



## Food and identity in Leila S. Chudori's (2015) *Home*

Cut Syifa Fauzia Abdillah

English Language and Literature Study Program,  
Faculty of Language and Literature Education,  
Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia  
Dr. Setiabudi No 229, Bandung 40154  
icutfz@student.upi.edu

### ABSTRACT

In a globalized world, food and foodways can act as vehicle for people to identify their belonging to certain communities or identities. For some people, their longing for certain times, places, or moments, is expressed through food narratives. Basing the analysis on Hall's (1996) theory of cultural identity, the researcher applies Anita Mannur's (2010) concept of culinary citizenship and Avtar Brah's (1996) homing desire as theoretical frameworks, this research aims to reveal the functions and ways food and foodways shape the identities of the main characters of Leila S. Chudori's (2015) *Home*. Narrations and dialogues involving food are examined to explore the relationship of an Indonesian political exile in Paris, Dimas Suryo, as well as his daughter, Lintang Utara and food in relation to their identity crises. Based on the analysis, it is found that food functions to claim their identities and as an emotional anchor in their process of constructing and re-constructing their identities as people coming from different generation of immigrants. These results suggest that food and foodways can accentuate the construction of identities of the main characters in the novel as people in diaspora.

**Keywords:** Culinary citizenship; Cultural identity; Diaspora; Food and identity; Homing desire

### How to cite (in APA style):

Abdillah, C. S. F. (2022). Food and identity in Leila S. Chudori's (2015) *Home*. *Passage*, 10(1), 16-24.

### INTRODUCTION

People, as Hall (1992) has stated in the field of cultural identity, are challenged by a range of diverse identities, exposing their once 'settled' identities to different cultural varieties. It leads to a rapid increase of new identities as people go through a process of discovering their positions in a brand-new environment. According to Hall (1992), one's identity goes on existing hand in hand with various other ones, a person then becomes the product of numbers of intertwined histories and cultures—forming a new identity. However, there is also a rather strong defensive reaction to this phenomenon. People might attempt to re-identify with their culture of origin through different media that project familiarity of the past in their process of identification, including through food and eating culture.

In the field of literature, there are previous studies that sought the connection between food and identity. In the research conducted by Liu (2020), *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), is put under the lens of material feminism, thing theory, and Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory. Its findings suggest that "food is more than an object or symbol; it is a 'storied matter' as it witnesses and acts as an intra-

actor in every turning point of the character's—Winnie's—lifetime and participates in her life's trajectory". It reflects Winnie's memories of her homeland and creates a space for cultures to meet and negotiate, allowing both her and her descendant to relocate cultural identity as new meanings of interpretations are created through their experiences through food.

One of Indonesian literary works that reflects such phenomenon is a novel written by Leila S. Chudori entitled *Home* (2015), translated into English by John H. McGlynn. Divided into three parts, Dimas Suryo, Lintang Utara, and Segara Alam, *Home* is a historical fiction that is told in the perspectives of different characters, sometimes in different timeframes. Its story revolves around the life of Indonesian political exile in Paris, Dimas Suryo and his friends—Nugroho Dewantoro, Risjaf, and Tjai Sin Soe. Being forcefully driven out of their homeland and denied access to come back even years later, they decide to set up an Indonesian restaurant called Tanah Air Restaurant in Paris. *Home* (2015) also follows the story of Lintang Utara, Dimas' daughter, as the second generation of Indonesian immigrant searching for answers about Indonesia.

There have been a lot of academic research on a variety of topics that use this Leila S. Chudori's *Home* (2015) as its data source. One of the examples is Wulandari's (2019) study entitled *Imagining Home in Diaspora in Leila S. Chudori's Pulang (Home)*. Since one of the novel's topics concerns the idea of a 'homeland' for exiles, this research utilized Mallet and Golob's (2004) concept of home to examine the main character's, Dimas Suryo, concept of 'home'. It is found that, while establishing Tanah Air Restaurant is Dimas' attempt to recreate his homeland in a foreign land, he still perceives a 'home' as a place to return to—and for him, that is Indonesia (Wulandari, 2019). Furthermore, research regarding food and identity in the novel has also been conducted. In *Culinary and Indonesian Identity in Leila S. Chudori's Novel Pulang*, Anantama and Suryanto (2020) sought to explore the food philosophy in the novel. Through literary gastronomy approach, the researchers analyze how Dimas Suryo and his friends treats food in order to see the implicit symbols that food carries throughout the novel. It is found that the characters of the novel exalts food, as can be seen from food being compared to a poem and Dimas' attempt to preserve the taste of Indonesian food. It is also argued that food appearances in the novel represents Indonesian-ness of the characters, as it is used to confirm their national identity. In addition, as Tanah Air Restaurant serves Indonesian cuisines, it becomes the representative of Indonesia in another country (Anantama & Suryanto., 2020).

