

THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF NUSANTARA IN A MOVIE “RAYA AND THE LAST DRAGON”

Nirwana*

English and Literature Department, UIN Alauddin Makassar

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ABSTRACT

Raya and the Last Dragon is an animated movie with an adventure theme from Walt Disney Studio which was released in 2021. This movie tells the adventures of a character named Raya who lives on his birthland named Kumandra. Raya begins her journey to find the last dragon named Sisu to help her defeat an enemy from darkness named Druun and unite the Kumandra again. In this movie, you can see the design aspects of local wisdom, background, culture, life values and tradition that are still strong and are very authentic and related to the daily life of people in Southeast Asia and one of them contains aspects of Indonesian culture. Therefore, this movie has norms values that reflect the identity of the Indonesian nation in the Southeast Asia region. This study aims to find out how the role of Southeast Asian culture is formed and influences the people in assessing Southeast Asian culture, especially culture from Indonesia. The research method was a grounded theory approach and the data is taken from the scene of the movie. The research results show that there are cultural elements that are shown through the values in the Movie Raya and The Last Dragon in the form of character design, asset design and background. These assets are able to build the people's perception of the culture of Southeast Asia and Indonesia.

Keywords: Cultural identity; *Nusantara* movie; Raya and the Last Dragon

ABSTRAK

Raya and the Last Dragon merupakan film animasi bertema petualangan dari Walt Disney Studio yang dirilis hampir setahun yang lalu. Film ini menceritakan petualangan seorang tokoh bernama Raya yang tinggal di tanah kelahirannya bernama Kumandra. Raya memulai perjalanannya untuk menemukan naga terakhir bernama Sisu untuk membantunya mengalahkan musuh dari kegelapan bernama Druun dan menyatukan kembali Kumandra. Dalam film ini, Anda dapat melihat desain aspek kearifan lokal, latar belakang, budaya, nilai-nilai kehidupan dan tradisi yang masih kuat yang sangat otentik dan terkait dengan kehidupan sehari-hari masyarakat di Asia Tenggara dan salah satunya mengandung aspek budaya Indonesia. Oleh karena itu, film ini memiliki nilai-nilai norma yang mencerminkan identitas bangsa Indonesia di kawasan Asia Tenggara. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana peran budaya Asia Tenggara terbentuk dan mempengaruhi masyarakat dalam menilai budaya Asia Tenggara, khususnya budaya dari Indonesia. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan teori grounded dan tahapan dalam pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah metode kualitatif. Dari metode tersebut, hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat unsur-unsur budaya yang ditampilkan melalui nilai-nilai dalam film Raya and The Last Dragon berupa desain karakter/tokoh, desain aset dan latar belakang. Aset-aset tersebut mampu membangun persepsi masyarakat terhadap budaya Asia Tenggara dan Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: film identitas budaya; film *Nusantara*; Raya and the Last Dragon

INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia is a region located in the Southeast Asian continent. people living in

this area are identified as people of Malay descent. The Southeast Asian region is divided into two groups, including Mainland Southeast Asia and Southeast Asian waters. ASEAN

*Author(s) Correspondence:
 E-mail: misswana1@gmail.com

(Association of Southeast Asian Nations) is an international organization founded by southeast Asian countries with the aim of maintaining the stability of each country, ASEAN consists of eleven countries including Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam and Timor Leste. Southeast Asian people are often called Malays because they have cultural and physical similarities. This similarity is due to the influence brought by the Arabs, Chinese, Europeans and Indians, at that time there was trade in the coastal areas of Southeast Asia.

Indonesia is located on the equator, this makes the country of Indonesia get sunlight throughout the year and makes its weather have a warm temperature. Indonesia consists of approximately seventeen thousand islands, this ensures that various organisms, both organic that can live in land and water areas, live, grow and develop very well, while making Indonesia a mega biodiversity country together with Brazil and Zaire. Indonesia's biological wealth is a combination of the biodiversity of Asia and Australia (Walujo, 2011).

