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The Representation of Chinese Culture in The Film *Tanda Tanya* by Hanung Bramantyo

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Abstract: Indonesia is a country rich in cultural diversity, including Chinese culture, which has long been rooted in the country's cultural landscape. Chinese culture has been in the socio-cultural life of Indonesia, making it quite widely studied in various films. *Tanda Tanya* is a film that raises the issue of diversity in Indonesia. In this film, Chinese culture is one of the important elements in it. The representation of Chinese culture in the film depicts a symbol of diversity that simultaneously shows the participation of Chinese culture in shaping the multicultural identity of Indonesia. This study aims to analyze the representation of Chinese culture in the film *Tanda Tanya* through the behavior of the characters, visualization, conversations between the characters presented, as well as to examine the representation of cultural interaction between Chinese culture and local Indonesian culture. The type of research used in this study is descriptive qualitative with a semiotic analysis approach proposed by Roland Barthes, and strengthened by Stuart Hall's representation theory and Harsojo's views on culture. The data collection technique used in this study is the listening and recording technique. The results of the study show that the representation of Chinese culture in the film is quite diverse. This representation encourages the understanding that Chinese culture can interact with and coexist harmoniously within Indonesia's multicultural society.

Key words: Chinese culture, representation, *Tanda Tanya* film

Abstrak: Indonesia merupakan negara yang kaya akan keberagaman budaya, salah satunya adalah budaya Tionghoa yang telah berakar lama di tanah air. Budaya Tionghoa mewarnai kehidupan sosial-budaya di Indonesia, menjadikannya film dengan latar belakang budaya yang cukup sering diteliti dalam berbagai film. *Tanda Tanya* merupakan film yang mengangkat isu keberagaman di Indonesia. Dalam film ini, budaya Tionghoa adalah salah satu unsur yang penting di dalamnya. Representasi budaya Tionghoa dalam film menggambarkan simbol keberagaman yang secara bersamaan menunjukkan partisipasi budaya Tionghoa dalam membentuk identitas budaya Indonesia yang multikultural. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap makna representasi budaya Tionghoa dalam film *Tanda Tanya* melalui perilaku tokoh, visualisasi, percakapan antar tokoh yang dihadirkan, serta mengkaji representasi interaksi antara budaya Tionghoa dan budaya lokal Indonesia. Jenis penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis semiotika yang dikemukakan Roland Barthes, serta diperkuat

oleh teori representasi Stuart Hall dan pandangan Harsojo mengenai kebudayaan. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah teknik simak catat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa representasi budaya Tionghoa dalam film cukup beragam. Representasi ini meningkatkan pemahaman bahwa budaya Tionghoa dapat berinteraksi dan hidup berdampingan secara harmonis dalam masyarakat multikultural Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Budaya Tionghoa, representasi, film *Tanda Tanya*

INTRODUCTION

The cultural identity belonging to the Chinese community in Indonesia is a distinct product resulting from a long history of migration and adaptation. As a vital component of the Indonesian multicultural landscape, this community continuously negotiates its identity by balancing the preservation of ancestral customs with integration into broader social structures. With Chinese descendants residing in almost all regions of Indonesia, Chinese culture has become widely recognized within Indonesian society (Rudiansyah & Sijabat, 2022). This interaction gives rise to unique forms of cultural expression, such as language, rituals, and culinary practices, which are frequently mirrored and reinterpreted through film as a medium of cultural representation.

Despite its long-standing presence in Indonesia, the expression of Chinese cultural identity has undergone various challenges and transformations throughout history. Processes of adaptation and interaction with local communities have shaped distinctive forms of Chinese-Indonesian culture, while at the same time requiring continuous negotiation between preserving cultural heritage and integrating into broader Indonesian society. As a result, representations of Chinese culture in public spaces and media become important sites through which cultural identity is expressed, maintained, and understood.