Referring to the previous studies above, it can be seen that the role of food is significant to the characters' identities and sense of home. However, these studies mainly focused on the exploration of the relationship between food and Dimas Suryo as well as his friends as Indonesian political exiles. It has not yet examined the relationship of food and Lintang Utara as the second generation of immigrants. Therefore, this current research aims to disclose the different functions and ways food and eating culture construct the main characters' identities, Dimas Suryo and Lintang Utara, as people in diaspora coming from different generations through these following questions:

1. What functions does food serve in constructing the identities of people in diaspora as seen in *Home* (2015) by Leila S. Chudori?
2. How does food play a role in shaping the identities of the main characters in the novel?

## METHOD

This research uses qualitative descriptive design to describe and explain the functions food serve in constructing the main characters' identities Leila S. Chudori's (2015) translated novel *Home*.

In order to analyze the data, the researcher first identifies the mentions of food and eating culture in

the context of identity in relation to Dimas Suryo and Lintang Utara by applying indicators of identity cultural identity and identity crisis derived from Diana Petkova's (2005)'s theory of cultural identity. After that, based on the contextual classification, the researcher investigated the characters' attitude towards food and eating culture using Tompkin's (2012) maxim of looking at food in literary texts, weighing not only the question of "what", but also "where", "when", "who", and the most significant one, "why". Then, by basing the analysis of Hall's (1996) theory of cultural identity, the appearance of food and the main characters' attitudes towards it were analyzed using Anita Mannur's (2010) culinary citizenship and Avtar Brah's (1996) theory of diasporic space and homing desire. Finally, the writer attempted to make meaning out of the collected data.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the findings and discussion regarding the analysis is presented to answer the questions of the research: (1) What function does food serve in constructing the identities of people in diaspora as seen in Leila S. Chudori's (2015) *Home*? (2) How does food play a role in shaping the identities of the main characters in the novel?

### *Asserting and Discovering Identity through Food*

One of the many ways food functions in relation to human identities can be analyzed through a concept called culinary citizenship. Mannur (2010) states that a person can assert or inhabit their identity through their relationship with food. In Leila S. Chudori's (2015) *Home*, this notion is apparent in its main characters, Dimas Suryo and Lintang Utara.

Dimas, as the first generation of immigrants of his family, attempts to claim his sense of self using his relationship and attitude regarding food and cooking. While residing in Paris, Dimas repeatedly associates certain food or foodways with his past, specifically the idea of Jakarta—his place of origin—and its shared culture (Petkova, 2005). Dimas' attitude towards two different kinds of coffee, coming from two different places, serves as a fitting example.

As in almost every other café I had visited in Paris, **the coffee was served in a demitasse**, whose size was, **to my Indonesian mind, much more appropriate for playing house than for serving a proper cup of coffee**. The first time I was served a cup of coffee in Paris, it was **so strong and thick and had such an incredibly oily taste that I'd almost had a heart attack**. My God, what would they have to put in their coffee to make it more palatable, I wondered, **a bucket of sugar and a gallon of cream? And now again, for the umpteenth time, with my first sip, the instant the thick and oil-like liquid touched my tongue, my body recoiled in shock** (Chudori, 2015, p. 7).

Due to differences in its ingredients and procedure, a cup of Parisian coffee is foreign to Dimas' taste buds, so much that it startles him. He then compares it to Indonesian coffee, suggesting a state of being conscious regarding his identity (Petkova, 2005). His resistance to a particular flavor change of coffee reveals that he is experiencing a cultural identity crisis as such action shows an unwillingness to recognize a certain culture as his identity (Petkova, 2005).

However, although Dimas is reluctant to associate himself with a certain food that feels foreign to him, there are times in which he has no choice but to consume it. By continuing to drink Parisian coffee, he is practicing the "omnivore paradox". It refers to the omnivore's contradictory characteristics of a person towards food. On one hand, an omnivore might perceive a foreign food as a possible danger, but on the other, they also possess the tendency to explore and the need for diversification (Fischler, 1988). Although Dimas is resistant towards change, he is also overcoming his refusal and incorporating a new taste into his life as he must consume it occasionally.

Similarly, culinary citizenship is also apparent in the narrations of Lintang Utara, Dimas' daughter. However, there is a difference in how the concept is manifested through Lintang's relationship with food.