Indonesia's cultural diversity is rooted in various kinds of local cultures that continue to grow and develop within the scope of their communities. The emergence of cultural diversity is the result of the visible influence of the reflection of its role in society so that culture is created by itself. From time to time, cultural development has a function and role to increase the spirit of nationalism. therefore, local culture has social norms that need to be applied by every Indonesian citizen. From this diversity, it is possible to bring up to an unparalleled variety of Indonesian cultural diversity, the results created from that culture are visualized in various forms including traditional houses, traditional ceremonies, religious rituals, traditional clothes, traditional dances, musical instruments and traditional songs, traditional weapons, even special foods that reflect Indonesian culture (Susanto, 2016).

The animated Movie *Raya and The Last Dragon* tells the story of the adventures of a character named Raya who was born in the

land named Kumandra. She traveled because he was looking for the last dragon left to defeat the enemy and uniting the divided land of Kumandra. In this movie, the viewers can see many elements including background elements, building forms, life values, community habits, and tradition that are closely related to the daily lives of people in the Southeast Asian region, especially Indonesia. This study intends to examine how Indonesian cultural identity is formed and influences the views of many people in assessing Southeast Asian culture, especially Indonesia. The author analyzes scene by scene in the Movie *Raya and The Last Dragon* using identity theory by Jane Batkin. The storyline of this movie is the journey of the main character named Raya in a prosperous land named Kumandra. The land of Kumandra is the place where humans used to live side by side with dragons who had magical powers. And then one day a tragedy occurred that caused conflict and division among humans. This triggers another problem, that is the emergence of a scary monster from the bottom of the darkness named Druun who brings a terrible plague. The plague is very deadly for every creatures especially for humans, if the plague monster attacks humans that humans who are affected by the plague will instantly turn to stone. Only the dragons can defeat them, but when humans need a savior, they suddenly disappear. The adventure begins with the scene where Raya the main character goes on a journey to find the last dragon with the hope and goal of the dragon being able to help him reunite the divided Kumandra and save and restore humans who have turned to stone. The role of this research is only as an additional reference regarding the study of various Asian and non-Asian films for scientific studies. This research also tries to convey to the readers about their own cultural identity (H Kara, 2014).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative method was chosen in this study. Qualitative research is an inquiry

*Author(s) Correspondence:
 E-mail: misswana1@gmail.com

strategy that emphasizes the search for meaning, understanding, concepts, characteristics, symptoms, symbols, and descriptors about a phenomenon; multi-method focus, natural and holistic, prioritizing quality, using several methods and presented in a narrative (Henricus Suparlan et al., 2015).

Presentation of data begins by identifying important elements in the film *Raya and The Last Dragon* which includes the selection and use of character designs, backgrounds, and any values and norms contained in the movie as a consideration in this research. This is in order to simplify and clarify the accuracy of the data obtained. Some of the parts that become the determining points in the selection of the sample are one of the scenes in this film which reflects the cultural values of the Southeast Asian population, especially the culture of the Indonesian state. How is the main character's attitude towards other characters and the surrounding environment. The author makes observations by watching each movie scene from the beginning until to the end of the movie and observing it from the author's point of view and taking parts that are considered to be able to present that idea. The author examines several parts of important scenes as samples in the study which are considered capable of showing the identity of Nusantara. At this stage, the author chooses the scene:

1. The opening of the movie begins with a scene depicting a group of people using a hoe to work on their land, at minute 00 : 01 : 30.
2. The background is in the form of using the designs of the characters with a Balinese cultural background, at minute 00 : 11 : 00.
3. There is also a depiction of a typical traditional market from Indonesia, namely the Floating Market on the island of Kalimantan, at minute 00 : 09 : 05.
4. Design assets in the form of a traditional musical instrument called Gamelan, at minute 00 : 14 : 36.
5. There is a depiction of a scene with a spiritual nuance or a ritual event

(worshipping using incense) given to the holy spirit, at minute 00 : 23 : 43.