As a form of mass media, film plays an important role in representing cultural identities and communicating social values to audiences. Through visual, images, narrative, and character interactions, film not only reflects social realities but also participates in shaping public understanding of culture. Therefore, film becomes an important site for examining how cultural identities are represented, negotiated, and understood within a multicultural society. With its ability to reach diverse audiences, film serves as a powerful medium through which cultural meanings are conveyed and interpreted. Thus, film is not merely a form of entertainment or spectacle, but also a means of developing public awareness, critical thinking, and appreciation for art and culture (Deviera, 2021).

In the context of the power of the film, representation becomes very relevant. Hall (in Ayuanda et al., 2024) explains that representation is something important in the process of forming and exchanging meaning in a culture. This process occurs through the use of language, symbols, and images that function to convey certain meanings to objects, concepts, or experiences. Representation is also a process of building meaning for concepts in the human mind through language (Ayuanda et al., 2024). This perspective is consistent with the view that representation is closely linked to the relationship between concepts and language. Representation is not limited to spoken language, but also consists of various other expressions, including through visual language (Satria et al., 2024).

One of the films that displays the representation of Chinese culture is *Tanda Tanya*, directed by Hanung Bramantyo and released in 2011, this film with a duration of around 105 minutes explicitly raises the theme of tolerance, pluralism, and diversity in the context of multicultural Indonesian society. Set in the Pasar Baru area, Semarang, *Tanda Tanya* tells the story of the daily lives of several families with different cultural and religious backgrounds (Gumelar, 2018). In the film, there are three families in the spotlight. First, the Tan Kat Sun family, Buddhists who run a Chinese Food restaurant. Then, Rika, a Muslim woman who continues her husband's bookstore business who is later told in the film to convert to Catholicism. Finally, Menuk, a Muslim woman who works at the Chinese Food restaurant owned by the Tan Kat Sun family. Despite having different cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs, these three families are depicted as being able to live side by side in harmony.

Among the three families, the Tan Kat Sun family displays a prominent and interesting representation of Chinese culture to analyze. In this film, the Chinese Food restaurant that is managed not only functions as a source of livelihood, but also functions as a means of representing Chinese cultural heritage that continues to be maintained and kept alive in Indonesian society.

To analyze the representation of Chinese cultural in the film *Tanda Tanya*, this study applies Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. Semiotics or semeion in Greek means sign. The representation of a culture can be illustrated through signs. In the study of semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure is known as a pioneer who introduced the basic concept of signs, namely the signifier and the signified which together form a sign. This concept was later expanded by Roland Barthes by adding layers of denotation and connotation. The signifier and signified form a denotative meaning which is a literal meaning or explicit meaning. Through denotative meaning, an objective description can be found which is the basis for further analysis to the connotative level which is a figure of speech or implicit meaning (Andiara & Muhdaliha, 2022). With this layer, the research can analyze cultural symbols on the screen in greater depth, revealing not only their literal meanings but also as the cultural and social meanings associated with them.

This study is also informed by Harsojo's perspective on culture, which views culture as diverse, structured, inherited and dynamic. In addition, Stuart Hall's theory of representation is used to understand how cultural meanings are conveyed through media. Together, these perspectives provide a framework for examining the representation of Chinese culture in the film *Tanda Tanya*.

Based on the background described above, this research formulates two questions. First, how is Chinese culture represented in the film *Tanda Tanya* through character behavior, visualization, and conversations between characters? Second, what meanings are conveyed through the representation of interactions between Chinese culture and local culture in the film *Tanda Tanya*?

This study aims to reveal the meaning of the representation of Chinese culture in the film *Tanda Tanya* through the behavior of the characters, visualization, conversations between the characters presented, and to examine the representation of interactions between Chinese culture and local culture in the film *Tanda Tanya*. This study is expected to contribute ideas, especially about how the representation of Chinese culture is formed and interpreted in film media through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. It is also expected to increase the knowledge and

insight of readers regarding the representation of Chinese culture in Indonesia that is shown in the film and encourage appreciation of cultural diversity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several previous studies have examined the representation of culture, identity, and diversity in Indonesian film media, with various focuses, approaches, and findings. The study by Naufal al hakim & Adim (2023) entitled "Representation of Chinese Family Values in the Film *Cek Toko Sebelah* (Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis)". This study uses Barthes' semiotic analysis approach to reveal how Chinese family values are symbolically represented in the film's narrative. Their findings show that the film *Cek Toko Sebelah* displays values such as filial piety, business inheritance, and cross-generational family ties through characters and conflicts, especially through the character of Afuk who is depicted as a central figure in maintaining the family business heritage.

