

REPRESENTATION OF ICONIC CULTURE IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN IN “RAYA AND THE LAST DRAGON”

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the representation of iconic culture in Southeast Asia in the movie. It focuses on findings of the scene that shows the iconic culture of Southeast Asian in the film Raya and The Last Dragon. The qualitative method is applied to analyze the data in this study and the applied theory is representation theory by Stuart Hall and culture theory. Therefore, the result of this study shows the representation of iconic culture from Indonesia, Thailand, and Philippines, the iconic culture itself is detailed represented and recognizable. The first iconic culture is the weapon used by Indonesian in the form of traditional weaponry. The form of iconic culture from Thailand is represented through the vehicle used by Raya. This vehicle is the iconic mode of transportation that can be found in Thailand. Finally, the Martial Arts used in the scenes are the Philippines iconic culture.

Keyword: *film, iconic culture, representation, Southeast Asian*

INTRODUCTION

In a multimedia environment that is constantly evolving, media literacy is arguably more important than ever. Individuals are frequently unaware that media culture is educating and shaping them (Kellner & Share, 2005). Critical media literacy can promote multicultural literacy, conceived as recognizing and interacting with the diversity of cultures and subcultures that constitute a world that is becoming more global and

multicultural (Courts, 1998; Weil, 1998). Critical media literacy teaches students how to learn from media and resist media manipulation and constructive use of media materials. However, it is also concerned with developing skills that will aid in creating good citizens and make individuals more motivated and competent social participants (Kellner & Share, 2005).

Film is known as a medium that presents a topic or message in a light manner so that the audience can understand it. Many people regard a film as a work of art as well as a free place for expression in a learning process to better their careers in the area of cinema, while others see it as an actual fact that accurately depicts social values that exist in a society. As a communication studies, it has given rise to mass communication, which, of course, requires the assistance of mass media in the delivery of messages from communicators to communicants. Film is an audio-visual medium of mass communication that conveys messages to people who watch in order to exchange messages. Mass communication allows a message to be sent to a large number of people at the same time (Febriyanti et al., 2020).

This study analyzed *Raya and the Last Dragon*, a Disney animated film. It was released on March 3, 2021, and is a relatively new film *Raya and the Last Dragon*, a fictional film featuring Southeast Asian culture, fascinates the researcher. Kumandra is a fantasy world inspired by Southeast Asia's diverse cultures. The film's unique aspects are inspired by the beauty of nature and cultural richness, as well as mutual trust and collaboration. This diversity is represented in Southeast Asian people's daily life through themes, colors, architecture, food, values, habits, and customs. Due to *Raya and The Last Dragon* is an animation film. Therefore animation is a film created by converting still pictures into moving graphics. Children enjoy the forms of animated characters that appear hilarious, cool, and engaging, animated films are aimed towards and have a more focused market for children. As a result, many animated films use a youngster as the

primary character to appeal to a wider audience. Aside from that, it catches the attention of the audience, particularly youngsters, because the characters they see are of a similar age to them. Emile Cold of France was the first to introduce cartoons or animated pictures in 1908 (Nurmawati et al., 2019). Characters created by American artist Walt Disney now dominate the showing of cartoons or animated films, including short stories of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck and feature lengths. *Raya and The Last Dragon* are among them as the newest released film.

The film itself was inspired from the Southeast Asian culture, which are Indonesian, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore. As a result, the researcher tries to explain the representation on how Southeast Asian culture is presented, as the researcher has gained new ideas after seeing the films *Raya and The Last Dragon*. *Raya and the Last Dragon* is a film that is not only exhibited in Asia, but also in other parts of the world, allowing outsiders to get insight into Southeast Asian culture. Culture, according to Koentjaraningrat (Eva, 2016), is "the entire system of ideas, deeds, and outcomes of human labour in the context of communal life that is developed into human beings via learning." Furthermore, culture are divided into three types: (1) culture as a complex of ideas, ideas, values, norms, and rules; (2) culture as a complex of ideas, ideas, values, norms, and rules; and (3) culture as a complex of ideas, ideas, values, norms, and rules. (2) The concept of culture as a collection of structured human behaviour activities in society, and (3) the concept of culture as things created by people. In a broad sense, the sense that comprises the human soul incorporates all of society's norms and ideals. Ideology, spirituality, art, and all human knowledge, as well as technology, are all included.

