

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

Culture is a habit that has been followed since ancient times and does continuously. Many cultures in the world are different from each other. Many nations have more than one culture, which is usually known as a multicultural nation. One of the famous multicultural nations is America. Many immigrants from various countries such as Africa, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Singapore, and many more come to America. Kasiyarno (2014, p.13) argues that American norms, values, and culture are practices considered superior to the world culture. America has influenced people's lives across the world in the form of popular culture. As in Richard's (2017, p.179) book, *When Cultures Collide*, America is first in volume of trade, first in the industry, first in food output, and first in aid to others. It has been proven that America has become an essential part of the world.

Nowadays, people demand equality and liberty that will enable them to pursue their dream of achieving prosperity. Irfan (2012, p.26) argues that living in prosperity is the right of any person. In the United States of America, which is a modern nation, this idea has been developed as the true American identity. The economic motive was unquestionably powerful, often dominant, in the mind of those who took part in the great migration, but mixed with this was also frequently presented the hope of a better and freer life. It is not wrong if, all this time, America is also known as a free nation. When someone comes to America, she or he wants freedom, be it free from their past, free from their culture, and so on. They will be a part of American society.

According to Irfan (20122, p.6), the arrival of immigrants to America started in the late 17th century, marked by the arrival of Northern Irish into America. Then, many nations from parts of the world also come to America. Nowadays, many Asian countries live in America as an immigrant. The first time, like the immigrant, there were some the problems that happened, such as shock culture, language, and different habits. Moreover, for the immigrant from the East because there are so many different things between East and West, especially in culture. Some of the problems that happen to immigrants in America are racism, identity, poverty, acculturation, and others. Those problems can happen from small scope to large scope. Definitely, it is because there is a different perspective of culture and also the lack of public awareness of multicultural life in the nation and state.

In the modern era, some of the problems of immigrants become good issues to discuss. It is because the quantity of immigrants steadily is increasing and becomes an issue that needs special attention from the international community. Those issues are often discussed in many aspects, such as in politics, society, laws, and even literature. In literary works, there are so many films or novel which tells the immigrant story. For example, in 2019 there is a film directed by Lulu Wang entitled *The Farewell* which is telling about an Asian family who lives in America. This film tells about the different cultures between East and West, and the general problem that happened in Chinese family. Besides film, in the novel, the issues of immigrants also become the most popular theme that is used by the author. Novels as a reflection or expression of society definitely can represent the issues in fiction form. Sumardjo (1998, p.29) argue that novel is

a story with the prose form in long shape, this long shape means the story including the complex plot, many character and various setting. The one of novels that tells about immigrant problems is *American Panda*. *American Panda* was published in 2018 and written by Gloria Chao. Gloria Chao live in America but her origin is from Asian.

American Panda novel tells about 17-year-old girl, named Mei Liu from Taiwan family who was born and lived in America with her parents. Her parents who keep their own culture (Chinese culture), teach Mei everything about Chinese culture in their home although outside Mei is faced with American culture. This thing makes the conflict for Mei. She wants to against her parents' rules, but in Chinese culture, filial piety to parents has become a part of life. As secretly Mei tries to do something that makes her happy such as dancing, talking to her brother who has been expelled from their family, eating some American food, and falling in love with Darren, a boy from Japan. Until the end, all of the things that Mei hides from her parents are disclosed. Mei's parents were very wrathful with her. Mei tries to explain to her parents, that she was born and lived in America in which there is American culture anywhere but her parents never teach and give the knowledge of American culture. Because of this, Mei always looks different and weird in American views even in other immigrants who stay in America.

In a nutshell, this novel describes two different cultures, which are American and Chinese or can say West and East culture. Mei as individual who was born and grew up in America feel that American culture suits her better meanwhile her parents still kept their tradition although they live in America. Until the end of the story, this novel explains that West culture is more rational

than East culture. In this novel, the author portrays how the Western culture meets Eastern old tradition and tends to degrade the East. It seems to Mei that Western culture and life-style are better and more rational than East. Interestingly, this novel illustrates how the story depicts the character and characterization of people from the West and East.