Being the second generation of an Indonesian immigrant, Lintang's knowledge about the country is constructed through scattered pieces of information that she gathers through third parties such as her father and his friends. Additionally, her idea of Indonesia is also gained through shared cultural practices—such as the food making and serving process of Indonesian meals and the tradition of eating together—at their home in Paris and Tanah Air Restaurant.

Lintang's dilemma is detected in her hesitation to attend the celebration of Kartini Day, an event that is held by the Indonesian embassy in Paris. Nara, her boyfriend, suggests the idea: **"You really do have to see another side of Indonesian society—on the opposite side of the spectrum from the one at Tanah Air Restaurant."** (Chudori, 2015, p. 162).

Nara's utterance supports the argument that Lintang's concept of Indonesia is largely obtained from Tanah Air Restaurant. Her knowledge of Indonesian culture and memories is disrupted, indicating a crisis of identity (Petkova, 2005).

Despite having her connection to Indonesia interrupted, Lintang has been introduced to many Indonesian cuisines since childhood as she always follows Dimas around to the kitchen. While Dimas must adjust his menus to suit the tongues of his clients, he does not have to worry about altering ingredients and methods for Lintang's palate.

Ayah always made two kinds of sambal or hot sauce to further spice up a meal: **a sambal bajak**

which was not too hot—**Ayah always removed the seeds of the red chilies and parboiled the chili's flesh before frying it—and thus more palatable for the tongues of French clientele, and a crushed peanut sambal into which he blended small green chilies that were so hot the sambal could be enjoyed by only the most tempered of tongues in Paris: those of Maman and me** (Chudori, 2015, p. 147).

It is illustrated that Lintang has already been accustomed to and has grown attached to Indonesian cuisine. When Dimas' friends from the embassy visits, Lintang even **"takes charge and proudly recommends everyone a Padang set menu"** (p. 272). It shows that Lintang's crisis is not caused by clashing cultural elements she must come to terms with. Instead, it is due to the lost connection with a part of her identity.

In addition, Lintang also struggles to fit in the Indonesian communities—not only in Paris, but also in Jakarta. It is mentioned that one of the ways Lintang learns about Indonesia is through the shared culture and conversations happening in Tanah Air Restaurant; however, the place also becomes the only part of Indonesia that she is familiar with. It is found that on Kartini Day celebration, an event held by the Indonesian embassy in Paris, Lintang does not feel accepted in a space that is supposed to embrace her. **"That night I had been introduced to a part of Indonesia which was very different from the one I knew through Tanah Air Restaurant"** (Chudori, 2015, p. 174).

Lintang's thought reflects her conflict of identity as she encounters a different part of Indonesia. At the same time, the event also emphasizes the interrupted culture of a certain group related to Indonesia that has been missing from her life.

In Indonesia, Lintang goes through a similar experience. Her visit to Jakarta, a place that she longs to go to, also confronts her sense of belonging; thus, her identity.

**As is usually the case in Indonesia, where no matter how official the meal might be, place cards are rarely used, none were on the table that night. This was something Lintang liked; it made meals much more familial—and she didn't feel forced to have to sit beside someone she didn't know** (Chudori, 2015, p. 378).

Based on Lintang's experience back at her house in Paris and Tanah Air Restaurant, eating together is a ritual that is associated with home and togetherness. In the excerpt above, she is invited to a dinner at her cousin's future in-laws, the Priasmoros, along with her uncle, Aji, and his family. Encountering a similar foodway in Jakarta to the one her family has back in Paris, Lintang feels at ease and included. Moreover, the hosts have been nothing but friendly to her.

However, at the same place and time, Lintang then witnesses her father and his friends, including their restaurant and cooking, being made fun of and scorned at because of political propaganda. “Funny in a way how those communists became famous for their restaurant, with their names written up everywhere when **the food wasn’t even special, or so I heard: just fried rice with an egg on top!**” (Chudori, 2015, p. 381).

In a ritual that Lintang recognizes as familial and warm, she does not feel safe nor embraced. She then defends the cuisines of Tanah Air Restaurant, indicating their prominence by describing them in detail.

“They **don’t just serve fried rice with an egg on top.** They have a complete Indonesian menu, and all the dishes taste great. There’s **Padang-style rendang, fried beef lung, shrimp with chili sauce, nasi kuning with all the fixings—tempeh, anchovies, and wilted vegetables.** There’s also **gulai anam and even ikan pindang serani,** which are also very good, and the restaurant is always full, from afternoon to night. It’s full!” Lintang spoke forcefully, her eyes brimming with tears“(Chudori, 2015, p. 381-382).