On the previously related studies, Anjirbag (2018) analyzed "Mulan and Moana: Embedded Coloniality and the Search for Authenticity in Disney Animated Film". She stated that in one film, a culturally important historical story was decontextualized and reframed, whereas in the other,

Anak Agung Sagung Sonia Sarwindah, Lambok Hermanto Sihombing – Representation of Iconic Culture in Southeast Asian in "Raya and the Last Dragon"

cultural actors had some input into the film's depiction. By analyzing culturally specific criticisms and scenes from each film, I will explore how the legacy of colonialism is still embedded in the framing of each film, despite the studio's stated commitment to diversity and multiculturalism (Anjirbag, 2018). Then, van Wormer, et.al. (2016), analyzed Cultural representations in Walt Disney Films: Implications for Social Work Education. They described representations of race, sexuality, ethnicity, and consumerism in recent Walt Disney films. They discussed social work students' reinforcement of critical thinking skills through a mutual examination of multicultural images. Another previously related study was taken from Bangsawan, A., & Juwariyah, A. (2019). They analyzed The Representation of Javanese Culture in the "Knight Kris" Animated Movie. The result of their study indicated that Javanese cultural elements were represented in the Knight Kris film through scenes, characters, setting, and background music. This film also represents Javanese culture regarding *tata paugeraning urip* (a way to preserve life). Knight Kris could also introduce students to the ethos and noble values through character education (Bangsawan & Juwariyah, 2019). Meanwhile, in this study, the authors analyzed how the iconic culture in Southeast Asia is represented in the movie which focuses on the scene that shows the iconic culture of Southeast Asian in the film *Raya and The Last Dragon*. To get the best findings, the authors used data collecting approaches such as observation and documenting to analyze scenes from the film "Raya and the Last Dragon." Observations were made with the goal of visually and linguistically analyzing the film's representation. People, organizations, groups, institutions, books, words (text), newspapers, and other things can be the subject of observational study as cited by (Rofifah, 2020).

THEORY AND METHOD

The media, according to McLuhan, has a huge impact on society. "Every move in society is engulfed by the media" (West & Tuner 2010, 140) as cited from (Angela & Winduwati, 2020). Information, entertainment, education, and social contact are all provided through the media. The media is strongly tied to human beings from the time we are still in the womb, the music that is played to the baby while in the womb. When we wake up - the morning alarm wakes us up - we are already immersed in the media, reading books, watching television, changing our status on cell phones, and engaging in other activities. Every day, we can't avoid being exposed to the media. Even in today's society, the media plays a vital role in social life. This suggests that there are no personal or social issues that are unrelated to the media.

Aside from the fact that our desire for media is fairly high, the media has other consequences. It is explained in the theory of media and mass communication that the effects of mass media affect practically everyone. The media, specifically the mass media, are seen to have a significant impact on society. This influence is then analyzed to see how strong the media's effects are. According to McQuail (Musfialdy & Anggraini, 2020), mass media has characteristics that allow it to reach a large number of people both inside and outside of the country, are broad, and can give fame to anyone who appears in the media. As a result, it can also be indicated that the mass media acts as a transmitter of information for a large number of people at the same time. The media can also disseminate messages that have an impact on people's daily lives (Susanto, 2018).

Several scientists, including Marshall McLuhan and Dennis McQuail (Munandar & Suherman, 2016), established the notion of new media or new media theory. This is likely the most well-known for attracting attention with his distinctive perspectives on the value of media as media. McLuhan's core thinking on media is startling, and he has been chastised by scientists

who believe that electronic media or communication technology used by people may affect and transform users. "Media theory" is the term for this way of thinking.

A film is made up of a number of physical components, including as cited from (Cahyani, 2018) first is shot, the term "shot" refers to the act of shooting a single photograph using certain camera techniques. One shot equals one camera shot of the item from the time the camera starts rolling (recording) until the director tells it to stop (cut). Second is scene, a scene is a brief part of a video that depicts an action, movement, or activity. A scene can be made up of numerous shots, or it might be made up of a single lengthy shot. Images (movements, gestures, character expressions) and/or language are shown in scenes (words, sentences spoken by characters). Third is sequence, a sequence is a long section of a movie that depicts a complete sequence of events. A sequence is made up of multiple interconnected sequences or shots. The setting of the site is the unit of measurement for the series. A sequence might take place in a single location or many locations. Film producers have become more diverse as a result of the advent of increasingly sophisticated technology and the needs of a wide audience. The sorts of films made may be categorized as follows to simply reflect the range of films produced:

1. Theatrical Motion Picture

Theatrical cinema, also known as storyline film, is an expression of human stories with dramatic aspects and a strong element of the audience's emotions. Essentially, films with dramatic components diverge from a story's analysis of conflict. For example, via the storyline of events presented graphically, the struggle between people and themselves, humans with other humans, and humans and their social environment, which in essence portrays conflict.

