

**DESCRIPTION OF CHINESE ETHNIC CULTURE IN THE FILM “TURNING RED”****Mona Salwa Amen**English Literature Study Program , Muhammadiyah University of Sukabumi  
mona\_saa040@ummi.ac.id**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to find out the picture of ethnic Chinese in the film "Turning Red". Cultural elements are language systems, knowledge systems, kinship systems and social organizations, systems of living equipment and technology, economic or livelihood systems, religious and artistic systems. The film "Turning Red" was used as the subject of this study because it has a cultural background of a Chinese family living in Toronto, Canada. This qualitative research uses content analysis method. Many depictions of Chinese culture are found in this film. Religious elements are the dominating element in this film, followed by other elements except language elements that are not depicted in this film.

**Keywords:** overview, ethnic Chinese culture, friendship**INTRODUCTION**

Many individuals from the land of China or China who migrated throughout the world. Based on data from the Overseas Community Affairs Council (OCAC), the number of diaspora communities from Chinese lands in America reached around 5.44 million people in 2020. These immigrants contribute to economic development in their respective countries and many of them have become local citizens. . Migrants from China do not only consist of people who were born in their own country, but also include descendants of Chinese citizens who were born and raised in various other countries .

Like immigrants in general, many Chinese aim to make a living in the United States. But the arrival of Chinese people to the United States has a dark history, even today 'Asian hate' is still common. Its history begins around the 1850s, when many people of Chinese descent migrated and settled in the United States. The majority of them live in California and the western states.

At the time, most Chinese immigrants worked in the mining and railroad construction industries. There is a high demand for workers willing to do dangerous work for low wages, and Chinese immigrants are offering themselves. Because of that incident, there was a lot of racist sentiment towards Asian people, and this even happened in the government. In 1854, the Supreme Court of California ruled that persons of Asian descent

could not testify against white persons in court. This decision made white people feel they could easily escape punishment if they committed violence against Asians out of hatred and racial discrimination.

Even so, many of them continued their lives in the United States. They have pursued a career that has given birth to many successful and famous people, although until now their arrival has been frowned upon. In addition, not a few of them bring their very diverse traditions and culture there to practice them in everyday life. Even one of the directors of Chinese descent who later lived in Canada, Domee Shi created a film with a Chinese cultural background entitled *Turning Red*.

*Turning Red* tells the story of a girl of Chinese descent named Mei Lin Lee who lives with her parents in Canada. He is a bright student and quite self-confident, he is also very obedient towards his parents. He even helped take care of his family's ancestral shrine with his mother. He was raised by an overprotective mother named Ming Lee . Like most teenagers in general, Mei wanted herself to be free in her teens , she also liked one of the popular boybands at the time, but her strict parents always disagreed with Mei's decisions and that made her upset and had a hard time controlling her emotions so she changed. become a red panda. Domee Shi, revealed that this story was inspired by his life story when he was a teenager, he often fought with his mother. Shi and Cho, his childhood friend who is also the scriptwriter for this film, shared that their mother had very high hopes for them. Cho felt he had the same feelings about hope as Shi when they were little. With this similarity, they created this film based on their strong culture.

The analytical method used in this study is content analysis because this study is widely used to describe the characteristics of the content of a message. According to (Riffe et al., 2019) content analysis is a structured and replicable process of communication symbols, in which these symbols are assigned numerical values based on accurate measurements and then analyzed using statistical methods to describe communication, attract conclusions, and provide context, both in production and consumption. The content analysis used is qualitative because according to (Nurkholiq et al., 2019) This method is used to describe or explain special things from social influences that cannot be described or solved using a quantitative approach.

Film is indeed one of the means of conveying messages to be conveyed. The way films convey messages is indeed unique, it can be directly through communication between characters with one another or indirectly through the behavior of the characters. So it's no wonder many people like it. According to (Effendy, 1993) film is an effective means of mass communication, not only to entertain, but also to provide information and knowledge. Currently, film is often used as a supporting medium in informative or educational lectures to clarify explanations. Film production has audio-visual characteristics that are used to communicate messages to a group of people gathered at a certain location (Reeds & Procedures, nd) . Therefore films have a very big influence on the people who watch them and it is certain that there are many social, cultural, religious values and so on.

In this study researchers used seven elements of culture. According to Koentjaraningrat (Siany & Atiek, 2009) language has seven elements which include language, knowledge systems, social organization systems, living equipment systems and technology, economic systems and livelihoods, religious systems, and the arts.

1. Language System

The use of language is a tool for humans to fulfill their social needs in interacting or relating to other people. Within the field of anthropology, the study of language is known as linguistic anthropology. Language has a crucial role in the analysis of human culture. According to Koentjaraningrat (Siany & Atiek, 2009) linguistic factors or human sign systems through speech or writing as a means of communication are the elaboration of the most basic characteristics of the language used by the ethnic group concerned along with the various variants of the language.

