

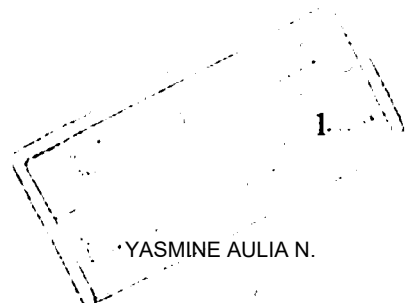
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The internal contestation between West and East has become a never ending discussion. The opposition between the two has produced many issues related to human lives, including culture. The West as the superior has the power to create the contrasting image of the culture they oppressed. They have the authority to create judgments and stereotypes to the East which are called “the Western colonial discourses”. It is a form of discourse crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations that inform the discursive and political practice of racial and cultural hierarchization (Bhabha 67). The Western colonial discourses define the East as cruel, sneaky, evil, cunning, dishonest, given to sexual promiscuity and perversion, and the like (Tyson 367). The West also perceives the East as its opposition, having the characteristics of inferiority, primitive, and has lower intellectual and knowledge than the West.

Asian countries are one of the ‘victims’ of Western colonial discourses. The Asian countries, as the ‘Third World’ countries (another term created by the West), are considered having negative characteristics, contrasting the definition for the West as kind, straightforward, good, upright, moral, intelligent and honest (Tyson 367).



Therefore, many Western people impose these kinds of patterns and ideologies in their mind. This may result in the way they perceive other races in discriminative perceptions. In other words, due to the colonial discourses, the East is considered “other”. It is the West who defined the conceptions of “otherness” towards the East, as claimed by the post colonialist Homi K.Bhabha : “..To be for an Other-entails the representation of the subject in the differentiating order of otherness (45).”

Despite the large gap between West and East, multicultural relationships still occur in the world nowadays. People no longer see the differences between them, although they come from various cultural backgrounds (whether they come from the West or the East). People may be involved in a relationship with those from other nations, natives, languages, and cultures. They may be involved in a love relationship. Moreover, they may have intercultural marriages. Creating an intercultural relationship may be something new and interesting for them because they can learn and adapt themselves in each of their cultural backgrounds.

However, having an intercultural relationship, especially the adaptation process, is not an easy thing to do. People involve in this kind of relationship may experience some obstacles and conflicts in maintaining their relationship. The colonial discourses created by the West towards the East somehow also influence individual who are involved in it (especially the West person), because the discourses have strongly rooted in all aspects of human life, including their love life.

The issues between West and East and the colonial discourses addressed to the colonized (including Asian countries) have invited the attention of some Asian-

American authors. One of them is Amy Tan, as one of the prominent figures in Asian American literatures. Amy Tan has produced an array of famous books, such as The Joy Luck Club, The Kitchen God's Wife, The Hundred Secret Senses, The Bonesetter's Daughter, The Opposite of Fate, and two children's books, The Moon Lady and The Chinese Siamese Cat. Most of her works have been translated into more than 25 languages all over the world. Amy Tan was born in 1952 and has a master's degree in linguistics from San Jose State University. She has worked as a language specialist to programs serving children with developmental disabilities. Christian K. Messenger, through his essay entitled "Amy Tan" stated that Tan's work has become emblematic of other American works of fiction that give particular attention to ethnicity, family history, and the articulation of female voices (qtd. In Microsoft Encarta 2006). In addition, most of Amy Tan's works are mainly concerned with the life of immigrant women in Western countries, especially the United States. Specifically, her writings often discuss about mother-daughter relationship and are focused on her own identity as a Chinese woman, and how immigrant women are always being marginalized by the Western.

One of Tan's works which particularly represents the cultural gap between West and East is The Bonesetter's Daughter, a novel written in 2001. The Times Online (March 16, 2001) mentioned that The Bonesetter's Daughter shows how the past repairs a rift between a first-generation Chinese mother and a second-generation Chinese-American daughter (Online). Meanwhile, The Observer states that The Bonesetter's Daughter is Tan's portrait of a blighted family reconciled through an

understanding of shared roots is perceptive and moving, and achieved with a light touch in spite of the weight of accumulated tragedy that haunts the three generations of women at its center (taken from the book jacket, unfortunately the date is not mentioned).