2. Non-theatrical Films

In basic terms, this is a film that is not fake and is made by employing original fact. It's also not meant to be a source of amusement. These films are more likely to be used as a way of conveying information and education. Non-theatrical films are classified as follows: first, the term "documentary" is commonly used to refer to non-theatrical films. Documentary films are connected to true aspects of human existence, animals, and other living things that are not messed with by elements of fiction when seen from the subject matter. In concept, this film is a drama about ideas that are thought to have the potential to affect social change because it's not for entertainment, education, or aesthetic enjoyment. The purpose is to awaken people's sentiments about an issue, motivate them to take action, or promote cultural norms. Second, educational films are designed for a physically identifiable set of viewers rather than for the whole public. This video is intended for pupils who must adhere to a strict topic matter. As a result, instructional films are transformed into visual courses or learning instructions. The third type is animated films, which are created by drawing each frame one by one and then photographing them.

The term "animation" originates from the verb "to animate," which means "to live and move." Furthermore, the word "animation" is derived from the Latin word "anima," which implies "soul, life, or spirit." Many people think of animation is "animating" an inanimate or motionless item so that it can move or give the idea of movement. (Animation: A Beginner's Guide to Indonesian Animated Films, 2010) as cited from (Alfatra et al., 2019). Animation is the act of generating the effect of movement or change over a length of time; it may also be a change in the colour of an item over a period of time, or it can be described as changes in shape from one thing to another over a period of time. Another definition of animation is the production of distinct pictures or contents in each frame, followed by the execution of the succession of frames into a motion or movement that

resembles a film. Animation, in general, is a visual presentation of appealing, static and dynamic visuals that is created by changes in each frame (frame by frame), changes in moving position (motion tween), or changes in form followed by movement (motion shape).

Animated cinema media, can also be an audio-visual medium consisting of a sequence of lifeless pictures that are successively on the frame and projected mechanically electronically to look alive on the screen. Many animated films are currently broadcast on television due to the unique dimensions and nature of entertainment. The majority of these animated films, however, have not resulted in scientific instruction. The majority of animated films on television are purely for amusement. However, several of these animated films include a moral lesson as part of the plot. Children's interest in animated films is no longer limited to children; nowadays, teens and even adults are interested in seeing animated films. Because animated films are entertaining, including them in the learning process can increase the quality of the process and the learning outcomes. If pupils are drawn to this animated film medium, it is hoped that the material would be simple to comprehend, as many senses are involved, particularly the ears and eyes, which are utilized to absorb information. As a result, the creation of learning material in the form of engaging animated films is required to improve understanding. Animation, like in cinema, is used to express certain concepts as well as cultural markers. This implies that seeing a film or animation may give the audience a sense of the many situations and cultures that exist across the world. And this is slightly related to the role shown in the Disney *Raya and The Last Dragon* films that animation serves as a tool for educating students, however it would be more accurate to consider it a tool for cultural introduction recreation. Animated films may give a picture of each region's culture due to the explicit and unlimited nature of animation.

There are a lot of animated films on culture. The animated films that represented culture through cinema are; Upin & Ipin from Malaysia, Adit & Sopo Jarwo from Indonesia, Mulan from China. The animated films listed above are representative of animated films from many areas and nations, the audience is very interested in animated films that are focused on culture. Before beginning to create animation, animators and animation producers consider the target audience as well as the film's long-term viability. Whether or whether market conduct can be accepted by the community is a factor in sustainability. Of course, animators and producers of animated films do not want to lose money when the picture is completed. An amount of time and money is required to produce an animated picture. As a result, the animators and producers must have carefully evaluated whether the films created are marketable and appealing to a broad audience. So far, animated films with cultural themes have done well in the box office and have piqued the public's curiosity. Animated films with cultural themes may introduce a country's or a region's culture to the rest of the globe. Through films, the entire community may learn about the cultures of various areas and countries. The animated picture has the potential to educate the entire globe particularly, knowledge on the various cultures that exist around the world. The usage of animated films as a type of audio-visual intermediate is extremely useful in delivering thoughts and ideas to a larger audience (Yasa & Santosa, 2018).