6. Design assets in the form of a traditional house called Rumah Gadang from Minangkabau in West Sumatra, at minute 00 : 52 : 22.
7. The design depiction of the main character named Raya and his friend named Tuk Tuk who is a pangolin, at minute 00 : 21 : 17.
8. A dagger-shaped sword from Indonesia called Keris which is used as a means of self-defense, at minute 00 : 16 : 53.

Next is the data verification stage. At this stage, the conclusions obtained are based on the alignment of the analysis, methods, theories, and experiences of the viewers represented by the author. The author will watch the Movie *Raya and The Last Dragon* and analyze the parts of the scene that have been selected using identity theory by Jane Batkin in her book entitled *Identity in Animation: A Journey into Self, Difference, Culture and the Body* (2017). The paper argues that animation is a powerful tool for exploring identity because it allows for the representation of subjective experiences and internal states that may be difficult to articulate through other mediums. Through an analysis of a range of animated films and TV shows, including "Avatar: The Last Airbender," "Steven Universe," and "Rick and Morty," the paper examines how animation can be used to represent issues of self, difference, culture, and the body. Johnston argues that animation can be used to represent a wide range of identities and experiences, from gender and sexuality to race and disability. By creating animated characters and worlds that challenge traditional stereotypes and expectations, animators can help to create more inclusive and diverse representations of identity.

Overall, "Identity in Animation: A Journey into Self, Difference, Culture, and the Body" is an insightful and thought-provoking paper that highlights the potential of animation as a medium for exploring and representing issues of identity.

*Author(s) Correspondence:
 E-mail: misswana1@gmail.com

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of making animated movie is not only entertainment but also cannot be separated from the importance of making similarities between images and aspects of each element in making animation itself. The author examines several parts of the scenes in the film to be able to find a series of important assets in the movie in detail. The author divides into several groupings of discussion objects that show identity according to the category 1) the value of life that is seen in habits, 2) main character design and other characters, 3) local cultural wisdom in the form of houses, weapons, and art forms, also 4) background.

1. Life Values

At the beginning of the movie, we can see the jasmine flowers are used in every traditional spiritual activity of the Balinese people. The flower symbol symbolizes sincerity and purity. The implementation of every traditional ceremony with a ritual nuance always requires plants to support its activities. The number of plants used in the equipment for these ritual activities is very diverse and has different meanings from one another, but nowadays all the plants needed are sometimes plants that are easy to find around the environment where the Balinese people live (Putri et al., 2013).

The ritual equipment always uses a Banten which means Sesajen in the language of the Balinese people as a symbol of gratitude to God. Sesajen refers to offerings or sacrifices made to honor and appease spirits, deities, or ancestors. These offerings can take many forms, such as food, flowers, incense, and other items that hold symbolic meaning. One of the sesajen that has the simplest form is called Sesajen Canang Sari. Canang sari is an offering to the God that has a container made of leaves and filled with a type of plant, one of which is flowers and incense as a means of religious event for Balinese people (Hariana, 2017).

We can see this in line with the scene where Raya prepares the sesajen for the spiritual activity of summoning the holy spirit, that is the last Dragon called Sisu, as seen in picture below.

Picture 1. Raya prepare the Sesajen (Source: Raya and The Last Dragon)



Sesajen offerings is a tradition in various ceremonies with nuances of traditional rituals and socio-religious events. This has also occurred in Balinese Hindu society since time immemorial and even today. Even though they have different types or varieties of Sesajen, the various rites in using these offerings actually have the same goal, that is asking for safety or asking for protection from the God so that they can avoid calamity or harm caused by supernatural beings or spirits that have different names and types in every place. In addition, several rites of giving Sesajen are also intended as a form of gratitude for what has been obtained, and hope for success and prosperity in the present and in the future.

