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Representation of Chinese Cultural Identity in the Films *Assalamualaikum Beijing* and *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina*

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Representation of Chinese Cultural Identity in the Films *Assalamualaikum Beijing* and *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina*

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ABSTRACT

In Indonesian films, representations of Chinese identity that integrate Chinese cultural elements and Islamic values remain relatively underexplored, making them significant to examine in a cross-cultural context. This study analyzes how Chinese identity is represented in the films *Assalamualaikum Beijing* and *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina*, and how these cultural elements are connected to Islamic values. The research employs visual semiotic analysis, which explores the signs, symbols, visual elements, identity representations, and narratives of multiculturalism that appear in both films. The results show that Chinese identity is positioned as a bridge of cultural harmony through depictions of tolerance, historical proximity, and the process of religious assimilation between China and Indonesia. The novelty of this study lies in revealing the integration of Chinese culture and Islamic values, which is rarely addressed in Indonesian films, particularly through visual representations that emphasize diversity and the historical and cultural connections between China and Indonesia.

Keywords:

Indonesian films, Chinese identity, Islam, cultural representation, visual semiotics

INTRODUCTION

In the post-Reformasi period, representations of Chinese culture in Indonesian media, including film, have increased significantly following the revocation of restrictions on the public expression of Chinese culture (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2000). Film has subsequently emerged as an important medium through which the Chinese community negotiates and reconstructs narratives of identity within Indonesian society (Hoon, 2021). In cultural studies, representation is understood not merely as a reflection of reality, but as a process of meaning construction through language, symbols, and signs (Hall et al., 2024). Cultural representation in the media inherently involves the selection of visual elements and discourses that actively shape how a particular group is understood by the broader public (Ernawati & Triyono, 2023). Therefore, film does not simply represent cultural identity; it also plays a role in reproducing social practices and cultural values that may reinforce or challenge dominant understandings of a group (Kolker & Gordon, 2024; Hall, 2015).

Despite the increasing openness of representational spaces for Chinese culture, Indonesian films that depict Chinese identity by positioning China as the narrative setting while simultaneously integrating Islamic values remain relatively limited. This is noteworthy given the long-standing historical relationship between Chinese culture and Islam, shaped by centuries of trade, migration, and cross-regional social interactions. The films *Assalamualaikum Beijing* and *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina* are particularly compelling objects of study, as they offer representations of Chineseness that differ from the dominant tendencies of earlier Indonesian films. Whereas Chinese characters have often been portrayed through narratives of conflict or discrimination, these two films foreground themes of harmony, tolerance, and positive relations between China and Indonesia.

This study analyzes how Chinese identity is represented in these two films through visual elements, identity constructions, and narratives of multiculturalism, and how these elements collectively produce meanings of identity and cross-cultural relations. Contemporary scholarship indicates that Chinese identity in Indonesia has increasingly been negotiated through media and visual representation in the post-Reformasi era (Setijadi, 2023; Suryadinata, 2017). However, studies that position China and Islamic values as visual representational spaces within Indonesian cinema remain scarce.

In contrast to previous studies that focus on representations of Chinese identity within domestic Indonesian contexts, such as Yapleony's (2019) analysis of Chinese minority representation in the film *Ngenest*, and Kusuma and Sholihah (2018) discussion of shifts in representations of Chineseness following political policy changes, this study explores China and Islamic values as visual and symbolic representational spaces in Indonesian films. The novelty of this research lies in its analysis of the integration of Chinese culture and Islamic values in Indonesian films set in China, with a particular emphasis on visual elements as strategies for constructing multicultural narratives. In this study, multicultural narratives are understood

as representations that position cultural and religious differences in relatively harmonious coexistence, without emphasizing conflict or the subordination of minority identities. This research aims to enrich studies of Indonesian cinema by demonstrating how visual representation contributes to more affirmative, non-stereotypical perspectives on minority identities in popular media, while also expanding understanding of how film shapes public perception through selective visual and narrative strategies.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach to understand the meanings and contexts of identity representation in film texts. This approach is selected because it allows for an in-depth reading of the construction of Chinese identity through visual elements and cinematic narratives. The method applied is semiotic analysis, which interprets visual signs and symbols as producers of cultural and identity-related meanings in the films *Assalamualaikum Beijing* and *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina*.

