonesian cultures represented in the film *Raya and the Last Dragon*.

From the research conducted by the researcher, the researcher found several representations of Indonesia cultures. These representations are described in pictures or visual. The representation are:

The weapon of Raya’s father

In *Raya and the Last Dragon*, the keris-like weapon has a profound meaning, not only as a means of defense but also as a symbol of culture and heritage. The weapon is first shown being used by Raya's father in an attempt to protect his kingdom from enemy attacks, illustrating its primary function as a sturdy and strategically valuable defense tool. However, more than that, the keris has a high emotional and symbolic value. As a leader, Raya's father decided to hand over the keris-shaped sword to Raya, his daughter, not only as a means of physical protection, but also as a form of inheritance laden with deep meaning.

The keris symbolize the spirit, struggle, and hope for Raya to continue her great task as a guardian of peace and unity amidst the divisions that plague their community. Raya's father's decision to give her the weapon reflects his trust in Raya's abilities, while also passing on the values of courage, wisdom and responsibility that must be maintained in order to keep their world harmonious. This illustrates how the keris weapon, inspired by traditional Indonesian culture, symbolizes not only the physical, but also the spiritual in the journey of the film's main character.

Table 1.

Keris Symbolism in Indonesian Film and Culture

Picture in the film	Supporting Evidence	Elements
 <p>Minute 17.09</p>	 <p>Source : www.cintaindonesia.web.id</p>	<p>Indonesian Traditional Weapons</p>

Keris is a traditional weapon used by ancestors as a form of defense and as equipment in every important traditional event, which has a wavy shape on both sides and has a sharp tip, keris can be interpreted as a legacy of the ancestors of the Indonesian people on objects that some people consider as works of art in the form of weapons. The process of making a keris is quite complicated because the blacksmiths must be able to master the techniques in the process of forming the keris itself, in the process of making a keris there is an assumption that there is the intervention of the Gods in this matter, so that some people believe that the keris is a sacred object that has magical powers. The keris here is a symbol of Indonesia's traditional weapons. Since 2005, UNESCO has recognized the keris as a unique weapon of Indonesian culture (Hardoyo et al., 2014)

Making Batiks In the Heart’s Scene

In the film *Raya and the Last Dragon*, the art of batik makes a subtle appearance. Although there is no explicit mention of batik, this visual design carries an aesthetic feel that is strongly associated

with Indonesian culture. Batik is known for its meaningful and philosophical pattern, often reflecting peace, daily life and community values. The use of batik-like patterns in the movie serves to give the Kingdom of Heart a deep cultural identity, while enriching the visual impression of the fantasy world that is built. Elements such as motifs in the kingdom's clothing and decorations symbolize the cultural attachment and diversity that exists in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, even though the film's story takes place in a fictional world. The use of batik shows how *Raya and the Last Dragon* integrates elements of traditional Indonesian culture to build a world that feels authentic and introduces the audience to the beauty of that culture.

Table 2.

Representation of Batik in the Film <i>Raya and the Last Dragon</i>		
Picture in the film	Supporting Evidence	Elements
 Minute 08.21	 Source: anekabatikanak.blogspot.com	Indonesian Cultural Art Performance

Batik tulis is a traditional Indonesian batik made by dyeing cloth using malam (wax) as a color barrier. The process of making batik, known as batik making, involves meticulous steps and creativity. Initially, a motif or pattern is drawn on the cloth using canting (a special tool for inscribing wax) or stamp (a metal stamp). After that, the cloth is dipped in dye, while the part covered by the night retains its original color. This process can be repeated many times to create intricate motifs with various colors.

Batik’s Indonesia in *Raya’s* film

Batik, with its rich motifs and traditional techniques, is a significant cultural heritage that reflects Indonesian identity and values. In the end credits of *Raya and the Last Dragon*, an Indonesian batik motif known as mega mendung batik from Cirebon, West Java, is seen, further emphasizing the influence of Indonesian culture in the work, although it is not directly explained that it is a mega mendung batik motif.

Table 3.