2. Knowledge System

Knowledge system is abstract and tangible in human ideas because it is related to systems of living equipment and technology which are knowledge systems in a universal culture whose boundaries are very wide. Humans cannot possibly live without having knowledge of the nature that surrounds them. They could not have made the tools they used for subsistence or even crafts without knowledge of the raw materials they used. Equipment and technology for their needs is made based on knowledge about the properties of substances that exist in the environment around humans.

3. Kinship System and Social Organization

According to Koentjaraningrat (Siany & Atiek, 2009) every community has customs and regulations that govern their lives in the environment where they live and socialize everyday. The nuclear family and other relatives are the closest basic social units. Furthermore, humans are divided into groups based on geographic locations to form social organizations. Kinship is related to the concept of marriage in society because marriage is the basis or core of forming a community or social organization.

4. Living Equipment Systems and Technology

Humans are always trying to maintain their survival, so they always make the necessary equipment or objects. The discussion of cultural elements included in life equipment and technology is a discussion of material culture. According to Koentjaraningrat (Liestyasari, 2009) in traditional society there are eight types of equipment systems and elements of material culture used by groups of people who live on the move. These types include productive tools such as stones for pounding, weapons, containers for hoarding, storing and transporting goods, tools for starting a fire such as the friction of two stones, food or drinks and the like, clothing and accessories, tools for protection. and housing, as well as means of transportation.

5. Economic System or Livelihood

According to Liestyasari (2009 ) ethnographic research regarding the livelihood system examines how the eyes livelihood of a community group or economic system them to meet their needs. Human livelihoods have changed over time and the times

have evolved from simple to complex types. The pattern of human life that initially relied on livelihoods as farmers developed to rely on education and skills in finding work. The economic system in each ethnicity or region has its own characteristics.

6. Religious System

According to Liestyasari (2009) anthropological studies to understand religious aspects as part of human culture cannot be separated from religious feelings or religious emotions. Religious emotions are feelings that encourage someone to take actions related to religion. This emotion also gives rise to the concept of objects that are considered sacred in human life, such as prayer beads, rosaries and statues. In addition there are places used for religious ceremonies such as temples, shrines, mosques and churches. The time for carrying out the religious ceremony has also been arranged according to when to carry out the religious ceremony.

7. Art

According to Liestyasari (2009) the artistic activity of a community Tradition has attracted the attention of anthropologists to research ethnography. Information collected in this research includes works of art such as statues, sculptures and ornaments. Art also has several types such as fine art, musical art, movement art and modern art.

## **METHOD**

The method used in this research is descriptive content analysis with a qualitative approach. The subject used in this study is the film "Turning Red" which is produced in 2022 and the object is a picture of Chinese ethnic culture whose data is contained in the film. The ethnic Chinese culture that has the most data found in this film is the religious aspect. Furthermore, in terms of art, kinship and social organization, knowledge, systems of living equipment and technology and economic systems or livelihoods. Meanwhile, the picture of culture in terms of language is not found in this film.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The problems that Domee Shi faced when he was a teenager became the main idea in making the film *Turning Red*. She has the same family background as Mei Lee (the main character of the movie *Turning Red*) where she is very close to her parents, especially her mother because her father has to go to work. Domee Shi revealed that being a teenager is not always fun, sometimes embarrassing and terrible but even so everything will be fine. His teenage life, which is bound by the customs passed down by his ancestors, is different from other teenagers, who according to him can freely do whatever they want. The culture and customs that are attached to family traditions that are often in conflict with circumstances make everything seem difficult to live as a teenager living in this modern era. Domee Shi hopes that this film can be watched by teenagers and their parents so that they can understand each other's position as depicted in this film.

The images of Chinese ethnic culture found in the film *Turning Red* are a system of knowledge, a system of kinship and social organization, a system of life tools and technology, an economic system and livelihood, a system of religion and an art system. However, the data found are religious and artistic systems, while language systems are not found in this film.

At the beginning of the film, you can see a photo frame belonging to Mei hanging on the wall of her house. The photo shows that Mei Lee is of Chinese descent, she and her family are seen wearing a cheongsam or qipao, which are dresses worn by Chinese women during Chinese New Year. The Ming even used it in their daily routine of caring for their family shrine. Cheongsams are usually red according to Chinese New Year traditions with various motifs. In the photo, Mei is wearing a red dress while her mother is blue. The red panda himself, who plays the main character in this film, is often used as a symbol of wisdom and power, and often appears in traditional art and mythology in China.

The Lee family believes that the mythical red panda, who has a history with Sun Yee's ancestors, has brought them good luck and prosperity because of Sun Yee's special abilities and relationship with the red panda. At that time, while at war Sun Yee's husband was given the ability to transform by a god into a red panda under a red moon to protect his village. That is what makes the figure of the giant red panda so attached to the Lee family and passed on to the next generation.