The primary data are derived from the two films. The analysis focuses on scenes that display visual elements of Chinese culture and Islamic religious practices. The observed visual elements include traditional Chinese architecture, representations of Chinese Muslims, script and calligraphy, spatial arrangements, and other cultural symbols that play a significant role in constructing meanings of identity. Supporting data are obtained through literature review and contextual readings of cultural and religious symbols to strengthen the analytical interpretation.

The analytical framework of this study is grounded in Stuart Hall's Theory of Representation and Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. According to Hall, representation is understood as the production of meaning through language, images, and symbols. Representation, therefore, does not merely reflect reality but actively shapes social reality through narrative and visual choices (Hall, 2015). Semiotic analysis enables the reading of cross-cultural adaptations of visual meaning, wherein the same symbols may generate different interpretations depending on the social and cultural contexts of their audiences (Gunawan, 2018a). This framework is employed to examine how Chinese cultural identity in film is constructed, simplified, or negotiated through visual representation. Roland Barthes' semiotic approach is used to interpret visual elements as signs that contain both denotative and connotative meanings. This approach allows for a deeper analysis of visual symbolism, spatial organization, and film aesthetics as devices for constructing meanings of cultural identity (Supiarza et al., 2020).

The analytical process involves several stages: repeated viewing of the films to achieve a comprehensive understanding of narrative flow and visual context; selection of scenes relevant to the research focus; semiotic analysis of selected visual elements; and comparison of findings from the two films to identify similarities and differences in the construction of Chinese identity representation. Through this method, the study seeks to reveal how films construct and negotiate

meanings of identity through visual language, as well as how narratives of multiculturalism and cultural integration are represented to audiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The films *Assalamualaikum Beijing* and *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina* are adaptations of novels bearing the same titles, and both position Chinese culture as a significant element in the construction of visual narratives and storytelling. These films present representations of Chineseness that differ from earlier tendencies in Indonesian cinema by emphasizing the relationship between Chinese culture and Islamic values within a framework of cross-cultural harmony.

Historically, interactions between Chinese culture and Islam have unfolded over long periods through trade routes, migration, and social assimilation. However, in Indonesian popular media, this relationship has rarely been explored in depth. Through interfaith romantic narratives and the use of China as a spatial setting, both films construct stories that position Chinese culture not as a source of conflict, but rather as a positive and acceptable site of cultural encounter.

The findings indicate that representations of Chinese identity in both films are primarily constructed through visual elements, including architecture, landscapes, religious symbols, Chinese script, and depictions of Chinese Muslims. These elements function not merely as aesthetic backdrops but also as markers of cultural identity that shape the meanings of Chineseness in relation to Islam and the Indonesian context. Accordingly, the following discussion focuses on how these visual elements operate as representational strategies in constructing harmonious multicultural narratives.

Results

The title *Assalamualaikum Beijing* (2014) combines an Arabic greeting with the name of the city of Beijing, signaling from the outset an encounter between Islam and Chinese culture. The use of the term *assalamualaikum*, closely associated with Muslim culture, along with promotional visuals featuring religious attire, indicates that the film is primarily targeted at Muslim audiences and centers on the experience of a Muslim woman in China. The narrative follows Asma (Revalina S. Temat), a non-Chinese Indonesian journalist, as she traces the historical presence of Islamic civilization in China while developing a relationship with Zhongwen (Morgan Oey), a Chinese man portrayed as being drawn to Islam.