The animated film by Adit and Sopo Jarwo addresses the topic of Indonesian culture, particularly Javanese culture. Several characters and their settings have elements of Indonesian culture, such as Betawi (Javanese) culture in Haji Udin, Sundanese (Javanese) culture in Kang Ujang as a chicken noodle seller, and typical Javanese culture in Jarwo. Environmental sites also include typical areas that can only be found in Indonesia, in addition to figures. The area, for example, has vendors as well as chicken noodle carts and supermarket stalls. This animated film's plot is

based on the daily lives and culture of the Javanese people in particular. This film depicts images from everyday life in Indonesia, such as people playing soccer, baseball, or simply singing (Yasa & Santosa, 2018).

Culture is shaped by a variety of factors, one of which is representation. Identity, cultural control, communication, and production are all constants in representation. The word 'representation' literally means 'to represent' something that has already happened, to mediate it, and to replay it (Anwar et al., 2018). Because representation is one of the most important practices in the construction of meaning, this concept is frequently used to define the connection between media texts and reality. Representation may also refer to a relatively low and imperfect description of the world of questions. Despite the fact that certain media products are fantasy or fiction, they have the ability to give an overview of society to the viewer. The term "representation" refers to a representation, an image, or a portrayal. In its most basic form, representation may be defined as an image of anything that exists in life and is described through a medium.

The portrayal of Southeast Asian culture in the films *Raya and The Last Dragon* is the subject of this study. Researchers in qualitative research rely largely on the findings of the studies, which are backed up by observations to gather data directly, including watching *Raya and The Last Dragon*. The researcher focuses on using scene research to see how the camera angle represents culture, shots or shooting techniques to show what culture is represented in the film, and also examines the dialogue of how they use words that represent Southeast Asian culture. Secondary data is obtained through literature studies, such as reading books, journals (literature), and previous research, all of which are related to research problems. After selecting the scenes, the researcher will be sorting out the scene to find the culture that is well shown in the film. Next, the researchers use Stuart Hall's Representation analysis dissect or examine the moment in the film regarding Southeast Asian cultural values. The last, the researchers

take a conclusion, evaluation based on field data, and the findings of the researchers' opinions are all integrated and assessed.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The Representation of Indonesian Culture in Film *Raya and The Last Dragon*

1. Shadow Puppet or *Wayang*



Figure 1. Shadow Puppet Kumandra's History

The first analysis is taken from the scene on minute 00.01.35. In this scene, Raya describes the tale of Kumandra's life 500 years ago using animation such as *wayang*. Raya tells how life was in Kumandra before the druun came in, where the druun is a dangerous plague that can turn humans into stone, the dragons also help the residents, but even that isn't enough, where finally the last Dragon named the Mighty Sisudatu who concentrates her magic to become a gem that can destroy the druun, all citizens who have turned into stone can return to being human by using her magic to become a gem that can destroy the druun. Now, instead of making things right to thank Sisudatu, people are fighting for control of the gemstones, fracturing Kumandra and dividing it into five sections, or a brief history of life in Kumandra.

Anak Agung Sagung Sonia Sarwindah, Lambok Hermanto Sihombing – Representation of Iconic Culture in Southeast Asian in “Raya and the Last Dragon”



Figure 2. Shadow Puppet in Fang

The next observation is taken from scene on minute 01.11.32. A shadow puppet performance by the residents of Fang was shown to the children to tell the history of the druun and how they have survived. This appears to be how *wayang* is performed in Indonesia, in which stories about the history of gods are told.

Wayang kulit is a traditional Indonesian form of art. Several specialists have given their definitions of *wayang*. According to R. T. Josowidagdo as cited from (Purwanto, 2018), the wayang language is "ayang-ayang" or in other words is shadow since what is seen in the Kelir is a shadow (white cloth curtain as a puppet playing arena). Puppet shows (*Wayang*) are not just performed in Indonesia; they are also performed in many other nations. Sbek Thom from Cambodia, Hun Krabok from Thailand are examples of puppet shows from around the world. *Wayang kulit* is a traditional Indonesian folk art that has managed to persist through the ages and across continents. From the history of Javanese culture, wayang kulit has grown in popularity, and there are still many fans, even if it comes from specific circles. *Wayang kulit* is a shadow puppet made of animal skin that is flat, coloured, and moves with the use of a stick. A Dalang performs the game by telling stories or famous stories like the

Ramayana and Mahabharata, which are popular in Hindu-Indian culture and have been adapted to Javanese culture.

