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*Reinventing the Nusantara Concept within Its Roles and Space*



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## **RESUME AND RECOMMENDATION OF ICoNS 2016**

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## **ABOUT UNIVERSITAS INDONESIA**

# REDEFINING NUSANTARA THROUGH INDONESIAN FILM: TRADITION, NATIONALISM, AND POPULAR CULTURE

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## Abstract

Indonesian films featuring traditional values, nationalism, and the appeal of Nusantara affect the social order in the society. Some films showing the natural and cultural beauty of Indonesia indirectly attract some members of the society, both local and foreign, to visit the area. For example, the Belitung region has become a new tourist destination since the launching of *Laskar Pelangi*. People's consumption of travelling to trend destinations is one of their arenas or fields to "struggle" into a certain social strata. Since 2000s and up (after the reform era), the societal trend of travelling started to increase. The scope of this study is limited on eleven films published after the reform era. Thus, this paper will present the images of Nusantara in some Indonesian films that critically affect the social arena of those film lovers.

**Keywords:** film, nationalism, popular culture, tradition

## Introduction

Film is one of the fastest growing works after the reform. The concept of post-reform freedom of expression also influences the quantity and quality of domestic films. The values promoted in the films also experience a development. In the early 2000s, the filmmakers began to dare making films which were slightly different from those on the market which were both the comedy and horror. The films that were launched in the early 2000s, such as *Petualangan Sherina* (2000) and *Joshua oh Joshua* (2001) became the "pioneers" lifting the life of children and the social condition of the society in the post-reform era. These two films were casted by child actors as the main characters to convey the values of goodness and the social condition of the underprivileged community in Jakarta.

After *Petualangan Sherina* (2000) and *Joshua oh Joshua* (2001) depicting the community's condition around Jakarta, the filmmakers dared to raise the

similar issues outside Jakarta. There are *Denias*, *Senandung di Atas Awan* (2006), *Laskar Pelangi* (2008), *Tanah Air Beta* (2010), *Tanah Surga*, *Katanya* (2012), and *Sokola Rimba* (2013). Those films contain the same value which portrays the life of Indonesian society. The films become a medium to describe the social life of Indonesian society, especially in the corners of Indonesia. Uniquely, those films are not only able to describe the social life of the community, but also able to raise film lovers' empathy and nationalism. The depiction of the community's condition living within limitations encourages some film lovers to contribute in developing the nation. Moreover, *Nagabonar Jadi 2* was launched in 2007, which is thick of nationalism and patriotism nuances.

Beside carrying messages and values, the film carries a visual image. The visual image displayed in the film also influences the social change of society. The films, such as *Denias*, *Senandung di Atas Awan* (2006), *Laskar Pelangi* (2008), *Merantau* (2009), *Sokola Rimba* (2013), *Tenggelamnya Kapal van Der Wijck* (2013), and *Cahaya dari Timur: Beta Maluku* (2014), have shaped the image of society's tradition and the beauty of the locations on which the films were based. The diversity shown in the films confirms that Indonesia is a charm in the equatorial emerald (*zamrud khatulistiwa*). Not only the tradition, but also the image of the equatorial emerald extends from Sabang to Merauke.

### **The Scope**

The physical images displayed in those several films changed the location of the filming. The consumption pattern on the films continues to increase along with the development of information media. Film becomes a medium to display the areas that become the background of the film. Moreover, Hudson et al, (2010) suggests that promoting through film can increase the number of visitors coming to see the filming location (in Ayu, Suharyono, & Wilopo, 2015: 1). The beauty of the locations depicted in the film, now has become a new tourist destination. There is an impact appearing after the launching of those films presenting the natural beauty and local culture. As a result, people's consumption to travel to those places increase slowly.

The existence of some films showing tradition values, nationalism, and *Nusantara*'s attractiveness also influence the social order in the society. The society's consumption on travelling both consciously and unconsciously is one of their efforts to "fight" into a certain social strata. Pierre Bourdieu (1984: 7) stated that art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences. Travelling consumption—a part of cultural products—as a mean of becoming a struggling arena for the society to enter a particular social class. The films portraying the community's life in the corners of Indonesia are also able to increase the empathetic nationalism, and further contribute to improve the community's life in the corners of Indonesia. This research explains that film has an effect on the life and social order of the society. Film as a medium is able to influence people's knowledge towards the tradition and nationalism as well as influence the travelling consumption which becomes a popular culture nowadays.

Based on the explanation above, the scope of this research is limited to eleven Indonesian films. The eleven films becoming the corpuses of this research are *Petualangan Sherina* (2000), *Joshua oh Joshua* (2001), *Denias Denias*, *Senandung di Atas Awan* (2006), *Nagabonar Jadi 2* (2007), *Laskar Pelangi* (2008), *Merantau* (2009), *Tanah Air Beta* (2010), *Tanah Surga*, *Katanya* (2012), *Sokola Rimba* (2013), *Tenggelamnya Kapal van Der Wijck* (2013), and *Cahaya dari Timur: Beta Maluku* (2014). Through those eleven films, the researchers are hoping that the concept of *Nusantara*—in which there are tradition, nationalism, and popular culture themes—can be defined.

### **Tradition, Nationalism, and Popular Culture Themes in Indonesian Films**

The existence of films showing the values of tradition, nationalism, and the attractiveness of *Nusantara* also influence the social order in the society. Some films that display the natural beauty and local culture attract some community members indirectly to visit that place. For example, Belitung Island which becomes a new tourist destination since the launching of *Laskar Pelangi*. The society's consumption on travelling both consciously or unconsciously is one of their efforts to "fight" into a certain social class. Since 2000s and up, the society's

trend to travel has been becoming more popular and increasing significantly. Besides becoming a life need, travelling also becomes society's fighting arena or field to enter a higher social class. The goal is to be accepted and treated the same as the community that has reached a certain social level.

Not only that, the emergence of films depicting the portrait of community's life in the corners of Indonesia by bringing the educational content has inspired some members of the society to contribute to their nation. Some members of the society become more empathic and are willing to contribute in real by developing and educating the children of the nation. The portraits of the community's life displayed in the films indirectly have touched the hearts of some individuals to initiate programs to improve the life of those people in Indonesia, such as *Indonesia Mengajar* program, *Nusantara Sehat*, and *Seribu Guru*. That is the important message from the eleven films to be consumed by the film lovers: real actions from the love of homeland (read: *Nusantara*).

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