Based on the excerpts above, it is seen that Lintang is experiencing both inclusion and exclusion, both happening alongside the appearance of food and foodways. Home, as Brah (1996) suggests, is innately connected to the way a diasporic subject process the experience of being included and excluded. In Paris, Tanah Air Restaurant is a place that Lintang considers as her home. It is an Indonesian community in Paris that makes her feel included. Not only Lintang regularly eats at the restaurant with her immediate family, but she also chats with Tjai, Nugroho, and Risjaf—her father’s friends—and gets introduced to Indonesia through their stories. At the same time, she also feels excluded in another Indonesian community of Paris, the one that exists outside of Tanah Air Restaurant. Similarly, she also goes through such experience in Indonesia. Eating together, Lintang feels included to be participating in a foodway that she considers as familial. However, she then feels excluded as the hosts insults her family—specifically the authenticity of her father’s food and Tanah Air Restaurant.

It is shown that the characters utilize their relationship to food to inhabit a certain *identitarian* position as they are going through identity crises as people in diaspora. Dimas, as the first generation of diaspora, uses food to assert his identity. Meanwhile, coming from the generation after him, Lintang uses food and food habits to discover and connect to a part of her Indonesian identity.

#### **Food as Emotional Anchor**

Referring to Ketu Katrak’s (1997) autobiographical essay entitled “Food and Belonging: At ‘Home’ and in ‘Alien’ Kitchens”, Mannur (2010) suggests that food can turn into an emotional anchor for people in diaspora, providing

a sense of rootedness for immigrant subjects. In Katrak’s case, it transports her to her past home, although temporarily. Longing for the familiar, however, is “deeply rooted in the creation of imaginary fiction” (p. 28).

In Leila S. Chudori’s (2015) *Home*, Dimas’ relationship with coffee can be taken as an example of this phenomenon.

It was ironic. It should have been me the military arrested in Jakarta that night, yet I was here, in Paris, amidst thousands of French students on the march. In their yells and cries, **I somehow caught a whiff of stench from Jakarta’s gutters mixed with the sweet smell of clove-laden kretek cigarettes and steaming black coffee.** The bright gleam in the eyes of the French students reminded me of former friends in Jakarta whose fates I didn’t know. With sparkling eyes and effervescent spirits, they demanded in loud voices a more just society (Chudori, 2015, p. 4).

Dimas associates the pleasant scent of coffee and clove-laden *kretek* cigarettes with an unpleasant smell of the gutters as he is reminded of his past in Jakarta. Although the smell of coffee is lusciously described and is associated with hope, it still brings up a painful memory to Dimas about his homeland. It is illustrated in the excerpt below, in which his longing for the familiarity of *luwak coffee* puts him in distress, comparing the feeling to an agonizing physical pain.

**“It would be perfect if we had a cup of luwak coffee.”** There, I had said it, that **dangerous word.** Poor and stranded as I was in the middle of Europe, **giving voice to a longing for something as exotic as luwak coffee was the same as sticking a knife in my heart.** If I wanted to go on living, I had to—at least for now—bury and conceal Indonesia and anything connected with it. **I felt my mind return to the Jakarta where I lived four years previously”** (Chudori, 2015, p. 22).

Reminiscing, Dimas remembers the way coffee, along with *kretek* cigarettes, accompanied Dimas in his time bonding with his friends.

A kretek was like a symbol for us. After **a long discussion and sometimes heated debate about politics** and the nation’s state of affairs at the office, we would often **end the discussion with a cup of thick black coffee and a kretek cigarette at Senen Market.** At that time, in late 1964, **Jakarta was a city that was neither calm nor comfortable** (Chudori, 2015, p. 23).

In this excerpt, Dimas remembers Jakarta as an uncomfortable place to live in at that time. After the passage above, coffee frequently pops up again in his narration of the past. However, it is seen to be appearing in more uplifting moments. It exists in certain situations where Dimas feels comfortable

and light-hearted to the point it made him lose track of time.

**I enthusiastically listened to political discussions** between Mas Hananto and other colleagues in the editorial room, and it wasn't rare to find me tagging along with them as they continued their **debate over coffee at Kadir's stall in Senen Market** (Chudori, 2015, p. 23).

Looking at the frequent appearance of coffee in certain situations of Dimas' flashbacks, it can be argued that coffee has a significant meaning in defining himself as a person. Coffee, in his narrations, appears as Dimas found a community for himself—a place to be.

However, it is also important to note that there is a difference between Dimas' relationship with coffee in the present and in his memories of the past. In the present, the smell and a mere mention of coffee can put Dimas in anguish. On the other hand, in his recalling of the past, although the same emotion as the present is offered in the first paragraph of the flashback, most of the time coffee appears in situations that excite Dimas and make him feel a sense of belonging.