Culture is defined by Nostrand in (Diner & Artikel, 2014) as common attitudes and beliefs, methods of thinking, behaving, and remembering among community members. Meanwhile, Koentjoroningrat defines culture as the entire system of ideas, acts, and human works in the context of community life that is created the property of humans via learning. Therefore in this scene it can be understood by using shadow puppets as illustrations to tell the beliefs and works of humans in the history of Kumandra. According to GAJ. Hazeu in (Purwanto, 2018) claims that the art of play in Java is tightly linked to ancestor worship rites and is not merely for enjoyment. Members of the ancestors who have passed away are thought to be spirits who can protect the family members who are still alive in the world provided they are respected and fed. Initially, the family's head of household was in charge of worshipping and summoning the spirits. The use of Wayang or shadow puppet in this scene as a representation of Indonesian culture.



Figure 3. Chief Benja with *Keris*

At the beginning of the film the first one to hold a sword is Raya's father (Chief Benja or Ba) in the minute 16:54, in this scene Chief Benja is trying to protect the 'stone' owned by Heart to protect the population from the druun. The stone itself is being fought over by the residents of Fang, Heart, Talon, Spine, Tail because having the stone keeps them safe from the druun. The sword here is used as an icon that is identical to the character, in the next scene Raya is seen using a sword as self-defence in an effort to collect back the stone that has been split and divided into 4 residents in Kumandra.



Figure 4. Raya with *Keris*

To support the analysis, the next observation is taken from the scene on minute 20.46. The sword used by Raya and Chief Benja looks like a *keris* from Indonesia. It can be seen clearly that the sword owned by Raya looks like a *keris* from Indonesia, where the sword is not straight like a sword in general.

Keris became one of Indonesia's cultural assets after our elders discovered iron. Various stone temple structures from before the nineteenth century show that the Indonesian people of the time were familiar with good iron tools, allowing them to make high-value sculptures. G.B. Gardner (1936) once said that the *keris* is the development of the shape of a sharp

weapon in prehistoric times, particularly the tailbone or stingray, sharpened bones or stingrays are separated from the stalk, so that the weapon can be held, and it becomes a deadly sharp weapon. Although categorized as a form of stabbing weapon, the *keris* is more of a symbolic weapon than a weapon for killing. As a result, the *keris* is thought to possess supernatural abilities; in other words, the *keris* can be utilized by its luck to provide safety help to its owner and people around him. In various cultures, the *keris* is a ceremonial object, an attribute of a specific position, a sign of certain power, and a personal representative or envoy of the owner, in addition to being employed as a weapon. Usually people often see *keris* is being used at traditional events in Sumatra, Kalimantan, Java, Bali, Madura, Sulawesi, and other parts of the Indonesian archipelago.

In studying the *keris* as a self-defence weapon influenced by Indonesia, the researcher interprets culture as a symbolic system, according to the culture theory. Schneider argued that analysing culture as a system of symbols may be beneficial if done independently of the "real forms" that a person can see as events and behaviours. Symbols and meanings refer to the fundamental assumptions that one culture holds about life, such as what it is, how it is defined, and how it differs from another. Culture is a body of human knowledge that includes beliefs, art, and legislation. Because the *keris* is a religious symbol that is honoured in numerous locations in Indonesia, it is one of the works of art that is still utilized and carefully kept today. Therefore the culture representation of Indonesia's weapon which is *Keris* is well shown in the film, it describes the use of *Keris*.

Representation of Thai Culture in Film *Raya and The Last Dragon*

1. Floating Markets



Figure 5. Floating Markets

In the Talon area the people make a living from selling, where it can be seen the Floating Markets scene at minutes 00.09.06. In this scene, it tells the story of Raya who lost the gemstone, where the gemstone was stolen by the residents of Talon who also wanted to have it to protect themselves from the druun. Talon residents are shown as traditional markets from Thailand, with some concepts of selling on boats that look like floating markets in Thailand.