Endraswara stated that there are ritual symbols in the form of Sesajen. The Sesajen is a visualization of the thoughts, desires, and feelings of the performer in order to get closer to the Gods. This activity of getting closer through offerings is actually a form of cause and effect from an abstract culture. Sesajen are also a means to carry out negotiations or talks that are spiritual in nature on occult things so that these supernatural creatures do not interfere with human life. By giving food

*Author(s) Correspondence:
 E-mail: misswana1@gmail.com

symbolically to supernatural beings, it is hoped that these creatures will behave as they are, and if they want to help human life (Persada et al., 2020).

The Balinese people, who are predominantly Hindu, are people who are thick with various ritual activities and traditional Balinese Hindu ceremonies in their daily activities. Almost every day they offer *Sesajen*, both in the form of plants such as flowers, food and sacrifices as well as activities related to spiritual nuances and so on. This is an expression of request to the guardian God for safety in his life from various disturbances that exist in this world. In Balinese culture, there is a ritual activity that must be carried out every day as a form of gratitude to God.

2. Character Design

The main character in this film is named Raya as seen in picture 2. She is the daughter of the village head who has been fond of adventurous things since childhood. She can also be a symbol for children in Indonesia, because Indonesian children from a young age really like to do exploration activities at a relatively early age. At this age children are directly involved in manipulating objects around them to be studied actively, using real situations accompanied by the use of imagination as a form of their thoughts and feelings. With a curiosity that is so strong and supported by the geographical shape where they live, it makes children withdraw themselves to be able to satisfy themselves (Saraswati et al., 2021).

Raya is the main character in this movie. Picture 2 is a very appropriate depiction of a Southeast Asian woman with dark brown skin color, large eyes and black and brown eyes also long and thick black hair. Southeast Asia is a tropical area, which causes people to be exposed to direct sunlight in their daily activities. For example, brown skin color is a typical skin color for Indonesian people (Sukisman & Utami, 2021).

Picture 2. Design character Raya (Source: Raya and The Last Dragon)



Pangolin animals are divided into eight species, and are included in the genus *Manis*, family *Manidae*, and grouped in the *Pholidota* family. Javanese pangolin or Sunda pangolin is one of the species found in Indonesia. This animal is unique because its entire body is covered with fairly hard scales as a form of self-defense when it feels a threat from other predators, They have long tongues that make it easier for them to find small insects such as ants that live underground, Pangolin animals also do not have teeth because their food is insects that have soft bodies. Javan pangolins are nocturnal animals that can be found in forests and areas of oil palm plantations, rubber plantations or transition zones between forests and local people's plantations which have a lot of grass (Cahyono, 2008).

The author sees the character called Tuk Tuk contained in picture 3 as a representation of the pangolin animal, one of which is located in a landmark Asian region that is in Indonesia, where the Javanese people call this animal by the name of the Sunda pangolin. However the character Raya represents a southeast Asian woman with brown skin color, then automatically her friend named Tuk Tuk must also come from the same area that is Indonesia.

*Author(s) Correspondence:
 E-mail: misswana1@gmail.com

Picture 3. Design character TukTuk (Source: Raya and The Last Dragon)



3. Local Cultural Wisdom

As a country that is rich in local wisdom for its culture, there are many things that can represent Indonesia on the international, whether it is from the form of a modern house as it is nowadays or from a house that is classified as ancient so that can make it is own unique values, a type of food that uses a lot of typical spices and of course the taste of Indonesian people's cuisine is definitely more spicy, traditional music that was born on the existence of instruments that have their own unique sound, objects that were used in the time of our ancestors as a form of every daily activity as well as a form of their defense from the enemies. Indonesian local cultural wisdom will never run out to be told or researched for scientific material that will be used in the present and in the future.

Picture 4 shows a building that has the shape of a traditional house in Indonesiathatis Gadanghouse or traditional house of West Sumatra which has its own characteristics. Most of the buildings are made of wood which has solid properties and has a long lasting power. Another uniqueness is that we can see it from the shape with the slightly curved tip of the roof and the sharp tip of the blade like the horns of a male buffalo. Another thing that is attractive is the carvings which have a shape pattern that almost resembles batik patterns. if

we look at it at a glance, we can feel that this traditional house prioritizes beauty in its construction. The interesting thing about this building is that its architectural design resembles a flat shape which is a trapezoid but in an inverted state. One more thing that is interesting about the process of making this traditional house is that from the beginning of its manufacture to the end it does not use nails as a binder between the parts of this building (Fiandi, 2017).