According to Mannur (2010), a person of diaspora uses nostalgia to structure their recollections of home. Smell, in this case the smell of food, is also added to the list as it mirrors an affective function. Referring to Salman Rushdie's idea of nostalgia in "Imaginary Homeland", immigrant subjects are inclined to alter their reminiscing of the past in great extremities into "an idealization of the past." Memories are seen in fragments, resulting in the distortion of one's remembrance of a 'homeland' (as cited in Mannur, 2010, p. 28).

Dimas recalls his relationship with coffee as his way to bond and belong, despite coffee also appearing in difficult situations or even insignificant moments. In addition, he also associates the sweet smell of coffee with the spirit of justice of his history. Through this relationship, it can be argued that Dimas is romanticizing his past through the act of nostalgia.

Dimas' ways to assert his identity through food function of emotional anchor is also apparent in his cooking habits. Recalling Katrak's (1997) essay, Mannur (2010) points out that as much as memories are scattered, immigrants tend to possess an unchanging perception of the homeland and lasting cultural core, resulting in them being "singular about the ontological coherency of their national cuisine" (p. 31).

For instance, Dimas' attitude in relation to cooking *nasi kuning* below:

I don't know where I got the strength, but I whipped off the sarong I'd been using as a shawl and threw it at Mas Nug, and then grabbed him by the collar. **"Don't you dare mess with my spices. Don't fiddle**

with anything. **Don't mix any other spices with the turmeric paste for the nasi kuning. And don't even think of altering the recipes for the dishes on this restaurant's menu!"** (Chudori, 2015, p. 97).

In this excerpt, it is seen that Dimas' particularity is not only about foreign ingredients. He is also specific regarding the mixing of the spices, refusing to associate his cooking with a turmeric paste. His refusal towards foreign ingredients, however, persists. It is seen as Dimas goes to rest, leaving his *nasi kuning* to other people in the kitchen and giving them a warning **"OK, OK, I'll lie down for a bit, but don't put anything strange in my nasi kuning,"** (Chudori, 2015, p. 97).

Dimas' inclination towards the authenticity of his food is also seen when he is cooking other cuisines. Although memories are fragmented, he is trying to reconstruct the feeling of being at home in a faraway land through 'culinary authenticity'. By replicating the exact recipe according to his memory, being inflexible and particular about his food making and preparation method, and resisting change as much as he can, Dimas is desperately clinging onto the sense of belonging he once knew. Coming to a foreign land with almost nothing and being bombarded with culture that he is not familiar with; he uses 'culinary authenticity' to relive his memories as well as keeping a part of his past that he can still protect.

However, as he is still an Indonesian cook opening a restaurant in Paris, Dimas also must compromise a few things as ingredients and tools are less accessible and the Parisian palate is different from his. For example, here is an excerpt from his daughter point of view:

Ayah, on the other hand, **loved ritual**. He was **both obsessive about and possessive of his stone mortar, which an aunt of his had sent him from Yogyakarta**. With his **faithful mortar in hand**, Ayah kept the blender at a distance. He **ground his spices slowly and carefully, mixing in the coconut milk, little by little, while complaining occasionally about having been forced to use coconut milk from the can** (Chudori, 2015, p. 146).

This textual evidence shows that although needs to use coconut milk from a can when he is making *rendang*, he can still use mortar to ground the bases for his sambal.

Other than being apparent in Dimas' foodway, food as an emotional anchor is also manifested through the smell of cloves and turmeric. Aside from being ingredients for cooking cloves and turmeric fill two different apothecary jars stored in Dimas' shelves in the living room.

Ayah knew that even if the Indonesian government rejected him, he was not being rejected by his country. It was not his homeland rejecting him. **And that is the reason he stored a pile of cloves in the one large**

**apothecary jar and several handfuls of turmeric in the other one that sat on the bookshelf in his living room. From them emitted the scent of Indonesia** (Chudori, 2015, p. 205).

As Dimas cannot come home to his country of origin, he takes two kinds of spices that remind him the most of Indonesia, smelling them occasionally to prevent himself from forgetting. When asked about the reason behind this specific choice of spices and their placement, Dimas never gives a definite answer. However, it is revealed that he is attached to the spices because of his past love, Surti, who has been sending him letters in ten years.

But I have no doubt whatsoever that you will succeed, **especially because you love the kitchen, with all its spices, and the culinary world, as much as you love the world of literature.**

I can see **you in the kitchen, enjoying every second you spend mixing your spices, treating them like living creatures, helping them to find their perfect mate so that they might commingle and then become one to produce a new taste altogether** (Chudori, 2015, p. 225).