Representation of Batik in the Film <i>Raya and the Last Dragon</i>		
Picture in the film	Supporting Evidence	Elements
 Minute 1.37.52	 Source : www.freepik.com	Batik Motifs of Indonesia

Indonesian Wood Carving

In the *raya’s* scene, *raya's* father and *raya* are cooking in the kitchen and the scene shows that the walls of the Heart Kingdom kitchen are decorated with Jepara wood carving motifs, which are

known for their artistic details and high aesthetic value. The motif illustrates the beauty of traditional Indonesian carving and gives a strong cultural touch to the interior design of the kingdom. Jepara carving, with its intricate and meaningful characteristics, is often used to decorate various architectural elements, including traditional houses and sacred buildings. The presence of these carvings in the kitchen of the Heart Kingdom not only enriches the visuals, but also reinforces the film's deep representation of Indonesian culture.

Table 4.

Representation of Indonesian Wood Carving in the Film *Raya and the Last Dragon*

Picture in the film	Supporting Evidence	Elements
 <p>Minute 09:54</p>	 <p>Source : berita.99.co</p>	Indonesian Wood Carving

Raya's hat

Raya is seen wearing a distinctive traditional hat that becomes an important part of her appearance during her quest to find the boulder to save the world of Kumandra from Druun's attack. The hat has a wide and circular shape, resembling a hat that is often used in Indonesia, such as a *caping*. In the movie, the hat not only serves as protection from the heat and rain during her long journey, but also symbolizes Raya's identity and determination as a protector and warrior. The hat is often seen worn by Raya in various important scenes, thus becoming one of the iconic visual elements in depicting the main character.

Table 5.

Representation of Traditional Indonesian Hat (*Caping*) in the Film *Raya and the Last Dragon*

Picture in the film	Supporting Evidence	Elements
 <p>Minute 21.33</p>	 <p>Source: www.dreamstime.com</p>	Caping

Caping is often worn in various regions in Indonesia, such as Java, Bali and Sumatra, with varying designs and sizes. Apart from serving as protection from the weather, the *caping* is also a symbol of Indonesia's agrarian life and rich local cultural traditions.

Rice Tampah in the heart's kingdom

In the scene in the film *Raya*, it is clear that someone is sifting rice using a *tampah* made of bamboo. This process is done by shaking the *tampah* so that the rice and its impurities can be separated properly. Although in *Raya and the Last Dragon*, the footage of a person sifting rice is only shown briefly, the scene succeeds in representing traditional practices that are still carried out in Indonesia. The use of *tampahs* in these daily activities shows how traditional tools are an important part of people's lives and hold valuable cultural values.

Table 6.

Representation of Traditional Indonesian Rice Processing Tools in the Film *Raya* and the Last Dragon

Picture in the film	Supporting Evidence	Elements
 <p>Minute 08.20</p>	 <p>Source : imagesee.biz</p>	Bamb oo Rice Tamp ah

The Region of Fang

In the *Raya's* film, it appears that the design of the Fang Kingdom has similarities with the architectural form of an Indonesian traditional house, namely the Gadang House from West Sumatra. Rumah Gadang is known as a typical traditional house with a jobby roof resembling a buffalo horn, reflecting the cultural values of Minangkabau. This element shows that the film *Raya* and the Last Dragon adopts traditional Indonesian architectural elements to enrich the cultural representation in the film

Table 7.

. Representation of Indonesian Traditional Architecture in the Film *Raya* and the Last Dragon

Picture in the film	Supporting Evidence	Elements
 <p>Minute 52.23</p>	 <p>Source : pergiyuk.com</p>	Indonesian Traditional House

rectangular building and a roof with a spiral pattern. Rumah gadang is used by the Minangkabau community as a residence, family meeting hall, and for ceremonial events. The owner of the gadang house is a woman from the family who owns the house and the ownership is passed down from the mother to her daughter (Faturahman et al., 2021).

Culture Messages

The researcher conducted research to find out the culture identity of Indonesia, while conducting the reseatch, the researcher also found several culture messages from the movie, the cultural messages which found in the movie can be seen below.

Mutual Cooperation

The movie *Raya* and the Last Dragon shows the importance of cooperation in achieving a common goal. *Raya* must build alliances with people from different regions of Kumandra to fight the threat of Druun and restore harmony to the world. This is in line with the concept of gotong royong in Indonesia, which is a noble value of Indonesian society. In daily life, gotong royong is reflected in joint activities, such as building a house, cleaning the neighborhood, or holding a traditional event. This message teaches that by uniting, differences are not a barrier to achieving greater goals.