The focus on the research of *Tanda Tanya* emerged in a study by Estu Gumelar entitled "Analysis of Reception in the Film *Tanda Tanya*". This study highlights the public's response to the message of religious diversity conveyed in the film, using Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding theory. The results show that although the film *Tanda Tanya* explicitly displays a message of harmony and tolerance between religious communities, the audience has various interpretations depending on their respective social and cultural backgrounds. This strengthens the view that representation in the media is not uniformly accepted by the audience, but is influenced by personal experiences and perspectives. Furthermore, research by Khoirul Huda entitled "The Meaning of Tolerance in the Film *Tanda Tanya*" analyzes messages of diversity through a framing approach developed by Gamson and Modigliani. This study shows that the film *Tanda Tanya* presents tolerance as an active trait in religious life, through the representation of harmonious interactions between figures from various religious backgrounds. For example, scenes showing the involvement of Chinese figures in interfaith activities emphasize the importance of mutual respect that reflects the spirit of living side by side in a pluralistic society.

The most relevant research to the focus of this study is the paper by Sabar Pamuji entitled "Representation of Chinese Cultural Identity in the Film *Tanda Tanya* "?". Using Barthes' semiotic approach, Pamuji (2016) examines the representation of Chinese characters in the film as a reflection of their ethnic identity and cultural values. This study emphasizes that characters such as Tan Kat Sun, Lim Giok Lie, and Ping Hen depict Chinese characters who are tolerant of religious and cultural differences, and respect the existence of cross-ethnicities.

Roland Barthes' semiotic theory is widely used in cultural and media studies to examine how meanings are conveyed through signs. Barthes proposes two level of signification: denotation and connotation. Denotation refers to the literal or direct meaning of a sign, whereas connotation refers to the cultural, social, and ideological meanings associated with it. Through connotative meanings, cultural values become embedded in everyday representations and appear natural to audiences. Therefore, Barthes's semiotic approach is particularly relevant for analyzing films, as it enables researchers to uncover the cultural meanings represented through visual elements, dialogue, character behavior, and other symbolic forms.

The four studies above provide important contributions to understanding how Chinese cultural values, tolerance, and identity are represented in films. However, most previous studies

tend to focus on broad meanings, such as family values, inter-religious tolerance, or ethnic identity as a whole. Therefore, this study is here to deepen and complement by focusing specifically on a narrow aspect, namely the representation of Chinese culture through Barthes' semiotic approach which is specifically directed at character behavior, visualization, conversation between characters, and intercultural interactions in the film *Tanda Tanya*. Thus, this study not only adds to the richness of the analysis of cultural representation in Indonesian films, but also refines previous studies through a more careful and contextual reading of Chinese cultural symbols that appear in narrative, visual, and interaction details in the film.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research type. Moleong (in Subandi, 2011) said that qualitative methods produce descriptive data in the form of words, both spoken and written. To analyze the data, this study applies Roland Barthes' semiotic approach which is relevant to reveal the denotative and connotative meanings of the signs in the film *Tanda Tanya*.

The data collection technique used in this study is in the form of reading notes by observing and then recording each scene that shows the representation of Chinese culture in the film. Data collection through reading notes allows the research object to be analyzed repeatedly and in depth.