Dimas' insistence on not using substitute ingredients or not letting people mess with his spices turns out to stem from another reason other than taste. Dimas uses its scent not because it solely reminds him of his kitchen in Jakarta, but also to relive the memories that he had with Surti. Based on these excerpts, one of the reasons why he desires to return to Indonesia might be because his past lover.

In addition, food as an emotional anchor also emerges in Lintang's relationship with food. As has been discussed before, Tanah Air Restaurant holds a significant meaning in her life. In her point of view, Tanah Air Restaurant as a place that is filled with friendliness and joy, so much that not being able to visit the place is something that is not easy to do.

I had stopped going to Tanah Air Restaurant, which in turn meant I had long been **separated from the restaurant's genial atmosphere**, with its distinctive sound of gamelan music, and its interior walls decorated with shadow puppets, masks, and a map of Indonesia. Making things much more difficult for me was that I now rarely saw my father's friends: Om Nug, Om Risjaf, and Om Tjai, who were like true uncles for me. Yet **another hardship was no longer being able to smell the scent of my father's goat curry, a dish that could compete with signature dishes of Europe's master chefs** (Chudori, 2015, p. 145).

Smell, as the affective function of food, also emerges in Lintang's narration. Like Dimas' narration, it is used to describe contradicting images between the surroundings and the emotion of the characters. In this passage, smell is connected to her feeling of discomfort, used to invoke the feeling of

longing for the familiar—her father's cooking and Tanah Air Restaurant.

Lintang once again uses the smell of food to emphasize absence—this time, it is Dimas'.

*Lintang remembered looking out the window to see her father's back as he walked away from the apartment building. Every evening thereafter, she still set three plates on the table at dinner time. She missed her father's fried rice with its scent of cooking oil laced with onions. But she always ended the night by returning his unused plate back to the cupboard* (Chudori, 2015, p. 188).

As fried rice is something that Dimas always cooks for their breakfast or dinner as a family, its presence is as strong as his. Therefore, by remembering its smell alone prompts Lintang to recall the image of him walking away from home.

Lintang uses the scent of food as an emotional anchor to a certain place, event, or moment of time where she feels the absence of something that used to be in her daily life. Elaborating on Brah's (1996) concept of home as a lived experience of everyday culture, Ahmed (1999) proposes that not only that people live on the locality, but they also instead live on each other—locality wraps diasporic subjects as it regulates their definition of the things that are being smelled, heard, touched, and remembered. In Lintang's case, smell defines the togetherness of a family ritual that makes a place home: eating together for breakfast or dinner. Thus, eating together is a lived experience she uses to regulate her sense of being at home—of belonging. As the memories of the smell opens the door to other memories of the eating habit, food as well as foodway act as an emotional anchor for Lintang.

#### ***Homing Desire through Food***

Based on the results, it is found that Dimas and Lintang experience crises of identities, expressed through food, in different ways. In order to examine each of the characters' way of overcoming their crises, Avtar Brah's (1996) concept of diaspora, 'homing desire', is put into consideration.

Brah (1996) argues that 'homing desire' is distinct from 'desiring a homeland' (p. 16). Diasporic subjects do not equally articulate 'homing desire' as longing to return to the place of 'origin' (Brah, 1996, p. 193). Despite knowing that he is restricted from entering Indonesia by the government, it is found that Dimas still desires to return to his homeland. As a result, he and his friends, fellow political exiles, decide to establish an Indonesian restaurant to make 'their mark' in Paris. In a research article entitled *Imagining Home in Diaspora*, Wulandari (2019) states that establishing Tanah Air Restaurant is a way for Dimas to rebuild his past in the present time (p. 40). To further elaborate this statement, this present study finds that Dimas also expresses his longing for Indonesia through mundane actions in his daily life such as his

attitude towards food, including his choice of food to cook and consume.

It is illustrated in *Home* (2015) that coffee holds a significant meaning in Dimas' culinary narration. Dimas' attitude towards coffee demonstrates the idealization of his past through his inclination to reminiscence coffee's presence in relation to intimate moments in the past. Additionally, Dimas' strictness and particularity regarding the ingredients and method he uses reflects his 'culinary authenticity'. Dimas tends to hold on to this concept unless he is forced to let it go and adapt according to certain situations. By reconstructing the exact recipe and method, Dimas also reconstruct the memories and feeling of his past in order to relive it. It can be seen in Dimas' rigidity regarding the ingredients and method of cooking *nasi kuning* and his emotional attachment to *ikan pindang serani*, cloves, and turmeric. In a study entitled *Consumption and the Indian Diaspora: A Study of Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake*, Das (2021) follows Ashima, an immigrant, in her attempt to recreate her favorite refreshment from Bengali called *jhalmuri*. As she expects to be taken down to the memory lane gastronomically, tasting the nostalgia of a home, the absence of a particular taste that she has been longing to revisit snaps her back to reality. Although in this excerpt Ashima fails to reconstruct the taste she desires, it supports the argument that 'culinary authenticity' is used by diasporic subjects to relive the feeling in the distant past.

