

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Colonialism indeed provides defined role for the history of human life. It occurs since long time ago and brings such huge effects to society. Especially the colonized people, they suffer the most for their countries had been invaded by powerful countries. During their aggression, the colonizer has certain purposes; expanding their empire and oppressing the people. It causes huge effects for the colonized, whether mentally or psychically. As Young said in his book *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, that “colonialism may have brought some benefit of modernity, but it also caused extraordinary suffering in human terms” (6).

The powerful country, like Japan, intended to expand their empire by colonizing Korean Peninsula. Japan tries to assimilate Korean but it never achieves that goal. In 1910 Korea empowered by Japan and remains colonized until the end of World War II (Caprio). Under Japan colony, Korean had to suffer continuously. Not only losing their national sovereignty, but they also had its cultural heritage and identity uprooted (Hurh 6). “Koreans were forced to learn Japanese history in place of Korean history and were made to change their names to the Japanese style and to worship Japanese gods and emperors at Shinto shrines” (Hurh 6). But after Japan had been defeated in World War II, the north, about 46.000 square miles and nine million

people, was occupied by Soviet Union; the south 38.000 square miles and 21 million people, was taken over by the United States (Clodfelter 4). Thus far, the Korean was separated into 2 countries while the North controlled by Soviet and the South by United States.

From the fact above, it shows the first contact between South Korean and United States. Apart from Japan, South Korea which taken over by United States begin to develop. A great many changes resulted under United States control. One of the most crucial is the changing of ideology. “The government of South Korea was modeled after Western democratic political systems” (Hurh 6) and by the change of ideology South Korean has leveled up. Soon after implying the ideology for the nation, United States withdrew their forces from South Korea (Hurh 6). Compared than being colonized by Japan, South Korea even though they still in the domain of United States develops better. In the eye of South Korean, United States tend to improve the civilization rather than oppress them. Based on that perception, it is not surprising that South Korean assume United States as the country of their dream.

Therefore in 1960, when South Korean economy began to develop and there was an active emigration policy as a part of domestic population control made by government, most of South Koreans moved to United States (Choi 16). The main purpose they left South Korea is in search for better economic opportunities in a more industrialized countries (Choi 15). Another reason for South Korean to choose United States according to Won Moo Hurh:

The United States has always been a nation of nations where people from every region of the world have come to begin a new life. Other countries such as Canada, Argentina, and Australia also have had substantial immigration, but the United States is still unique in the diversity of nationalities and the great numbers of migrating people who have come to its shores (xiii).

By moving to the new land in this case is United States, it can be said that they were experiencing *Diaspora*. *Diaspora*, according to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, and Hellen Tiffin “is a voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions” (61). This massive migration brings them to unfamiliar place. In order to survive they have to adapt in the new environment. In this new environment which is better than their previous country, they start to build their new life.

Difficult situation emerges as soon as *Diaspora* lives in the new land. They have to face many problems to adjust with new environment. The culture in the new land is totally different from what they have taught in their homeland. Not to mention the language, the biggest problem immigrant has experienced is mostly caused by language. The difficulty to communicate with others makes them feel alienated. Therefore, it increases difficulties to adapt. They start a new life in the new land until generate many generation. In the middle of it, in the process of having a new life in the new environment, slowly they face a new problem; having an identity crisis.

Diaspora will experience identity crisis in the new place. They feel unsure about their postcolonial identity as they live for rather a long time in the new region, especially the first generation. The first generation is a foreign-born who then moves to the new land. As they are the first to move to a new land, they experience the most difficulty moving from their homeland. It is supported by Faiza Hirji in her paper, “the experiences of the first generation, which include physical migration, departing a homeland, and settling into a new place, are likely to be significantly different from those of subsequent generations.” (Hirji 3). It is clear that the process of settlement of the first generation in the new land is rather difficult than the next generation, since they still have attachment to their origin land where they were born and raised.

This issue of identity crisis is the main issues depicted in *A Step from Heaven* written by An Na. *A Step from Heaven* tells a story about Young Ju, a young girl as Korean-American immigrant. She moves from South Korea to United States along with her parents. Her parents Apa and Umma live in hope for a better economic life. The novel tells the struggle of Young Ju and her family as Korean-American immigrant, living in two different cultures and tries to assimilate them. In the process of assimilating new environment, the family faces many difficulties. Aside of having the problem of adjustment, they are also having internal conflict within the family. One of the problem is Apa attitudes. His harsh behavior and his addiction to alcohol worse their family condition. Afterwards, the family struggle continuous until Young Ju decides to call the police to put his father in jail for beaten up his mother.

According to the author official blog, An Na was born in Korea and grew up in San Diego, California. She is a former middle school English and history teacher (About An Na). As the main object of this analysis, the novel *A Step from Heaven* by An Na has received an award in 2002. The novel won Michael L. Printz Award from the American Library Association. The book is also a finalist for a National Book Award. The author, An Na is also Korean-American immigrant just like the main character in her book. According to interview, An Na herself said that this novel is made for the reminiscence of her childhood. This book pretty much describes about her, how she just like Young Ju who suffers because she has to move from her previous country Korea to a place who completely new for her. She also has the same characteristic with Young Ju, which is shy and soft-spoken. She has her main inspiration of writing from the book entitled *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros. She is inspired to apply the short episodic chapter for *A Step From Heaven* just like what Cisneros did in her novel (Na).