Data collection in this study involves primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from direct analysis of the Indonesian film entitled *Tanda Tanya* which took data from character behavior, visualization, conversations between characters, and intercultural interactions that show the representation of Chinese culture in the film. To enrich the analysis, secondary data was collected from literature relevant to the study, such as books, previous studies, and other scientific publications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To find the representation of Chinese culture in the film, the first analysis conducted was to identify signs in the form of character behavior, visualization, conversations between characters, and the interaction and adaptation between Chinese culture and local Indonesian culture as depicted in the film. Each sign was analyzed through a marking process, namely by classifying the signifier (visible visual form) and the signified (meaning of the signifier). Then, it was further analyzed using the semiotic approach proposed by Roland Barthes by explaining the meaning of the sign through denotative and connotative meanings. Each part not only shows meaning directly but also has a meaning that is not conveyed directly which then strengthens the public's understanding of the representation of Chinese culture in the film. Below is a discussion of the film scenes:

A. Representation of Chinese Culture through Character Behavior

In Stuart Hall's view, culture is defined as practices and habits carried out in everyday life. Characters in the film as representations of the character of a particular society, indirectly carry cultural values and identities through the behavior they display. In the film, there are two scenes that display Chinese cultural traditions that are still passed down from generation to generation,

this can be seen from the behavior of the characters who are praying and performing a traditional Chinese divination ritual known as Ciamsi.



Figure 1:

Praying to ancestors scene

Source: https://youtu.be/XZP_Kj7U0nA?si=bVCQW12y5xk3gGNE

The marker in picture one is the act of lighting three incense sticks or joss sticks and bowing in front of the altar with clasped hands. The sign of this action shows a spiritual connection with the ancestors. Denotatively, we can see the scene of Lim Giok Lie (Tan Kat Sun's wife) standing holding three incense sticks or joss sticks and on the altar of offerings there are candles, oranges and apples, and photos of deceased ancestors. Connotatively, the three incense sticks or joss sticks that are burned symbolize 天 (sky), 地 (earth), and 人 (humans) as a form of respect and prayer for the harmony of nature and the goodness of all beings. The candles that are lit have the meaning of lighting and purity. The flame from the candle symbolizes the spirit of life which shows that every individual needs to be motivated to learn and try (Subandi, 2019). Oranges symbolize good fortune and apples symbolize peace and protection (Wahyuni & Hartati, 2020). Photos of deceased ancestors are placed on the altar to commemorate the kindness they have given during their lifetime (Asih & Triguna, 2022). From a Confucian perspective, moral awareness is cultivated within the family and expressed through filial piety toward parents and ancestors. Thus, filial piety to ancestors and parents is the basis of virtue. Filial piety is considered the source and foundation of that virtue. Within Chinese culture, ancestral spirits are regarded as a source of blessings for future generations, and ancestor worship serves to strengthen family values and reinforce familial unity.



Figure 2:

Ciamsi scene

Source: https://youtu.be/XZP_Kj7U0nA?si=bVCQW12y5xk3gGNE

The marker in picture two is the act of shaking a bamboo tube containing numbered flat sticks, until one of the sticks falls, after which it is matched with a fortune-telling paper. The sign

of this practice shows spiritual belief in the role of the Almighty in determining the direction of life. Denotatively, it can be seen a scene of two people who are in a temple, the first person holding incense and the second person performing the Ciamsi ritual. One of the common fortune-telling practices in Chinese culture is Ciamsi (签诗 qiān shī), a tradition that has been part of human life for a long time. In the Ciamsi tradition, the ritual begins with a request for permission from the gods to find out whether Ciamsi is allowed. If permission is granted, the process of taking the fortune-telling is carried out by shaking a bamboo tube containing flat bamboo sticks that are numbered, until one of the bamboo sticks falls to the floor. After the number is obtained, confirm to the god regarding the truth of the number, using the same procedure as when asking for permission previously. If deemed correct, then the Ciamsi fortune-telling that matches the number will be given. However, if not, the process of taking it is repeated until approval is obtained. Connotatively, Ciamsi is usually carried out to find out fate and luck, its implementation is not limited to the Chinese New Year moment, but can be done at any time as needed. Ciamsi is also often used to find answers related to life partners, jobs, health or simply asking for life advice. From a socio-cultural perspective, belief in Ciamsi continues to survive and is passed down from generation to generation. Meanwhile, from the aspect of belief, many Chinese people consider Ciamsi as a spiritual intermediary with the Almighty to get guidance in life (Ahmadi, 2020).