Based on explanation above, American Panda novel is one of literary work that are uniqueness could be seen through first in the title itself. American Panda which was put forward by Gloria Chao to explain there are two cultures in the story. The word "*American*" describe of America people meanwhile the word "*Panda*" which describe animal from Chinese.

Second, the uniqueness is from the intrinsic elements. Gloria Chao takes the setting of novel in Boston, America. This novel explains how the situation of Mei and her family live as immigrant from Taiwan. Then, this novel also explains how Mei as the main character must to keep Chinese tradition even live in America. Furthermore, many of habit of Asian culture which describe in this novel such as Mei's mother send the food to Mei's boarding house, ask Mei to eat vitamin in order to make smart, and mindset about hundred or A is one and only best score.

Then, Mei as main character also unique because she felt that Chinese culture is outdate tradition and she feel suitable with American culture. This issue can relatable with the orientalism theory of Edward Said, especially in type of cultural power. In power cultural Said (2003, p.508) that the East have become support for what is considered the main trend in the West. By using the orientalism of Edward W. Said, the differences between two cultures and

perceptions will be analyzed based on the orientalism that is found in the novel. It can create the assumption about the West as superior and the East as inferior.

In agreement of Dian (2020, p.3), one of postcolonial theory which especially discuss about West authority toward East is orientalism. There are many post-colonial figures such as Homi Baba, Gayatri Spivak, and Edward Said. The famous one is Said's orientalism. His book entitled *Orientalism* was a milestone in the early birth of post-colonialism. In this book, Said explains how the West views the East and also the relationship between West culture and colonialism and imperialism. The East has always been seen as something different, which is built from Western views and thoughts, not from the East itself.

Before discussing post-colonialism, it is good to discuss a little bit about colonialism first. As generally, colonialism is done by the West against the East, for example, the Netherlands colonized Indonesia, and also France that colonized Egypt. On the other side, the East was also colonized West such as Turkey which is colonized Spain in the 15 - 16 centuries. In the beginning, colonialism only aimed to control the existing natural resources to expand the power of the Western people who were known for their 3 main goals, namely gold, glory, and gospel. However, in its implementation, not only for these interests but also forms a new mindset for human resources, so Eastern accept themselves as inferior.

The inferior can be described as the weak, oppressed, or being backward. This mindset was kept by Eastern people from the time of colonialism to after colonialism. It turns out that the remainder of the colonialism made an impression and continues until now. This mindset makes Eastern people always feel backward from Western. For example, that has been and even continues to be

cultured is fashion mode which always refers to the West as a role model which is fashionable, contemporary, and also cool. This unconsciously shows or makes West people always think that East people are always lower than them and are not equal. The Western view of the East that has been known to many people has had a real impact on the East both during the colonial and post-colonial times. During the colonial period, the West studied the East by approaching the East directly. They study the East by watching how the East interacts with each other and studying how the culture of the East that the West says is unique.

According to Said (2003, p.1-2), “The French and British have had an old tradition, called Orientalism, which is a way of understanding the East, based on its special place in Western European human understanding. Said's understanding refers to their understanding of the unique East world and something else and which is different from the West. This uniqueness and differences made them interested in Eastern things until the end, this interest turned into a desire to dominate the East with everything in it.

In agreement of Widyaresmi (2012, p.3), views and theories from Western are not neutral and objective because designed as intentional through changing the social culture for authority and significance. First of all, Orientalism works very well until the East is already brainwashed by the West. This has had a lasting impact on East people who continue to feel threatened if they worship the West too much then they will lose their native culture.

The case which is happening in Gloria Chao's *America Panda* is compatible to be analyzed with orientalism of Edward Said's theory. This study is going to prove that West culture more superior to East culture through the

depiction of Mei's characterization. In the analysis of the characterization of Mei character, this study will refer to the theory of character and characterization from DiYanni and another approach which relevant. The study of literature naturally needs to be started from the analysis of the literary work itself because then it would enable us to identify more aspects that built that work. After that, this analysis is going to reveal the domination of Western towards East, especially from the cultural aspect in Gloria Chao's *American Panda*.