Trust

Trust is a central theme in the movie, where Raya must learn to trust others despite being betrayed before. Trust is necessary to create peace and harmony, especially among different groups. This is relevant to Indonesia, which consists of diverse ethnicities, religions and cultures. Indonesians are taught to trust each other and work together despite having different backgrounds. Trust is the foundation of unity in diversity that is embodied in the motto “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika.”

Harmony with Nature

In this movie, the lives of humans and dragons depict harmony with nature before conflict occurs. Elements such as rivers, forests and water dragons reflect the importance of maintaining a balance between humans and the environment. In Indonesian culture, many traditions teach a spiritual connection with nature. For example, the Dayak indigenous people in Kalimantan have a tradition of customary forests that maintain the sustainability of the ecosystem, while the Baduy people in Banten prohibit the destruction of the environment to maintain the balance of nature. This message is relevant as a reminder to respect and preserve nature as part of life.

Traditional Food as Cultural Identity

Food plays an important role in this movie as a symbol of unity. Scenes where characters share specialties show that cuisine can be a cultural bridge. This also reflects Indonesian traditions, where food is an important part of social and traditional events. The tradition of eating together such as *selamatan* or *tumpengan* is often used to strengthen relationships between community members. This message confirms that food is not just about taste, but also cultural identity and a tool to strengthen solidarity.

Family and Solidarity Values

Family relationships are an important aspect of this movie, especially the relationship between Raya and her father, Benja. The movie shows that family is the main foundation that provides support and hope to build harmony. In Indonesian culture, family values are highly upheld. The concept of extended family in Indonesia emphasizes solidarity and shared responsibility within the family, both in daily life and when facing difficulties. This message teaches that family is the first place to foster love and unity.

Rituals as Honoring Ancestor’s Heritage

Several scenes in the movie showcase unique celebratory traditions and rituals, such as traditional ceremonies or important anniversaries. This reflects the rich culture of the Kumandra region, which is full of traditions. In Indonesia, traditional celebrations such as the *Ngaben* ceremony in Bali, *Ruwatan* in Java, or *Tabuik* in West Sumatra illustrate the spiritual meaning and togetherness of the community. This message reminds us of the importance of maintaining traditions and honoring ancestral heritage as part of cultural identity.

Diversity and *Kebhinekaan*

Kumandra, which consists of five regions with different cultures, illustrates the diversity that still has common roots. Although the regions were at odds, they eventually united to fight *Druun* and restore the world. This reflects the cultural diversity of Indonesia, which consists of more than 17,000 islands with hundreds of ethnic groups and languages. The motto “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” is the basic principle to maintain harmony in diversity. This message emphasizes that differences are not an obstacle to unity, but rather a strength.

Traditional Clothing and Accessories

The costumes worn by the characters in the movie adopt elements of traditional Indonesian culture, including weaving motifs, fabrics, and ornaments. Many of these elements are similar to traditional Indonesian fabrics such as songket, batik and ulos. The design reflects pride in cultural heritage while introducing the beauty of Indonesia's textile traditions to a global audience. The message teaches the importance of preserving and promoting the uniqueness of local culture through art and clothing (Arista & Sudarmillah, 2022).

The cultural messages in *Raya and the Last Dragon* not only reflect universal values, but are also closely related to Indonesian culture. This makes the movie not only an entertainment, but also an educational medium about the importance of unity in diversity and respect for tradition (Nurjanah et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This research explores and evaluates the elements of Indonesian culture shown in the film, and relates them to the original Indonesian culture recognized by UNESCO. Some of the Indonesian representation of cultural elements identified in the movie include the traditional weapon keris, wayang, batik, Jepara wood carving, and caping hat. Each of these elements not only shows the richness of Indonesian culture, but also illustrates deep values, such as cooperation, trust, harmony with nature, and the importance of family solidarity.

The movie conveys cultural messages that are relevant to Indonesian social values, such as gotong royong, diversity, and the importance of maintaining traditions. In addition, the movie introduces elements of Indonesian culture to a global audience, showing how local culture can be a symbol of identity and unity. Thus, *Raya and the Last Dragon* is not only a means of entertainment, but also an educational medium that emphasizes the importance of unity in diversity and respect for cultural heritage.

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