Prayer has the meaning as a form of respect and devotion to ancestors and parents. Ciamsi has the meaning of spiritual efforts to find guidance regarding the direction of life in the future. Connotatively, these two practices not only display religious activities but also represent Chinese cultural values that value intergenerational relationships and rely on spiritual understanding in living life. By presenting these two traditions, the film conveys that Chinese identity remains alive and its existence is valued amidst the diversity of other cultures. This finding also reflects Harsojo's view that culture is not inherited biologically but learned and transmitted socially from one generation to the next. The continued practice of prayer and Ciamsi in the film demonstrates how cultural traditions are preserved and passed down within the Chinese-Indonesian community.

B. Representation of Chinese Culture through Visualization

The representation of Chinese culture in the film is also presented through various visual elements. In Stuart Hall's view, culture is interpreted as a representation that works through language and signs including visual language. Language in this case does not only refer to written and spoken words, but also includes images, symbols, and visual representations produced in the film. In this film, visualization is represented through various properties.



Figure 3:

Chinese characters and ornament

Source: https://youtu.be/XZP_Kj7U0nA?si=bVCQW12y5xk3gGNE

The visualization of Chinese culture is represented through a number of property and decoration elements that appear in the Chinese Food restaurant. The markers in the image above include a signboard with traditional Han characters on the front of the restaurant, the dominance of red and gold colors in the interior, lantern decorations, and there are also visualizations that are only briefly shown, such as ceramic glass motifs and curtains, the presence of a statue of the God Guan Yu, and dragon ornaments on the roof of the temple. The markers of all these elements refer to important values of Chinese culture. Denotatively, we can see the restaurant with the traditional script 廣東中國飯店 “Canton Chinese Food” which shows that this restaurant serves typical Guangdong (Cantonese) dishes, there is also the writing 一九六零年 which shows that this restaurant has been established since 1960, then there are red lanterns, Chinese ornaments in the architecture of the restaurant and the use of red, green and gold colors. Connotatively, writing script using traditional script instead of simplified script is one form of preserving ancestral cultural heritage. Some scholars argue that a limited understanding of Traditional Chinese characters may hinder the preservation of Chinese cultural heritage. Therefore, the scene showing the nameplate of the Tan Kat Sun family restaurant shows the preservation of Chinese culture in a multicultural society. Then, the installation of lanterns in the restaurant is believed to bring good luck and prosperity to the owner. In addition, lanterns are considered sacred because they are believed to be able to ward off evil forces and negative energy. Its installation is also interpreted as a symbol of prayer and hope that is raised to the sky for a better life in the future (Adhimas et al., 2023). The use of geometric trellis ornaments in the form of zigzag patterns or angled lines on the window glass and door of the room displayed at a duration of 00.06.24, connotatively carries the meaning of a symbol of balance because it consists of rigid, symmetrical, and interconnected shapes (Azmi & Lindarto, 2015). The use of red is a symbol of happiness, while green is a symbol of prosperity and health. As for yellow or gold is a symbol of good luck (Suharyanto & Matondang, 2018).



Figure 4:
round table and chopsticks

Source: https://youtu.be/XZP_Kj7U0nA?si=bVCQW12y5xk3gGNE

The markers in the image above include the use of chopsticks when eating chicken noodles and the use of a round dining table used in Tan Kat Sun's restaurant. The markers in these two scenes shown refer to cultural values that are strongly embedded in Chinese tradition. Denotatively, we can see the scene of Rika and her child using chopsticks when eating and they sit eating their food at a round table. Generally, chopsticks and round tables are made of wood. Connotatively, chopsticks are a traditional Chinese dining culture that is still preserved. Chopsticks symbolize unity, equality, and justice. Chopsticks consist of two sticks that are equal and the same length, and must be used together. Chopstick movements must be in harmony, directed in the same direction simultaneously. If one stick moves backward while the other moves forward, it will be difficult to pick up food. When chopsticks are used, there is etiquette that must

be observed, such as the prohibition of sticking chopsticks vertically into a bowl containing rice or noodles. This act is considered similar to the ritual of sticking incense on a grave, which is often believed to be a symbol of death (Selvia, 2021). In Chinese culture, eating at a round table is a way to create a warmer atmosphere and make it easier to pick up food. This makes the process of eating food easier and creates a more harmonious atmosphere (Sofyan, 2021).