Through the character of Zhongwen, the film constructs a representation of Chinese identity as adaptable and compatible with Islamic values. This identity is presented in a positive, harmonious manner, though it oversimplifies the complexity of Zhongwen's identity beyond his relationship with religion. Chinese culture is represented through various visual symbols,



Figure 1. Cover of the novel and poster of the film *Assalamualaikum Beijing*

(Source: Nadia, 2013; Soeharjanto, 2014)

such as historical sites in Beijing, Kunming, and Xi'an, as well as elements of traditional arts, including calligraphy and tea culture. In this context, Chinese culture serves as a visual and narrative bridge, conveying universal messages of love, tolerance, and diversity.

The film also introduces the presence of Islam in China through representations of mosques, the history of Islam in Beijing, and the existence of Muslim communities as a minority group, statistically estimated to comprise approximately 2% of China's population (Central Intelligence Agency, 2022). The depiction of enduring Islamic heritage sites that continue to function in contemporary society serves as visual evidence that Islam can coexist within China's heterogeneous social structure. Chineseness in this film is primarily represented by the figure of the Chinese Muslim and by the tolerant attitudes of society, personified in Zhongwen as the central character. The core message is the possibility of harmonious relationships between Chinese and Indonesian individuals across religious and cultural boundaries, including in marriage.

The title *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina* (2014) is inspired by the hadith, "Seek knowledge even as far as China," which, in the film's context, is interpreted metaphorically as a pursuit of love. The inclusion of Arabic text in the film poster, along with visuals of religious attire, once again emphasizes an Islamic tone and signals a Muslim target audience. The film follows Iman (Afgan Syahreza), a non-Chinese Indonesian man, as he discovers love in China with Jiali (Eriska Rein), a Chinese Muslim woman.

In contrast to *Assalamualaikum Beijing*, this film places greater emphasis on the historical relationship between China and Indonesia through an Islamic narrative framework. Jiali is



Figure 2. Novel cover and film poster *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina*
(Source: Yunita, 2014; Bustomi, 2014)

represented as a devout Muslim whose moral integrity influences Iman's religious journey. This representation reinforces the image of Chinese Muslims as religious figures aligned with Islamic values familiar to Indonesian audiences. The film integrates narratives of Chinese civilization, Islam in China, and the spread of Islam in Indonesia, presenting them as both religious experiences and visual attractions.

Historical narratives surrounding Admiral Cheng Ho play a significant role in constructing this representation. The use of Sam Poo Kong Temple in Semarang as a filming location highlights historical connections between China and the Indonesian archipelago dating back to the fifteenth century. Cheng Ho is portrayed as a Chinese Muslim who introduced Islam to Indonesia, serving as a symbol of religious Chineseness and cultural influence. Visual settings in China further reinforce the notion that Islam has been present and has developed in China for centuries.

Through the romantic relationship between an Indonesian and a Chinese Muslim, the film constructs a narrative of long-standing bilateral relations that were previously underexposed due to New Order policies that discriminated against expressions of Chinese culture in Indonesia. Consequently, *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina* not only represents a personal love story but also contributes to the re-normalization of China and Chineseness within the collective memory of Indonesian audiences.

Discussion

Visual Elements of Chinese Culture

In *Assalamualaikum Beijing* and *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina*, Chinese cultural identity is represented primarily through recurring visual elements that span the films' narrative spaces. These elements include distinctive Chinese architecture, urban landscapes, script and calligraphy, and spatial arrangements that create a distinct cultural atmosphere. Such visual elements function not merely as aesthetic backgrounds, but also as cultural identity markers that frame both the characters' experiences and the audience's perceptions of Chinese culture.

a. Architecture and Landscape

Architecture is a dominant visual element in representing the Chinese cultural space. Traditional buildings, gates, and urban spatial arrangements are depicted as orderly, clean, and well-organized environments. In *Assalamualaikum Beijing*, iconic locations such as the Great Wall of China, the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven, the Bird's Nest National Stadium, the Stone Forest, and the Niujie Mosque are used as primary settings. These sites are presented through visual compositions that emphasize scale, architectural detail, and the relationship between space and human activity.