Picture 4. Design traditional house; Gadang (Source: Raya and The Last Dragon)



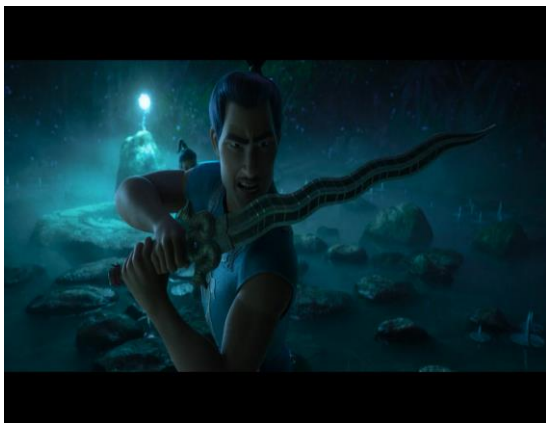
In Indonesia, there is an traditional weapon that ancestors used as a form of defense and as equipment in every important traditional event. The weapon is called the Keris which has a wavy shape on both sides and with a sharp and tip. Keris can be interpreted as a legacy of the ancestors of the Indonesian nation on objects that some people consider it as a work of art in the form of weapons. The process of making a keris is quite complicated because the smiths must be able to master the techniques in the process of forming the kris itself. In the process of creating a keris there is an assumption that there is interference from the Gods in this matter. So some people believe that the keris is a sacred object that has magical powers (C., 1937).

In the movie Raya and The Last Dragon, picture 5 shows the use of a sword in the form of a keris which was used by Raya's

*Author(s) Correspondence:
 E-mail: misswana1@gmail.com

father as a form of defense against attacks launched by other residents of the Kumandra. The conflict that occurred because each of them wanted to seize the magic crystal from the holy spirit and then they used it as a source asset for the prosperity of their own village. They are too greedy and complacent for the crystal. Raya's father, who believed that Kumandra would definitely reunite like before, but instead they betrayed this belief so that Raya's father desperately defended the *kristal* by using his flagship weapon that is keris sword. Raya's father lost and the keris sword was given to Raya as a form of inheritance as a symbol of spirit and a struggle (Bolter & Gromala, 2018).

Picture 5. Design weapon keris (Source: Raya and The Last Dragon)



One of the cultural legacy in terms of sound and music is the existence of instruments that can produce a distinctive or unique sound such as a traditional musical instrument called Gamelan which is of the type originating from the mainland of Java or more precisely the art that originated from the Mataram kingdom and then passed on by the Keraton Kingdom. Javanese gamelan is a traditional musical instrument from Indonesia as an ancestral legacy that is not known for certain when and how it was originally created. Gamelan is usually played in a performance such as wayangakulit (shadow

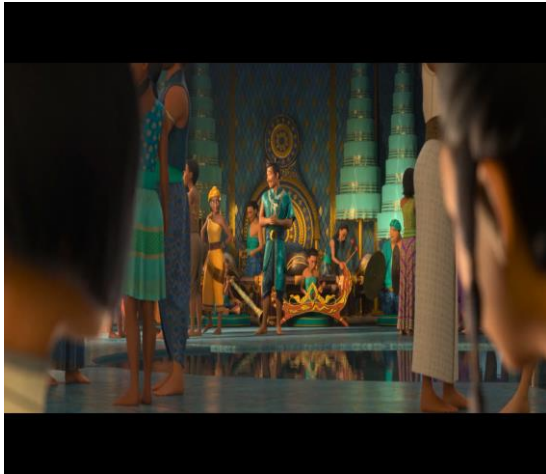
puppet) or ketoprak¹ as the accompanying or backsound music for the show. In Javanese society and from the Mataram kingdom the use of Gamelan music is usually called "Karawitan" which means complicated, smooth, or small. The use of Gamelan instruments in Javanese art is still shown at official events such as weddings, thanksgiving and so on (- et al., 2014).