It is also found that in the kitchen, Dimas prefers a stone mortar that his aunt sent from Yogyakarta than a blender. In *Search of "Home" in the Transnational Imaginary: Food, Roots, and Routes in Memoirs* by Asian Australian Women Writers, Ahmad and Ramlan (2019) explain that in order to protect connections with their homeland, Yahp and her family brings not only cultural, but also physical baggage of their food and cooking memories. As an example, in their migratory journey through Sydney, Paris, and Kuala Lumpur, Mara carries along *kuali* (wok). Similarly, Dimas' use of faithful use of mortar serves to maintain a link to Indonesia.

As seen in the discussions above, Dimas' 'homing desire' is also manifested in his attempt to recreate and reconstruct his memory of his 'homeland' through 'nostalgia' and the concept of 'culinary authenticity'. Despite the ability to recreate 'home' in another country, Dimas stands firm that home is a place to return to (Wulandari, 2019). Even so, food and foodways function as an emotional anchor that connect him to the memories of his homeland to deal with the harsh reality that it is impossible for him to go back. In this process, Dimas continuously positions and repositions himself in his surroundings as a person of diaspora (Hall, 1996).

As for Lintang, 'homing desire' is manifested in the form of grasping a sense of belonging through food and foodway. As the second generation of immigrants, there is a preconception regarding their conflict of identity generally being a 'culture clash' within themselves as a result of being disclosed to 'two different cultures' (Brah, 1996). Lintang's conflict, on the other hand, lies in her being kept oblivious to certain parts of Indonesian culture and history, making her questions her identity and belonging most of the time.

In a study entitled *Food as Storied Matter in Amy Tan's Kitchen God's Wife*, Liu (2020) reveals that tofu represents the gap between generations. Winnie's daughter, Pearl, has no interest in Chinese soy products and confesses that she has never bought tofu. She also identifies herself as "a typical American". On the contrary, Lintang is found to adore Indonesian food—especially Dimas' cooking. Indonesian food has been a part of her life since her childhood. Here, food acts as a bridge rather than a gap, linking Lintang to Indonesia despite the 'interrupted connection' with the country.

Lintang anchors the sense of being home through food and its smell to the memory of togetherness, especially about eating together. Tanah Air Restaurant, with all the eating and cooking rituals in it, is one of the places where Lintang lowers her anchor. Besides that, in her exploration for her sense of being at home, she experiences "the process of inclusion and exclusion". Ahmad and Ramlan (2019) state that in Yahp's migratory journey through Kuala Lumpur, Sydney, and Paris, she experiences the process in all three places; as a result, home is multiply located for her. Yahp then directs her 'homing desire' through the "belief in the potentially restorative ability of cooking and eating rituals to reconstruct the idea and feeling of home" (p. 111). In Lintang's case, the 'lost' connection to Indonesia is enunciated at the celebration of Kartini Day for her presence is seen as unacceptable in the eyes of the majority. It is different from the other side of Indonesia in Paris, Tanah Air Restaurant, that always embraces her presence. In her trip to Jakarta, Lintang experiences the process through the culture of eating together. In a place that feels familial, she is rejected indirectly by the host of the dinner, pushing her to defend herself and her family by listing the food Tanah Air Restaurant serves in detail. It is seen that although at the beginning of her narration Lintang is afraid of examining a part of her that is tied to his father's past, in this situation she comes to a point where she identifies with that part of her publicly.

Ahmad and Ramlan (2019) conclude that Beth Yahp's *Eat First, Talk Later* is a text that sets up food to express the continuous questions regarding one's idea of 'home' and belonging. In line with this statement, through food and foodway that function as an emotional anchor for Lintang it shapes a sense

of being home and belonging. In its process, it is seen that her identity is being constructed and reconstructed, as seen from her anecdotes in Paris and her visit to Jakarta.

## CONCLUSION

As this study aims to reveal the functions and ways food and eating shapes the identities of Dimas Suryo and Lintang Utara in the novel *Home* (2015) by Leila Chudori, the author explores the narrative events involving food and eating that revolve around the two main characters as Indonesians exiled in a foreign country. Basing the analysis on Hall's (1996) theory of cultural identity, the researcher applies Mannur's (2010) concept of culinary citizenship and Avtar Brah's (1996) to examine Dimas Suryo and Lintang Utara's relationship with food in relation to their construction of identities.