From a semiotic perspective, architecture and landscape function as denotative signs that indicate geographical locations, while simultaneously operating as connotative signs that convey values of order, historical continuity, and the strength of Chinese cultural traditions. Representations of Chinese culture in modern media tend to emphasize historical continuity through symbols of public space and architecture (Baojie, 2025). The Great Wall of China represents unity and the resilience of civilization (He et al., 2024). The Forbidden City functions not only as a former political center but also as a symbol of national pride and Chinese cultural heritage (Bracken & Orum, 2019). The Temple of Heaven symbolizes the sacred and harmonious relationship between humans and the Creator. Meanwhile, the Bird's Nest National Stadium, constructed for the 2008 Olympic Games, signifies success and the transition from a nation with strong traditional roots to one that embraces modernity and innovation (Lianto & Trisno, 2022).

The Stone Forest, designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is presented as a symbol of harmony between humans and nature and also carries a mythological narrative associated with Ashima. In the film, the figure of Ashima is symbolically linked to Asma, a veiled Muslim woman, thereby constructing a visual and narrative bridge between local Chinese culture and Muslim identity. The Niujie Mosque is also depicted as a significant space that affirms the presence of Chinese Muslim communities and the historical roots of Islam in China (Ubaedillah, 2023). Notably, during the 212 demonstrations in Indonesia in 2016, President Joko Widodo conveyed a symbolic message by visiting the Niujie Mosque in China, stating that the mosque represents a friendly and inclusive form of Islam and that Indonesian and Chinese Muslims share a close historical relationship (Usman, 2021).

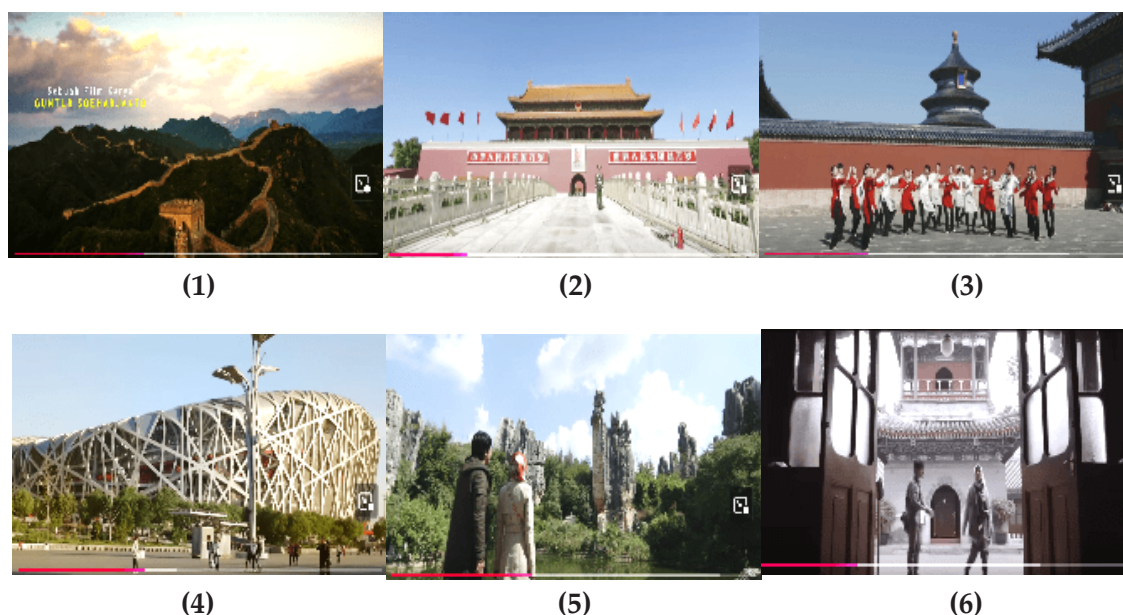


Figure 3. (1) Great Wall of China, (2) Forbidden City, (3) Temple of Heaven, (4) Bird's Nest National Stadium, (5) Stone Forest, (6) Niujie Mosque
(Source: Soeharjanto, 2014)

Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina integrates representations of Chineseness across both Indonesian and Chinese landscapes. The film opens at Sam Poo Kong Temple in Semarang. Sam Poo Kong Temple is a historic site associated with Admiral Cheng Ho, who is regarded as a key figure in cultural and trade relations between China and the Indonesian archipelago. Although Cheng Ho was a Muslim, local communities venerate him as a figure of virtue, which contributes to the temple's symbolic association with interreligious harmony (Muhibbuddin, 2020). In China, the use of wide shots in locations such as the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, the Niujie Mosque, and the Great Mosque of Xi'an emphasizes both the scale of cultural space and the historical continuity of Islam in China. The Great Mosque of Xi'an, constructed in 742 CE, features traditional Chinese architectural elements, including curved roofs, wooden carvings, and pavilions. This architectural form illustrates the acculturation of Islamic and Chinese cultures without diminishing religious identity (*Xi'an Great Mosque - The Largest Mosque in China*, n.d.). Overall, the representation of architecture and landscape in both films functions as a visual strategy for constructing narratives of integration between Chinese culture and Islam. Space is not merely employed as a narrative backdrop but also operates as an identity marker and a medium of cultural negotiation that demonstrates harmony among tradition, religion, and modernity.

b. Chinese Muslims (Hui Ethnic Group)

The representation of Chinese Muslims constitutes a crucial aspect of both films. Chinese



Figure 4. (1) Sam Poo Kong Temple, Semarang; (2) Forbidden City; (3) Great Wall of China; (4) Niujie Mosque; (5) Great Mosque of Xi'an
(Source: Bustomi, 2014)

identity and Islam are not portrayed as opposing entities, but rather as coexisting within the same cultural space. This is evident through the visualization of places of worship, religious attire, and Islamic practices that are naturally embedded in the characters' everyday lives.

Both films depict Chinese Muslim communities from the Hui ethnic group, which is recognized as one of the largest Muslim ethnic groups in China. In *Assalamualaikum Beijing*, the Hui are represented through figures of children at play and Zhongwen's relatives who assist in preparing traditional medicine (Figures 5.1 and 5.2). In *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina*, the Hui community is represented through the family of Ma Fu Hsien, Jiali's fiancé (Figure 5.3). Visual markers, such as the white skullcap worn by Hui men, serve as recognizable signs of religious identity, allowing the audience to identify Muslim affiliation without verbal explanation.

The identity of Chinese Muslims, particularly within the Hui community, is understood as a dynamic identity formed through encounters between Islamic traditions and Chinese culture (Rosi, 2020). Within a semiotic framework, the presence of Hui figures and Islamic worship spaces embedded within the Chinese landscape constructs meanings that suggest religious identity does not negate cultural identity. Mosques and Islamic practices are not depicted as foreign elements, but rather as integral parts of a long-established historical and cultural diversity in China. These visual representations construct a myth of cultural and religious coexistence within a shared social space.

However, this representation tends to be idealistic. The films do not depict social conflicts, identity negotiations, or potential discrimination that Chinese Muslims may experience. This choice reflects the tendency of popular culture films to prioritize persuasive and educational functions over exploring complex social realities.