The floating market is a type of commercial venue that is either totally or partially placed on the water (both traders and purchasers are aboard the boat). Damnoen Saduak Floating Market and Amphawa Floating Market are two of Thailand's most well-known tourist floating marketplaces, both of which are located on riverbank towns in the country's central area. Other Southeast Asian countries also have floating markets (e.g. Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar). In terms of cultural representation, touristic floating markets can be classified. This includes 'genuine floating markets,' which are touristy floating marketplaces based on the community's authentic floating market tradition. Floating

marketplaces, for example, the 'Thaka Floating Market' in Samut Songkhram, a tourist site developed from the Thaka community's periodic market, whose existence can be traced back to Ayutthaya, are among these.

Cultural, or culture, refers to both tangible and non-material components of human life. Most specialists who understand culture in this way are likely to be influenced substantially by evolutionism, a theory that states that culture evolves from simple to more complex phases. Initially, floating markets were a market for local residents, but over time, floating markets have become one of the must-visit tourist destinations when visiting Thailand. This is a growing culture, with the appearance of floating markets in this scene can be interpreted as a representation of Thai culture.

Representation of Philippine Culture in Film *Raya and The Last Dragon*

1. Arnis Martial Arts



Figure 6. Arnis Martial Arts

Arnis' martial arts technique from the Philippines can be seen at minute 00.06.03 when Raya is fighting against Chief Benja or his father. In this scene, little Raya is being trained by her father 'Ba' to be a protector of gemstone and here chief Benja or Ba is being a protector of the gemstone and he challenges Raya to become a protector of the gemstone. They start to

Anak Agung Sagung Sonia Sarwindah, Lambok Hermanto Sihombing – Representation of Iconic Culture in Southeast Asian in "Raya and the Last Dragon"

fight, chief benja uses a sword as his weapon while Raya uses long-range weapons. Here, it can be seen that Raya's martial arts technique is inspired by Arnis's martial arts originating from the Philippines, because in martial arts Arnis uses a stick as a weapon.

Arnis is an indigenous Filipino martial art that was developed for self-defense and physical development by early Filipino aborigines (Sanchez et al. 2020). Arnés, which means weapon in Spanish, was the origin of the word arnis. In the year 2000, Wiley published a book titled "Wiley's Guide to Fencing, or esgrima in Spanish and eskrima in its Filipinized form (Federico Lazo. 2008; History of Filipino Martial Arts, 2009; Warriors Eskrima – Worcestershire, 2009), describes "two individuals fighting using long-range weapons; and Kali, which means "to dig" or "to stab," originated with the Ilocano's. Arnis, Eskrima, or Kali is a weapon-oriented defensive martial art system in which practitioners learn hand-to-hand fighting techniques, knives, bladed weapons, and various improvised hand extensions, usually twenty-three inches long, made of yantok, olisi (rattan), or kamagong (a type of Philippine hardwood), and other indigenous materials. Kicking, locking, throwing, disarming, and grappling techniques are also included, creating an effective combat method for its practitioners, known as arnisadors or eskrimadors. Arnis has its origins in pre-Hispanic Filipino tribal battles, however the modern version was inspired by 15th-century Spanish fencing (Sanchez & Sanchez, 2021).

According to the culture theory, culture is a cognitive system. Culture is not a physical entity; it is not based on objects, people, or feelings. More than those things, culture is an organization. Culture is the shape of things that exist in the human mind, the models that people must accept, relate to, and understand the material phenomena mentioned above. Therefore Arnis the martial arts of Filipino is a martial arts knowledge for Raya and a representation of Filipino culture.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the result of this research shows the representation of iconic culture from Indonesia, Thailand, and Philippines. The iconic culture itself is detailed represented and recognizable. The first iconic culture is the weapon used by Indonesian in the form of traditional weaponry. The form of iconic culture from Thailand is represented through the vehicle used by Raya. This vehicle is the iconic mode of transportation that can be found in Thailand. Finally, the Martial Arts used in the scenes are the Philippines iconic culture. In this study, representation is used to explain or construct the meaning of a cultural symbol shown in Disney's film *Raya and The Last Dragon*.

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Anak Agung Sagung Sonia Sarwindah, Lambok Hermanto Sihombing – Representation of Iconic Culture in Southeast Asian in "Raya and the Last Dragon"

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