The author finds that the use of Gamelan instruments in the Movie Raya and The Last Dragon is not just an illustration, however this gamelan instrument actually becomes the backsound of several scenes in this movie such as when the prologue scene of the movie uses Gamelan music as musical accompaniment or music for spiritual event (Nasir, 2016). There is also another scene, such as at the time of a joint meal between all the residents of the Kuramadra, where we are shown and at the same time hear the sound of the Gamelan instrument.

The use of gamelan sounds is assumed as an effort to create an authentic atmosphere and feel like in Southeast Asia, the place where gamelan culture originates. Thus, the use of gamelan can promote the cultural identity of Southeast Asia in general, and Indonesia in particular. In addition, gamelan is also often associated with values such as unity and cooperation, because it is usually played together by a group of people. Therefore, the use of gamelan in this film might reflect these values, and also give a positive message about diversity and unity in Indonesian culture. as in Picture 6.

¹ Ketoprak is a popular street food dish in Indonesia, especially in Jakarta. It is a vegetarian dish that typically consists of rice vermicelli noodles, tofu, bean sprouts, and cucumber, all mixed together with a peanut sauce. Some variations of ketoprak may also include boiled eggs, fried shallots, and krupuk (a type of Indonesian crackers).

Picture 6. Traditional instrument; Gamelan
 (Source: Raya and The Last Dragon)



The Floating Traditional Market (pasar apung) in Banjarmasin is a public facility that is made to serve as a means of shopping for the floating traditional market in Banjarmasin. The basic idea arises because the original floating traditional market in Banjarmasin is not well organized and tends to damage the river because of market waste that floats on the river so that a floating traditional market is needed that is organized in terms of good buying and selling and the waste system is in accordance with a good and healthy shopping place. The Floating Market in Banjarmasin have met good market criteria in the process of buying and selling, arranging and also handling waste. This floating traditional market is expected to be able to restore and maintain tradition and locality of the people in Banjarmasin, so that traders in this floating market can become a special attraction and also increase tourism in Banjarmasin (Emanuella et al., 2018).

Another local wisdom is the market which is quite unique because the place where they trade is on a small boat but with a very much capacity for the goods they trade. The floating traditional market in this movie is a market that operates in waters that are the center of trade and economic turnover for the Kumandra residents in the talon area, the depiction of the floating market as in picture 7.

Picture 7. Floating Traditional Market
 (Source: Raya and The Last Dragon)



The art of shadow puppet (wayang) performance is not new for people in the Southeast Asian region. This has always existed for every ethnicity and nation. In the Southeast Asian region, this unique art has become a symbol of identity for the Nusantara. In Indonesia, wayang has various types and forms, this can happen because it is adjusted to the visualization of the wayang artists and the place where the puppets are in the show. Some of the famous wayang in Indonesia come from various regions, for example from the island of Java, wayang Narta in Bali, wayang Sasak in Lombok, wayang Banjarmasin, wayang Palembang, wayang kulit Cirebon and so on (Koesoemadinata, 2013).

The scene shown in picture 8 is the prologue of the movie *Raya and The Last Dragon* which uses visualizations from wayang performances in Indonesia. The movement of the animation when cultivating the land using a hoe is the same as the motion of the wayang when it is played. The design of the wayang is almost the same as the wayang kulit design that comes from Cirebon. However, the shape and color of the wayang used in this animation are more modern, unlike the original wayang which have a monotone black and white color with a little gold added on the design (Subagya, 2013).