Mei is a smart child and loves her parents very much. He also diligently helps Ming Lee, his mother and Jin Lee, his father to maintain and care for the shrine dedicated to their ancestor, Sun Yee. There are several supporting ornaments for ritual purposes depicted on the Lee family shrine. Lanterns, are one of the objects that are definitely present on every Chinese public holiday such as Chinese New Year, because they are interpreted as happiness and hope. While the red color on the lanterns symbolizes happiness, kindness, success and bringer of good fortune. Therefore, the Chinese people believe that lanterns always bring good luck and provide sustenance for their users, as well as repelling reinforcements or evil spirits.

It can be seen that Mei and Ming are carrying out a ritual of worship in their hands, incense, which is incense used by the Chinese people as a complement to the ritual of worship. Hio means fragrant. In accordance with the meaning of its name, Hio emits a distinctive fragrance when burned. When worshipping, the Chinese burn varying amounts of incense from 1 to 9 in one service depending on the beliefs of each individual, or some even burn them up to hundreds. There are three incense that are seen used by Mei and Ming for their worship rituals, which are symbolized as worship for the universe which consists of 3 elements, namely earth, sky, and humans.

Apart from that, another ornament that adorns the Lee family shrine is the chunlian that is displayed at the entrance of the temple, Chinese calligraphy written on two long red pieces of paper containing prayers with good meanings and hopes to be achieved. Usually chunlian contains words like xi, shun, chun or cai which mean happiness, success and wealth. Chunlian is installed on both sides of the door of the house or the entrance of the shopping center. Meanwhile, red candles, ornaments that are also certain to exist in temples and are always used for Chinese public holidays such as Chinese New Year, are believed to be exorcists of evil spirits.

Mei is indeed very obedient to her parents who are too protective of her. Her mother also always pressured Mei to be like that, which has become Chinese family culture. Mei will do everything she can to please her mother and live up to Ming's wishes. But Mei is also still a teenager who sometimes wants to enjoy the hustle and bustle of the outside world, such as watching a boy band concert that she has always loved, namely 4 Town. One night when Mei was forming dumplings with her mother who was eating a bowl of porridge, Mei showed her interest in the boy band in front of her mother after seeing the advertisement on television, but Ming didn't like it, seen when she questioned why the boy band was named 4 Town when the number of members was five peoples. Likewise her grandmother, she didn't like the boyband that Mei liked on the grounds that the boyband's name contained four letters which, according to Chinese belief, the number four means bad luck because the pronunciation when pronounced is similar to the word "death" so usually Chinese people don't use the number four for numbering. floors of the country's buildings.

Not to mention about Mei's friends, which consist of four people, namely Miriam, Abby, Priya and Mei herself. Ming doesn't like him because he thinks that Mei's friends always influence their children , especially when they use Mei as a source of making money which the four of them will later use to buy tickets to the 4 Town concert and that has already been agreed between them, including Mei. But Mei didn't explain everything to Ming so Ming's view of his best friend got worse until one day their friendship was strained. The four of them saw each other less and less because at that time Mei was also going to carry out the ritual of releasing the red panda spirit at the full moon which was timed to coincide with their dream boyband concert schedule. But when that day came, Mei was suddenly among her three friends watching a concert. Of course that made his three best friends wonder. Mei explained what happened until their close friendship finally returned.

## CONCLUSION

Chinese ethnic culture in the film "Turning Red" found a lot of data, especially in terms of religion. Apart from that, the Chinese ethnic culture is also seen in the art system, kinship system and social organization, knowledge system, economic or livelihood system and system of living equipment and technology .

The image of ethnic Chinese culture in the film "Turning Red" is dominated by a religious system in which many spiritual objects are seen in the Lee family shrine such as the shrine itself, incense sticks and red candles. Then the cultural image of the technological system is found in typical Chinese food and clothing. The picture of livelihood can be seen in the Lee family who daily care for their family's temple. The majority of the elements shown in terms of art can be seen in the objects displayed in his temple and house. While the elements of knowledge found in this film include family tree and characteristics. However, no elements of the language system were found.

Apart from containing cultural elements, the film Turnung Red depicts a strong and realistic teenage friendship. Like teenagers in general, their friendship is not always right, they do silly or stupid things, fight until they are friends again. Even though Mei is always under the supervision of her mother who is overly protective of her, Mei's three best friends are always beside her when Mei is happy or when she cannot control her emotions and feels that the red panda curse that is on her makes her insecure and sad. This type of friendship is often found in the real world. Sad, happy and disappointed. So that anyone who watches it will get a lesson that it's normal to make mistakes as long as you want to fix it and keep getting better because that's adolescence, the time when everyone just starts learning about life and continues to find their identity.

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