Based on the findings and discussion, it is concluded that the function of food in constructing Dimas and Lintang's identity as people in diaspora is to serve as an emotional anchor in re-constructing the memories of the homeland and enunciating one's process of searching home, producing and reproducing the character's identities in the process.

Dimas' attempt to rebuild his past through the memories of a distant homeland through exercising 'culinary authenticity', Dimas is expressing his 'homing desire' to escape the reality that he cannot return to his place of origin. By recreating his recipe and method of cooking as similar as possible, Dimas tries to relive the moments of his time in Indonesia, recreating his past in his present, as well as reminiscing who he was before he steps his feet in Paris. In addition, looking at Dimas' relationship with food, it can be argued that Dimas' desire to return to the homeland does not necessarily focus on his identity as an Indonesian but a friend, a lover, and a person in the past. It is shown that his longing does not solely rely on his devotion nor love for Indonesia as a country, but rather his idealized and romanticized version of the past, seen through pink tinted yet shattered glass as he clings onto its past nuance of warmth, pleasure, and familiarity. Food functions not only as a marker of identity but also an emotional anchor.

On the other hand, Lintang's 'homing desire' is expressed through her experiencing the process of exclusion and inclusion in relation to food and foodway in order to shape a sense of home. Additionally, it is also seen in her attempt in creating a sense of home through the affective function of food smell. By doing so, she constantly constructing and re-constructing her sense of self in different surroundings—as shown through her experiencing process in Paris and in Jakarta. As has been stated by Hall (1996), the idea of homeland does not constrain one's identity. Living through diaspora, a person goes through countless transformations

through producing and reproducing themselves in their new surroundings.

It is seen that the ways food functions in constructing the identities of the main characters in Leila S. Chudori's (2015) are different, indicating intergenerational responses. While Dimas, the first generation of immigrants, uses food to assert his identity, Lintang, his daughter, uses it to discover and connect with hers. By conducting this research, the author expects to enrich the understanding about the characters' sense of identities in the novel as well as to contribute to the field of food in literature studies and identity construction.

## REFERENCES

- Ahmad, S. N., & Ramlan, W. (2019). In search of home in the transnational imaginary: Food, roots, and routes in memoirs by Asian Australian Women Writers. *文山：文學與文化*, 12(2), 103–127. [https://doi.org/10.30395/WSR.201906\\_12\(2\).0005](https://doi.org/10.30395/WSR.201906_12(2).0005).
- Ahmed, S. (1999). Home and away: Narratives of migration and estrangement. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2(3), 329–347. <https://doi.org/10.1177/136787799900200303>
- Anantama, M. D., & Suryanto. (2020). Kuliner dan identitas keindonesiaan dalam novel Pulang karya Leila S. Chudori. *Atavisme*, 23(2), 206–219. <https://doi.org/10.24257/atavisme.v23i2.688.206-219>
- Brah, A. (1996). Cartographies of diaspora: Contesting identities. Routledge.
- Chudori, A. (1996). *Cartographies of diaspora: contesting identities*. Routledge.
- Chudori, L. S. (2015). *Home*. Deep Vellum Publishing.
- Das, R. (2021). Consumption and the Indian diaspora: A study of Jhumpa Lahiri's the Namesake. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 13(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v13n1.38>
- Fischler, C. (1988). Food, self and identity. *Social Science Information*, 27(275). <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901888027002005>
- Hall, S. (1992). The question of cultural identity. In S. Hall, D. Held, & T. McGrew (Eds.), *Modernity and its futures* (pp. 273–326). Cambridge, UK: Blackwell Publishers
- Hall, S. (1996). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Eds.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (pp. 222–237). London, UK: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Liu, Q. (2020). Food as storied matter in Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife*. *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, 35(2), 170–177.



- <https://doi.org/10.1080/0895769X.2020.1766408>
- Mannur, A. (2010). *Culinary fictions: Food in South Asian diasporic culture*. Temple University Press.
- Petkova, D., & Lehtonen, J. (Eds.) 2005. *Cultural Identity in an Intercultural context*. University of Jyväskylä
- Tompkins, K. W. (2012). *Racial indigestion: Eating bodies in the 19th century*. New York University Press.
- Wulandari, R. (2019). Imagining home in diaspora in Leila S. Chudori's *Pulang* (Home). *Culturalistics: Journal of Cultural, Literary, and Linguistic Studies*, 3(2), 37–40. <https://ejournal2.undip.ac.id/index.php/culturalistics/article/view/6630>