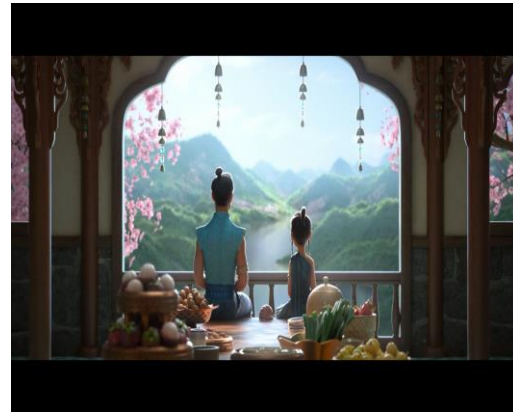
*Author(s) Correspondence:
 E-mail: misswana1@gmail.com

Picture 8. Shadow puppet (wayang) in the prologue scene (Source: Raya and The Last Dragon)



The author identifies that the setting used in Movie *Raya and The Last Dragon* is Balinese cultural background. This is shown in picture 9 which uses assets and properties that have similarities to Balinese culture. Such as the use of aspects of the arrangement of fruits that represent the habits of the Balinese people. The use of fruits for the Balinese people is not just as food but more than that, the fruits will be offered to their ancestors and to the God as a form of gratitude for what they have obtained in this world. Another aspect shown in picture 9 is the use of clothing on the character of Raya and her father. The clothing designs used are almost the same as the clothing designs used by the Balinese people every day. The forms and patterns used include aspects of simplicity such as the use of plain cloth with batik patterns. The atmosphere shown in picture 9 seems calm. This means the culture of the Balinese people who love the calm aspect of life. This serenity is caused because the Balinese people like doing religious activities that require concentration and calmness of the soul in its implementation as in the process of doing a meditation. However we can see the expanse of mountains and rivers which a characteristic terms of geography in Indonesia (Dewi, 2019).

Picture 9. Nuance of Balinese cultural background (Source: Raya and The Last Dragon)



CONCLUSION

The results of the study conclude that there is a depiction of the identity of the nusantara in the Movie *Raya and The Last Dragon*. This result can be proven through the identification of the selected scenes that can present aspects include the habits of people in the Southeast Asian region and also from through the main character “RAYA”. Raya is described as a warrior who is tough, brave, and has values such as courage, honesty, and loyalty which are highly valued in Indonesian culture. Apart from that, Raya also seems to really appreciate cultural diversity and cooperation, which are values that are considered very important in Indonesian society. Through Raya's character and storyline, this film gives a positive message about cultural diversity and the importance of cooperation in achieving common goals, which are very important values in the culture of the archipelago.

Moreover, Asian people always put forward and believe in the values of life which include spiritual activities or the daily activities they usually do, this is also closely related to the values that are embraced and applied in Indonesia. the use of the building form which is identical to various traditional houses in Indonesia, one of which uses the design of the Gadang traditional house from

*Author(s) Correspondence:
 E-mail: misswanal@gmail.com

West Sumatra. The background of the place used also adds to the aspect of the typical atmosphere of mainland Indonesia which has a tropical climate which is identical to rainwater. The designs of the characters that represent the gestures and appearance of the Indonesian people such as the design of the main character named Raya who is a representation of a southeast Asian woman who has dark brown skin. The use of tools and properties also adds to the aspect of Nusantara identity, such as the use of wayang kulit art, the existence of a sword in the shape of a keris. The Nusantara does have a lot of cultural diversity. However, this variety of cultures does not make us divided but it is precisely these differences that bring the Nusantara to the international with it is culture that is recognized by many other countries.

This research was conducted because of the desire to participate in identifying the culture that exists in one's own country so that later it can be used as a reference for further research. The Nusantara has a lot of culture that is not yet known by the people themselves and from the international. Therefore, the author wants to learn and research more about the culture that exists in our country.

The author's recommendation is that more Asian researchers who are experts in expressing their ideas and thoughts in the perception of their own cultural identity need to be put forward in a global scope. The role of other researchers is very useful for readers who want to increase their knowledge about the identity of a culture.

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*Author(s) Correspondence:
 E-mail: misswana1@gmail.com

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