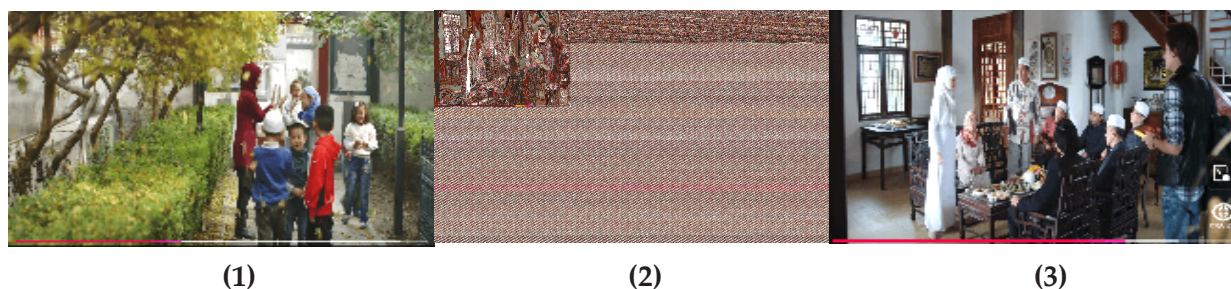


Figure 5. (1) Hui ethnicity represented through children, (2) Zhongwen's uncle and aunt, (3) Hui ethnicity represented through the family of Ma Fu Hsien, Jiali's fiancé
(Source: Soeharjanto, 2014; Bustomi, 2014)

c. Chinese Calligraphy and Script

The use of Chinese script and calligraphy also constitutes a significant element in the construction of visual identity in both films. Chinese characters appear on signboards, building entrances, and spatial ornaments, reinforcing the cultural atmosphere of the setting. In this context, the script is not presented as a medium of linguistic communication, but rather as a visual element that instantly marks space as belonging to Chinese culture.

In a visual context, Chinese calligraphy possesses aesthetic and philosophical power that can be interpreted beyond linguistic comprehension. Most Indonesian audiences do not understand the Chinese language literally; nevertheless, the script continues to function effectively as a symbol of cultural identity (Susanti, 2013). In public visual spaces, Chinese characters operate as symbolic cultural markers rather than informative texts (Gunawan et al., 2011). The meaning of calligraphy is constructed through its visual form, spatial placement, and contextual appearance within the film narrative.

In *Assalamualaikum Beijing*, Chinese calligraphy appears at the entrance of the Niujie Mosque, displaying the inscription 清真古教 (*qīngzhēn gujiào*), meaning "Islamic teachings" (Figure 6.1). The presence of this script illustrates the integration of Islamic values within Chinese cultural visual expression. In *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina*, calligraphy at the entrance of Sam Poo Kong Temple in Semarang reads 三保大人 (*sānbao dàrén*), referring to "Lord Sanbao," another name for Admiral Cheng Ho (Figure 6.2). The use of Chinese script and calligraphy in both films functions as a visual strategy to reinforce cultural identity without relying on the audience's linguistic understanding, while simultaneously bridging Chinese culture, Islam, and the Indonesian context.

Representation of Chineseness

In *Assalamualaikum Beijing*, the character Zhongwen is represented as a modern Chinese figure who integrates Chinese cultural values with Muslim identity. Zhongwen is portrayed as open-minded and adaptable, able to practice Islam without relinquishing his Chinese

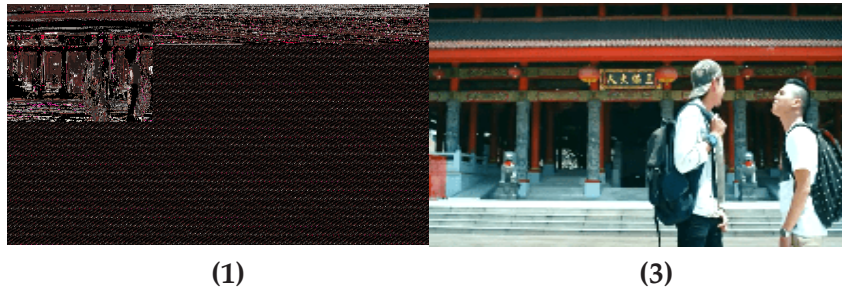


**Figure 6. (1) Calligraphic inscription at the entrance of Niujie Mosque, China
(2) Calligraphic inscription at the entrance of Sam Poo Kong Temple, Semarang
(Source: Soeharjanto, 2014; Bustomi, 2014)**

cultural background. This representation is evident in his daily life, his interactions with other characters, and the natural placement of religious practices, such as praying in a mosque, within the narrative flow.