In addition to the visual elements that are directly displayed in the main scenes, several visual elements of Chinese culture also appear briefly but still have strong symbolic meanings. Namely, at the duration of 00.41.10 a scene is shown showing the use of ceramic cups. Denotatively, it can be seen that Lim Giok Lie uses ceramic cups with Chinese motifs. Chinese-patterned ceramics developed in various regions of Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. Ceramics were one of the export goods in the 19th century. Ceramics are usually decorated with floral motifs such as peonies and chrysanthemums and mythological animals such as phoenixes and dragons. The motifs on ceramic cups have connotative meanings that generally contain hopes for happiness, good luck, and safety (Steven & Martono, 2014). At 01.23.28, a scene is shown that denotatively shows the use of a crane motif on the window curtains of Tan Kat Sun's room. Connotatively, Mulyono & Thamrin (2008) wrote that the crane symbolizes longevity and prosperity because cranes are believed to live up to 600 years. At 00.07.06, a scene is shown that denotatively shows a statue of a god with a serious facial expression, a beard, and holding a weapon. This god is known as the God Guan Yu. Connotatively, the God Guan Yu is the protector of Buddhism. In addition, Guan Yu is highly respected in Chinese tradition and is seen as the protector of the business world and social life (Nugroho, 2024). The scene showing the statue of the God Guan Yu in Tan Kat Sun's restaurant reflects the hope and belief that the restaurant business will always be guarded by the gods. Then, at the duration of 01.28.23, a scene is shown showing a dragon ornament. Denotatively, this scene shows two dragon ornaments facing each other on the roof of the temple. In a connotative sense, the dragon is seen as a symbol of power that watches over and protects humans and the universe (Mulyono & Thamrin, 2008). The Chinese community in Semarang believes that placing dragon ornaments on the roof of a place of worship or residence is believed to be a form of devotion to God Almighty which can also be interpreted as a place dedicated to God (Utami, 2018).

The existence of scenes that clearly or briefly show the visualization of Chinese culture, starting from the use of nameplates that still have traditional script, typical Chinese colors, Chinese architectural ornaments, the use of chopsticks and round tables to the motifs of ceramic cups and curtains, the statue of the God Guan Yu, and the dragon ornaments on the roof of this temple represent that in the film, the objects shown do not merely function as props. However, these various props convey the meaning of Chinese culture that represents Chinese identity. The connotative meaning of these elements strengthens the view that Chinese cultural heritage still exists and is still preserved and makes the audience recognize and realize that Chinese culture is not something foreign but is part of the reflection of a diverse Indonesia. These visual elements also function as recognizable markers of Chinese cultural identity.

Traditional Chinese script, Guan Yu statues, dragon ornaments, and the use of symbolic colors are closely associated with Chinese cultural heritage and therefore reinforce the “Chineseness” represented in the film. Their presence not only makes Chinese culture visible to audiences but also highlights the continuity of cultural traditions that continue to be maintained within the Chinese-Indonesian community. This finding is in line with Harsojo’s view that culture is inherited and preserved through various cultural elements that are passed down across generations.

C. Representation of Chinese Culture through Conversations between Characters

In Stuart Hall's view, language is one of the processes of cultural representation. Culture is represented and identity is expressed through diction, conversational context, and manner of speaking. In this film, conversations between characters are represented by greetings and the use of Chinese names.