B. Identification of Problem

Based on the background of the problem, some points in literature are performed by characters in *American Panda* novels related to the concept of orientalism, especially in the third type of power in orientalism, which is cultural power. Orientalism is the way how West view the East represented through Mei's characterization. For example, Mei sees the American culture as more rational and makes sense than Chinese culture. Furthermore, in this novel, the author tells the internal conflict about an old traditional Chinese family who lives in America. The conflict is about Mei who is the generation of Chinese people that were born and live in America feel that she most suitable with Western culture than East culture. The author explains in detail the Chinese family's role in life and compares it to the knowledge of Western within Mei as the main character. For this reason, knowing the characterization of Mei's character can simplify this study to reveal the superiority of West toward East.

C. Formulation of Problems

Based on the explanation above, this research focuses on the following formulations of problems as follows:

1. How is the characterization of Mei as the main character in Gloria Chao's *American Panda* characterized?
2. How is orientalism reflected through Mei's characterization in Gloria Chao's *American Panda*?

D. Purpose of Study

Based on the formulation of problems above, this study has the intention of analysis there are:

1. To identify the characterization of Mei as the main character in Gloria Chao's *American Panda*.
2. To explain the reflection of orientalism that is represented through Mei's characterization in Gloria Chao's *American Panda*.

E. Significance of Study

1. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study can be beneficial in terms of adding some knowledge of cultural assimilation, orientalism, and also characterization. Furthermore, this study is expected to give new knowledge for the academicians who are interesting to find out orientalism which is represented in literary works, especially in a novel, to be precise, and to present two different cultures, especially between West and East, and also the reflection of orientalism which still happens this time. This study is also expected to help another study that used a similar topic about orientalism.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, this study can be beneficial for researchers in the future that want to analyze the orientalism aspect in literary works. The results of this study

are expected to be useful for the public who is interested in orientalism. After reading this study the readers will be more aware of the different cultures in society, especially about the influence of western culture on East culture. Then, the reader will be expected to be more appreciate to diverse culture in society since each of culture has self-identity. Indirectly, it has an impact on society in dealing with diverse cultures in society life.

F. Limitation of Study

Considering of research questions, this study focuses on analyzing the characterization of Mei as the main character of this novel. This study reveals and explains the reflection of West superior towards East based on Edward Said's theory of orientalism. The main analysis of this study is the characterization of the main character and includes other elements of literature, specifically intrinsic elements. This study only found the relationship between literary work and reflection of West superior through orientalism theory of Edward Said.

G. Organization of Study

This study was divided into six chapters. Each chapter consist of several appropriate sections based on the studies carried out. The first part is chapter I which contains the background of problems, identification of the problem, formulation of problem, purpose, significance, limitation, and organization of the study. The focus in chapter 1 is about the importance of orientalism which is influencing the process of cultural assimilation process in the novel. This is supported by two main problem formulations. The first problem was answered by explaining the characteristics and characterization of the main character in Gloria

Chao's *American Panda*. The second problem focuses on the reflection of orientalism represented in the characterization of the main character.

The next is chapter 2 which contains a literature review and previous studies. In the theoretical framework, there is the description of theories was used to analyze data, such as the definition of literature's element, post-colonialism theory, orientalism theory, and the types of power in orientalism,. Start from the definition of a novel, then the explanation of literature's element by Robbert DiYanni which is used to analyze the character and characterization of the main character. Furthermore, there is a definition of orientalism from Edward Said's theory. Then, the types of power in orientalism which used to classify the power which contains in *American Panda* novel. The last part of this chapter is previous studies which explain the differentiating point between this study and another previous study.

The next chapter is a methodology in chapter 3 which contains research design, the object of study, stage of data collection, and data analysis. This study uses descriptive qualitative to point out the result of analysis in the form of description and developed with an explanation. The object used to obtain data is a novel entitled *American Panda*. The data was collected and analyzed through various stages. Then, there is chapter 4 which contains general description. This chapter consist of the information novel which used in the study, such as title, genre, the background of the author, and the relation between literature and the theory. Furthermore in this chapter also consist of the subject of the study.

The next chapter is chapter 5 which contains findings. All of the data in *American Panda* novel was analyzed in terms of the ways to convey the

representation of orientalism through the characterization of the main character. The last chapter is chapter 6 which contains the conclusion and suggestion. In the conclusion, there is a brief explanation of the findings and analysis. The last section contains a suggestion for future research development.