To analyze this novel, the writer will apply the theory of post colonial. The struggle of Young Ju and her family in United States will examined by Post Colonial Criticism. At first the writer will analyze the impact of United States colonization. Afterwards, compares the identity of Apa, Uhmma, and Young Ju in the process of settlement in United States. In conclusion, their true post colonial identity finally reveals.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

Having read An Na's *A Step From Heaven*, these question emerge in order to comparing parent-child diasporic identity:

1. How does parent-child diasporic identity as an immigrant portrayed in An Na's *A Step from Heaven*?

1.3 Objective of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Explain how parent-child diasporic identity as an immigrant portrayed in An Na's *A Step from Heaven*?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study, attempts to appeal the reader to learn about how parent and child diasporic identity is portrayed in An Na's novel *A Step From Heaven* and their process of settlement as Korean immigrant in America occurs. By examining their experiences, later their truly postcolonial identity will be revealed. This study also expected to advance UniversitasAirlangga students in English Department who interested in Post Colonial reading and wants to apply Post Colonial theory for their research.

Since the issues of parent and child diasporic identity is never discussed before by the student of English Department of UniversitasAirlangga, the writer wishes that this will help them to learn more.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

A scope and limitation is needed to analyze literary work in order to be focus and more specific. Literary work written by An Na and published in 2001, entitled *A Step from Heaven* is the object of this analysis. The aim of this study is to compare the diasporic identity between Young Ju and her parents in order to reveal their true post colonial identities.

The main character here, Young Ju Park's experiences and her parent are the scope of this analysis. The reason to choose Young Ju and her parents is because they are all are Korean immigrant who experiencing Diaspora. Therefore, they must have difficulties of adjusting in the new land. Post Colonial Criticism will be used as the basic theory of this study. At first the writer will analyze the impact of United States colonization. Studying the indication of identity crisis of the main character and her parent in the new place is the next step. Finally, in the last step after knowing the identity crisis of the characters their true post colonial identity will reveals.

1.6 Theoretical Background

In order to reveal child-parent's postcolonial identity in the novel *A Step From Heaven*, this study will use Post Colonial Criticism approach. Post Colonial Criticism

is a theory which is used to examine literary works to analyze a whole range of colonization practices, to reveal the history of colonial, cultural conflict and identity crisis. As Ashcroft et al said in his book:

Postcolonial criticism is concerned with the way in which literary texts, in many different ways, reveal the traces of colonial encounter, the confrontation of races, nations and cultures under conditions of unequal power relations that has shaped a significant part of human experience since the beginning of the age of European imperialism (4).

Post colonial theory is chosen because it fits the best with the content of the novel *A Step From Heaven*. This novel tells about Young Ju Park, a little girl from Korea who move along with her family to United States to have a better life. By moving to the new country, they must experiencing Diaspora. According to Bill Ashcroft, “Diaspora is the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions, is a central historical fact of colonization” (68). From that statement above we can conclude that what happened to Young Ju and her parent in *A Step From Heaven* is also consider having Diaspora as they started to move to the whole new country. As Young Ju and her parent moving to America they are expecting to get adapted with the new situation. Using Diaspora to analyze their struggle in new country and how she survives get through all the difficulty.

After knowing their difficulties as Diaspora, the next step is to find their postcolonial identity. According to Homi K. Bhabha identity is “a process of self-reflection in the mirror human nature and the anthropological view of the difference of human identity as located in the division of nature and culture” (46). Their post colonial identity reveals who truly they are as they struggling survive in the new land.

1.7 Methods of the Study

This study uses qualitative research as the method of the study. For collecting the data sources can be taken from journal, books, articles, electronic books, and thesis. As the primary sources, this study will use *A Step From Heaven* novel by An Na. After collecting the data from those various sources, the writer will do close reading.

Close reading needed in order to find Young Ju’s and her parent difficulty in the new country. The second step, analyzing the behavior as diaspora and then compare it between the child and the parents. After finding the differences, then the writer can conclude what postcolonial identity they are belonged to.

Analysis will be conducted through the following sequences: Knowing the impact of America colonization, and then analyzing the diasporic identity by each family member. After done analyzing, the writer can conclude the information and draw the conclusion in the end of this study.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

- Diaspora: a voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin)
- Korean Diaspora: People who migrates from their homeland to a new land. In this case, the main character moves from South Korea to United States (Bhabha).
- Post-colonial Identity: The cultural background of people's identity which is based on both colonizer and colonized because those form them to be how they are as the effect of Colonization (Hall)
- Post Colonial Criticism: Theory uses to analyze literary works in whole range of colonization practices.