The novel itself portrays the intercultural relationship between the main protagonist, Ruth Young, and Art Kamens, each represents Chinese and American culture. In this relationship with different cultural background, Ruth, as the Chinese woman, is being subordinated by Art and his American family. Cultural contestation occurs within the relationship between Ruth and the American family, resulting in the discriminative acts addressed to Ruth. Besides facing cultural conflicts with Art and the American family, Ruth also has different cultural point-of-view from her own mother, LuLing. Ruth, who was born in America, used to ignore her Chinese cultural origin (her reluctance of learning Chinese language and calligraphy), and adopting American values and lifestyle instead. Ruth does not only ignore her cultural background, but she also does not know the past history of her family, which are actually very valuable.

Furthermore, the novel also implies the importance of appreciation towards the native cultures, as Ruth tries to find her Chinese identity by revealing her family's past and cultural heredity. It is her mother's writings that help her understand her Chinese origin. Her mother's writings contain precious history of the famous bonesetter and ink-maker family. The other things that make the writings change Ruth's understanding is that it also contains the stories and secrets of her mother and

her grandmother's life. For the rest of her life, Ruth nearly never knows about her mother's past and how LuLing had struggle hard before she moved to America as an immigrant. In other words, Ruth has not really recognized her own mother until LuLing suffers from a mental disease called Alzheimer, which makes her confuse and almost unable to remember her past. This revealing process is very important for Ruth, in the way that as her understanding grows, her cultural identity will be strengthened as she lives in the middle of the American stream.

The issue of intercultural relationship and cultural appreciation has captured the interest of the writer of this thesis. Intercultural relationship is an interesting topic to be discussed because it becomes part of human lives, as people live in the diversity of cultural backgrounds, races, ethnics, religion, and so forth. Hence, it is very important for each individual to have cultural appreciation of his/her origin, considering the rapid globalization and Western influences tend to make people forget about their own cultural origins. Therefore, the writer of this study chooses the novel The Bonesetter's Daughter written by Amy Tan because this novel can represent the topics explained above. In addition, Amy Tan is a Chinese-American author who also has an intercultural marriage with an American man, Lou De Mattei, who became her husband in 1974. Amy Tan herself may be a Chinese-American woman who appreciates her "Chinese-ness" or her cultural origin, as shown in her statement in the first page of the novel, "On the last day that my mother spent on earth, I learned her real name, as well as that of my grandmother. This book is dedicated to them, Li Bingzi and Gu Jingmei."

The Bonesetter's Daughter implies the existence of Western colonial discourses in all aspects of human life, including love life, whereas intercultural relationship can be one way to bridge the gap and differences between East and West, in which there is no concept of "binary opposition" occurring between them. It will be a good thing if people from different culture can be united by a universal love without considering their cultural backgrounds, social status, race, and so forth. In addition, the novel may also show the intentions of (Chinese) cultural appreciations and celebrates the importance of family history and heredity in the middle of the American hegemonies. Therefore, according to the writer of this thesis, the novel The Bonesetter's Daughter written by Amy Tan is worth to be researched.

B. Statement of the Problems

After reading the novel and determining the topic as it has already been explained before, there are several questions that could be raised. The questions are:

1. How are cultural differences (Chinese and American) portrayed in the relationship between the characters?
2. What process does Ruth have to undergo to finally understand her own cultural background?

C. Objective of the Study

In organizing the study, there are several objectives that are desired by the writer to be achieved. The objectives of the study will be intended to answer every

coming out questions, as it has been mentioned in the statement of the problems, by using the chosen theories as the tool to analyze it. Therefore, this study tries to answer the above questions:

1. The portrayal of cultural differences (Chinese and American) occurs between the characters.
2. The process that Ruth has to undergo to finally understand her own cultural background.

D. Significant of the Study

To deal with intercultural relationship with the variation of cultural backgrounds, problems and obstacles may occur, especially in understanding each of the differences. Therefore, each individual needs to have his/her own cultural understanding. Thus, this research paper benefits the readers, in order to create cultural appreciation, especially in multicultural relationship with many people across the boundaries of race and culture. By analyzing this study, it is hoped that the readers are able to know about the intercultural relationship and the contestations that occur within the relationship itself.

