

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Today, diversity needs to be a crucial issue to be discussed in depth to increase the value of tolerance in all aspects of social life. Diversity is one thing that will always exist in everyday life by looking at the diverse conditions of society. Therefore, society's diverse needs are significant to be understood to prevent people from being easily divided over sensitive issues such as religion, culture, and race. Thus, understanding diversity is essential.

Diversity suggests differences. Hence, understanding differences are also wise and crucial. This perfectly works when recognizing the differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical ability, religious beliefs, or politics (Unc, 2010). In other words, living in and with diversity means knowing how to understand one another and moving beyond simple tolerance to embrace and celebrate each individual's rich dimensions of diversity. Thus, cultural diversity is understood as a general phenomenon in many countries.

Raya and The Last Dragon (Estrada & Hall, 2021), a film produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios, shows a rich representation of cultural diversity. Don Hall and Carlos Lopes Estrada directed the film, while Qui Nguyen and Adele Lim wrote the screenplay. Walt Disney Animation Studios produced the film, the first Disney animated film set in Southeast Asian culture. This film takes inspiration from Southeast

Asian culture. This film has also become the talk of critics and film connoisseurs of the world. In addition, the existence of this film can indirectly become a media that can contribute to overcoming the problems previously mentioned, namely the identity of each country, especially the Southeast Asian region. With a good understanding of the audience, it is hoped that people from various continents can recognize the cultures of countries in Southeast Asia better (Saraswati et al., 2021).

Raya and The Last Dragon (Estrada & Hall, 2011) is one of the animated films that won the Annie Awards in the category of the best-animated picture by ASIFA-Hollywood. In addition, one of the fascinating aspects of *Raya and The Last Dragon* (Estrada & Hall, 2021) is its representation of multiculturalism. This movie recounts the events set in an imaginary country known as Kumandra. It is a region where people of many tribes co-exist peacefully with dragons.

The film was produced in 2018 and continued to the COVID-19 pandemic time. It was officially released in 2021. In the preproduction stage, the director conducted research on several countries in the Southeast Asia regions, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, Laos, and Myanmar. The voice actors in the film are also filled with several Asian people. The main cast in the film is Kelly Marie Tran, who voices Raya and is of Vietnamese descent, Awkwafina is the voice of Sisu and Singaporean, and Gemma Chan is the voice of Namaari. At the first screening of this film, 1.08 billion minutes were watched on the first weekend. So far, the film has grossed \$130 million. On the other hand, this film has entered ten nominations at the 49th annual Annie Awards, the highest film with the ten most nominations (Erbaş, 2013).

This film presents the country of Kumandra with its many diverse cultures. Where these cultures are very similar to cultures in Southeast Asia, one of which is Indonesia. The film differs from other Asian-set films that were also popular earlier, such as *The Great Wall of China* (Yimou, 2016). *The Great Wall of China*, released in 2016, is a historical fantasy action film directed by Chinese filmmaker Zhang Yimou in his Hollywood directorial debut. However, in terms of the intended meaning presented in this Disney film, some audiences still do not understand the meaning clearly because sometimes culture is displayed in an implicit or implied form. The film is an interesting object to study, especially in the representation of the cultural diversity of Southeast Asia. Therefore, the researcher is interested in describing the culture of Southeast Asia in the film in terms of language, clothing, food, geographical conditions, architectural building, and tradition.

A movie is one of the many forms of media that exemplifies cultural diversity. How characters are portrayed in movies has the potential to establish a paradigm that inadvertently shapes the audience's way of thinking. A scene serves as the vehicle through which the cinema, described as a communication medium, delivers its messages (Nuning, 2016). The movie is a kind of entertainment, but it also plays an important part in the dissemination of ideology and the influence of viewers on social reality (Fatimah et al., 2021). Since films can be both entertaining and informative to the audience, films have the potential to influence the audience watching them. In the film, there are also elements of signs and omens that imply information in an interesting event space. These signs and signs often need to be analysed through story-enhancing

elements, such as costumes, settings, and properties in each type of film (Sreekumar, 2021).

1.2. FIELD OF STUDY

This field of study is cultural studies on a cinematic medium (film).

1.3. SCOPE OF STUDY

Raya and The Last Dragon (Estrada & Hall, 2021) is an animated cartoon film it aims to entertain and be presented to children. However, it also contains a specific purpose, namely to represent and inform the culture in Southeast Asia. The discussion would cover several aspects, such as physical character, clothing, food, environment, architectural buildings, and weapons

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis has only one research question: “What cultural diversity is represented in *Raya and The Last Dragon* (Estrada & Hall, 2021)?”

1.5. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to identify and describe the cultural diversity shown in *Raya and The Last Dragon* (Estrada & Hall, 2011).

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The writer hopes that this research may enrich cultural studies, especially in a cinematic medium. Also, the result of this research can be used as a reference to improve

the reader's understanding of cultural diversity. Further, this work can provide additional information to those who intend to conduct further research on the related field.

1.7. DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.7.1. Representation

Representation is depicting someone or something in a certain manner, either by description or illustration. It is divided into three things. They are narration, conflict, and characters (Kuhn & Westwell, 2012).

1.7.2. Cultural Diversity

Multiculturalism and cultural diversity are two interchangeable terms. The concept of multiculturalism refers to the viewpoint that many cultures, racial and ethnic groups, and ethnicities, particularly those belonging to the under-represented, minority groups, and those needing cultural acknowledgment of their unique cultures within a particular cultural dominance (Erbaş, 2013).