In scene at duration 00.11.27 - 00.11.35, shows a marker in this scene, namely the use of greetings such as "Engko" and "Ci" in the conversation between Lim Giok Lie (Tan Kat Sun's wife) and Menuk (her employee). The signifiers of this greeting indicate respect and social closeness. Denotatively, "Engko" means older brother and "Ci" means older sister, in accordance with the greeting structure in Chinese culture. Connotatively, the greetings "Engko" and "Ci" in the film are used by other ethnic groups when addressing ethnic Chinese who are not much older than them. Pratiwi et al. (2021) wrote that each ethnic group adapts their speaking style when communicating to create social closeness. Ethnic Chinese feel more respected when addressed with greetings that reflect their cultural identity, as this strengthens their recognition of their existence in their social environment.



Figure 5:
Tan Kat Sun who was scolding Ping Hen

Source: https://youtu.be/XZP_Kj7U0nA?si=bVCQW12y5xk3gGNE

The scene above shows Tan Kat Sun scolding Ping Hen (his son) for ignoring Tan Kat Sun's request to close the restaurant and give employees five days off during Eid.

The signifiers in this scene are the words "pi" or "papi" and the use of the Chinese name "Ping Hen." These greetings and the use of Chinese names indicate respect and a kinship system. Denotatively, the name "Ping Hen" means the Chinese name of the actor in the film *Tanda Tanya*, while the word "papi" comes from Spanish and means father. Connotatively, Chinese people highly value their names. Guangyu (in Gunawan & Karsono, 2013) wrote that according to Chinese people, names are not only a title or symbol, but also have meaning. A person's name can reflect family hopes, individual interests, inspiration, ambitions, and is also a cultural heritage. The use of the word "papi" is one variation of the greeting used by young Chinese people to address their parents (Kuntjara, 2018).

The greetings and the use of Chinese names in the film *Tanda Tanya* show that the ethnic Chinese identity is spoken in everyday language. The greetings reflect social values such as respect, kinship, and interpersonal closeness, while also illustrating the structure of social relationships communicated through language. Likewise, the use of Chinese names reflects the characters' attachment to their cultural heritage and serves as a marker of ethnic identity within Indonesia's multicultural society. By presenting these linguistic elements, the film not only develops its

narrative but also reinforces the visibility of Chinese culture in everyday social life. These findings are consistent with Harsojo's view that culture possesses a structure, as language functions as a cultural system through which social values, norms, and identities are organized and transmitted across generations. Therefore, the use of greetings and Chinese names in the film represents an important aspect of "Chineseness" that continues to be maintained within the Chinese-Indonesian community.

D. Representation of Chinese Culture through Intercultural Interaction

In Stuart Hall's view, culture is understood as the result of a process of representation that occurs through social practices, language, and interactions between groups. Therefore, culture is not fixed, but is constantly being compromised through social relationships between individuals from different backgrounds. This film features scenes that represent cultural interaction through acculturation in the culinary field.



Figure 6:
Acculturation of Chinese-Indonesian food

Source: https://youtu.be/XZP_Kj7U0nA?si=bVCQW12y5xk3gGNE

The signifier in this scene is chicken noodles, which represent a form of acculturation between Chinese and local culture. The signifier of the scene of eating chicken noodles reflects the adaptation of Chinese values to the majority culture. Denotatively, chicken noodles are derived from the word *bakmi*. *Bakmi* is one of the noodle dishes commonly found, especially in Southeast Asia, which has a significant Chinese population. *Bakmi* comes from the Hokkien word "bah-mī," which in Indonesian means "meat noodles." These noodles are made from wheat and were brought to Indonesia by Hokkien Chinese immigrants from Fujian. *Bakmi* usually uses pork and lard. However, over time, *bakmi* has adapted to Indonesian society, especially Muslims. This adaptation can be seen in the various types of meat used in making *bakmi*, such as beef and chicken, which now also often use garlic oil and chicken oil. This shows that *bakmi* has become a common and more varied dish, adapting to local tastes (Rudiansyah & Sijabat, 2022).

The phenomenon of Chinese culture interacting with local culture in the culinary field is not only shown in movies but also found in real life in Indonesian society, such as *bakpao*, meatballs, and *siomay*. In Hokkien, "bak" means meat and "pao" means bundle, so *bakpao* literally means "bundle of meat". In Hakka culture, similar foods are called *nyukppao* or *yugppao* with the same meaning. Initially, the filling of buns usually used pork, but over time, the filling variants have become more diverse such as using vegetables, sweet jams, nuts, and chicken (Rudiansyah & Sijabat, 2022). In Hokkien, meatball or *bakso* is "ground meat" which originally used pork. When introduced in Indonesia, the meat used in making *bakso* underwent adjustments, so that *bakso* with chicken, beef, fish, or shrimp can be found in everyday life. Then, *siomay* is also a form of cultural interaction, *siomay* is a type of traditional dumpling originating from Hohhot, the

capital of Inner Mongolia, China. In Mandarin it is called *shaomai* and in Cantonese it is known as *siu mai*. *Siomay* has a skin similar to dumplings and in Cantonese customs, *siomay* is served as part of dimsum, while in its area of origin it is often served as a breakfast menu. In Indonesia, *siomay* has undergone adjustments in filling, as a substitute for pork, Indonesian *siomay* generally uses chicken, shrimp, mackerel which is then mixed with sago flour or tapioca to make it easy to shape (Sulistiyawati & Prianta, 2024).

The scene of eating chicken noodles and several examples of Chinese cultural acculturation in Indonesian cuisine illustrate the process of cultural acceptance and adaptation in Indonesia's multicultural society. Connotatively, chicken noodles, steamed buns, meatballs, and *siomay* reflect that Chinese culture has adapted to local values and social norms, particularly through modifications to food ingredients to accommodate the Muslim majority in Indonesia who do not consume pork. This adaptation not only demonstrates cultural acceptance but also illustrates how Chinese cultural elements can coexist with local traditions while maintaining their cultural roots. As a result, these culinary products represent a form of Chinese-Indonesian cultural identity that has evolved through interaction with local culture. This finding supports Harsojo's view that culture is dynamic and continuously changes in response to social conditions. Therefore, culinary acculturation functions not merely as an adjustment of taste but also as evidence that Chinese culture remains present and relevant while adapting to the multicultural context of Indonesian society.

CONCLUSION

This research employed Roland Barthes' semiotic approach to analyze the denotative and connotative meanings represented through Chinese cultural signs in the film *Tanda Tanya*. This representation is manifested through:

1. Character behavior, depicting scenes of characters performing traditional prayers and Ciamsi.
2. Visualizations featuring the use of traditional script signage, typical Chinese colors, Chinese architectural ornaments, chopsticks and round tables, ceramic cup and curtain motifs, a statue of the god Guan Yu, and dragon ornaments on the roof.
3. Conversations between characters featuring greetings and the use of Chinese names.
4. Intercultural interactions show cultural acculturation in the culinary field.

The results of this study indicate that the representation of Chinese culture not only presents visual elements that pass down cultural values across generations, but also examines the traditions and customs of the Chinese people who live side by side in a multicultural society. The traditions of praying and Ciamsi are examples of traditions passed down from generation to generation that are still practiced today. The greetings in the film reflect the social values that exist within the community. The language and communication styles are not used randomly, but in an orderly manner, demonstrating the structured nature of culture. The use of Chinese names reflects a connection to cultural roots. The way the characters interact and the use of Chinese names symbolize the continuation of cultural identity in everyday life. Then, cultural acculturation in the culinary field shown in the movie and other real examples is proof that culture is always changing. The dishes consumed across ethnicities reflect the process of cultural interaction that enriches Indonesia's culinary diversity. The cultural signs identified in this study function as recognizable markers of Chinese cultural identity, reflecting the continuity of

traditions, values, and heritage that remain visible within the Chinese-Indonesian community. Thus, *Tanda Tanya* significantly represents Chinese culture as a dynamic, vibrant, recognized, and accepted part of Indonesian society. The film serves as a medium through which Chinese cultural identity is made visible, highlighting the existence and role of Chinese culture within Indonesia's multicultural landscape.

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