Zhongwen's presence represents a form of Chinese identity hybridity, in which cultural values such as diligence, honesty, and respect for family coexist harmoniously with Islamic teachings. Socially, such identities are not new phenomena, both in China through the Hui Muslim community and in Indonesia through Chinese Muslim communities. However, explicit representations of Chinese Muslim identity remain relatively rare in Indonesian cinema, making Zhongwen's character particularly significant in popular culture.

Nevertheless, Zhongwen's representation tends toward idealism. The film does not portray internal struggles, identity conflicts, or experiences of discrimination, which are often associated with Chinese diasporic realities. Muslim and Chinese identities are depicted as seamlessly aligned, leaving the complexity of identity negotiation outside the narrative. Zhongwen thus represents an image of openness and cultural harmony rather than a layered social reality.

In contrast, *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina* presents a more traditional representation of Chinese identity, emphasizing cultural preservation. Chineseness is conveyed through symbolic elements such as tea rituals, traditional clothing, and martial arts. These elements underscore efforts to maintain tradition as markers of Chinese cultural identity. This approach tends to be stereotypical, reducing Chinese culture to specific visual symbols without exploring the contemporary lived experiences of the Chinese diaspora. The representation foregrounds cultural exoticism as a backdrop for the protagonist's spiritual journey rather than presenting culture as a dynamic and evolving lived space. Overall, the two films employ different representational strategies: *Assalamualaikum Beijing* emphasizes identity hybridity, while *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina* foregrounds cultural preservation through symbolic representations.

Narratives of Multiculturalism

The representation of Chinese identity in both films can be understood as a hybrid identity shaped by encounters and negotiations between Chinese culture and Islamic values. This hybrid identity is not portrayed as problematic but rather as a relatively stable and socially accepted condition. Visual elements play a central role in constructing this image, particularly through spatial arrangements, religious symbols, and character interactions that are naturally situated within the Chinese cultural landscape.

The depiction of hybrid identity in an idealized manner reflects the film's tendency to simplify social realities and construct narratives that are easily accepted by audiences. Ideologically, the films construct a myth of harmonious multiculturalism, in which cultural and religious differences are positioned as capable of integration without conflict. This myth functions as a normative discourse that promotes tolerance and cultural integration, while simultaneously concealing more complex and contested social realities.

In cultural representation, the visual approaches employed by both films demonstrate how Chinese identity is positioned as non-threatening, amicable, and compatible with dominant values. This underscores the role of film not merely as a reflection of social reality, but as a medium that actively shapes collective imagination regarding how intercultural relations should be understood in a multicultural society.

Assalamualaikum, Beijing places particular emphasis on interreligious tolerance and harmony between Chinese culture and Islam, presenting assimilation as a process that does not erase original identity. Religious and cultural diversity is framed as a unifying element that supports the characters' emotional journeys. Meanwhile, *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina* focuses more on exploring Chinese culture through the protagonist's interactions with traditional Chinese environments, without explicitly engaging with Indonesia's cross-cultural context. Both films present multiculturalism in an idealized, relatively conflict-free form, leaving the more complex social experiences of the Chinese diaspora outside the primary narrative focus. Nevertheless, multicultural narratives in media retain the potential to open spaces for intercultural dialogue and to challenge historically embedded stereotypes associated with ethnic groups (Pracintya et al., 2022).

Both films also emphasize that Islam and Chinese identity are not mutually exclusive. The existence of Muslim communities in China, along with historical narratives surrounding Zheng He's role in disseminating Islam through maritime routes, serves as a symbolic foundation that connects these two identities. This approach offers an alternative perspective to earlier Indonesian films, which have often represented Chinese identity through narratives of discrimination and negative stereotyping. In the Indonesian context, where Muslims constitute most of the population (87.2%), the use of religious themes and intercultural relations functions as a narrative bridge that facilitates audience acceptance of Chinese identity (Permana, 2024).

The use of Mandarin in several dialogues, despite being delivered with limited pronunciation

accuracy by Chinese Indonesian actors, also carries important symbolic meaning. Language does not function primarily as a communicative tool for the audience, but rather as a visual and auditory marker of Chinese identity. The re-emergence of Mandarin in popular media reflects a broader process of normalizing Chinese identity in Indonesia's public sphere in the post-Reformasi era. This phenomenon aligns with the growing Indonesian public interest in China through tourism, education, and cultural exchange, which has contributed to the construction of a more positive image of China in Indonesian popular discourse (Gunawan, 2018b).

Assalamualaikum Beijing and *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina* can thus be understood as forms of popular cultural diplomacy that employ visual representation to construct a positive image of Chinese culture within the Indonesian context. By portraying China as an orderly, aesthetically pleasing, and religiously grounded space, these films create emotional proximity between Indonesian audiences and Chinese culture. Through selective and aestheticized visual representation, both films contribute to the normalization of Chinese cultural presence within Indonesia's public imagination, while simultaneously promoting discourses of tolerance and intercultural harmony in a multicultural society.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of *Assalamualaikum Beijing* and *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina* demonstrates how Chinese identity is represented through distinct visual and narrative strategies. *Assalamualaikum Beijing* emphasizes the process of cultural assimilation between Chinese identity and Islam, particularly through narratives of interethnic relationships unified by shared religious values. In contrast, *Kukejar Cinta ke Negeri Cina* focuses more explicitly on preserving Chinese traditions, presenting cultural practices as the primary backdrop for interpersonal relationships. The film's dominance of visually distinctive Chinese cultural elements also offers audiences a cinematic experience akin to a cultural journey.

The representation of Chinese identity in both films tends to foreground harmony among tradition, modernity, and hybridity. This approach enriches Indonesia's multicultural narrative by offering a more affirmative and positive perspective on Chinese culture. Both films use cultural aesthetics and visual exoticism as communicative strategies to convey messages of tolerance and intercultural harmony, with visual design elements playing a crucial role in reinforcing meaning through architectural symbolism, color schemes, and composition.

The findings of this study affirm that film, as a visual medium, possesses a significant capacity to shape discourses on cultural identity and interethnic relations in Indonesia. The representation of Chinese culture in these films is not neutral but rather constructed through selective visual and narrative processes that reflect particular social values. The decision to frame Chinese culture in terms of harmony, spirituality, and aesthetic order reflects a broader tendency in Indonesian cinema to produce representations that are widely acceptable in a

multicultural society.

From the perspective of visual communication design, this study demonstrates that visual elements function as an effective cultural language. Symbols such as Chinese architectural forms, traditional ornaments, urban landscapes, and the strategic use of color and composition not only support narrative atmosphere but also construct meanings of Chinese identity as structured, harmonious, and historically continuous. Nevertheless, the tendency toward aestheticization and romanticization of Chinese culture in both films also reveals representational limitations, as the complexities of Chinese identity, including historical tensions, experiences of marginalization, and social conflict, remain largely outside the narrative focus.

This study contributes to film studies, visual communication design, and cultural studies by demonstrating that the representation of cultural identity in cinema is a process of meaning construction that involves negotiation among aesthetics, ideology, and social context. These findings are expected to serve as a foundation for future research on the representation of other ethnic cultures and to encourage more critical and reflective visual representation practices within the Indonesian film industry.

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