This research paper also benefits to enrich the notion of postcolonial reading and contributes ideas, responses, and criticism in literature, especially postcolonial literature. In addition, this study is also meant to give contribution towards the study of literature, particularly in the English Department of Airlangga University. It is also

hoped that the sequence of research will improve the result of this research by giving new perspectives of reading Asian American literatures.

E. Scope and Limitation

In the novel The Bonesetter's Daughter written by Amy Tan, there are many problems, events, and conflicts which can be analyzed through various perspectives. Therefore, this research study must have a focused issue, so that the research will not be too wide-ranging.

In particular, this study mainly deals with the cultural differences occurring between American and Chinese culture in an intercultural relationship of the characters. It focuses on the alienation and discrimination experienced by the main character, since the Chinese is the minority ones in America. Besides that, this research paper also focuses on the understanding process of Chinese origin experienced by Ruth, the main protagonist, as she reveals the precious history of her family in China. This study also discusses the main character's "in-between identity", in which her identity is influenced either by Chinese or American culture.

F. Theoretical Background

In analyzing the novel The Bonesetter's Daughter by Amy Tan, the writer will use a theory as a fundamental point-a-view for getting a focused result. Therefore, the writer uses the theory of post colonialism, specifically the theory suggested by Homi K.Bhabha, one of the main figures of post colonialism theory. However, suggestions

and statements from other post colonialists and sources are also used to support the analysis of this study. The theory used in this research paper involves the existence of colonial discourses, resulting in the act of discrimination and fetishism. Bhabha explained that the subordinate people become the victim of colonial discourses adapted by the colonizers. Colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness (66). The implication of the colonial discourses is a marginalization towards its colonized people, and one of them is *fetishism*, a discourse claims the colonizers' superiority and the lack of the colonized. All men have the same skin/race/culture'-and the anxiety associated with *lack* and difference (74).

In addition, the writer of this study also takes Bhabha's concept of the "in-between" identity which suggests the split of identities of the colonized people within the colonizers' environment. The split occurs at the contestation between its own ethnic identity and the colonizers' influence. Bhabha said that these in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood- singular or communal- that initiate new signs of identity (1). The reason why the theory used for this research paper is because the theory is suitable and applicable with the issues raised in the novel.

G. Method of the Study

In the process of writing this study, the writer uses the library and online research. This research is done by collecting data from various books, articles, critics,

reviews, commentaries, and other printed materials from both library and internet which can be used to support the analysis. Those printed materials include the main source of the analysis, that is the novel and its other supporting information about the novel itself, the author, the background, and everything that are related with the novel.

Besides, the researcher also collects data and printed materials about the theory used in this study (especially postcolonial theory). “A researcher has to develop the theoretical base as well as to choose appropriate approach and method due to the literary research and analyzed object...has to formulate theoretical bases which eventually can be used to conduct every step taken during the research (Atar Semi 47).”

Then, after collecting such complete data, the writer will arrange it in order to study it, so that the writer will get a good understanding about the novel and the issues that will be analyzed. In analyzing the data, the writer intends to use qualitative method by elaborating the dialogues, plots, actions, events, and conflicts found in the novel.

H. Definitions of Key Terms

Contestation: conflict or struggling between one thing and the others

Culture: art, literature, music, and other intellectual expressions of a particular society or time. The existence of culture may signify the identity of certain society, tribes, nations, communities, and many other groups.

Discourse: a long and serious treatment of a subject; usually create some understanding towards certain issues and subjects.

Intercultural relationship: a kind of relationship which involves people from different cultural backgrounds, across the boundaries of nations, religion, race, ethnicity, and so forth.

I. Organization

The organization of this research is divided into four chapters, which are Introduction, Theoretical Framework, Analysis, and Conclusion. The first chapter that is the Introduction consists of background of the study, statement of the problems, objective of the study, significant of the study, scope and limitation, theoretical background, method of the study, definition of key terms, and organization of the thesis. The second chapter (the Theoretical Framework), contains the theories used to support the analysis of the thesis. While chapter three, the analysis, is divided into two main points that are The Portrayal of Cultural Contestation between Chinese and American Culture in Amy Tan's The Bonesetter's Daughter and The Understanding Process Undergone by the Main Protagonist (Ruth Young). In addition, chapter four as the last chapter of the thesis contains the conclusion of the whole discussion in this study.

CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK