

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Novel becomes one of the ways for people to express and describe their ideas about certain situation, condition, people, countries, cultures, and so forth. As stated by Abrams, most literary works like novel, portray all the things that exist in the society, especially cultures issues (Abrams, 1981: 135). In another words, authors tell their stories through the novels that contain their opinion, experiences, or views toward some things or some people. One of the authors who write based on culture and people in the perspective of the West is in Arthur Golden. Golden is an American man who wrote the story about Japanese culture of Geisha, seen from life style of Geisha, as the object in entertaining people in Japan. He took an interview to a real Geisha, Mineko Iwasaki to know the secret of the life Geisha, and finally published his first novel, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, which is written in 1997.

The novel is an American novel published in 1997, and such the attempt at West does East, especially on the complex and delicate subject of the Geisha. It became successful into a short period of time and remained on *The New York Times* best seller list for two years, which the book was the result of six years of work regarding the view point of West toward Japanese Geisha and Japanese art. This historical novel offers an insight in the life of a Geisha in a Japan by war while explaining the process a girl will have to take in order to become a Geisha and things expected from them. Golden presented them in a fair light, as artists who undergo years of training before they are considered Geishas (Collin, 2001).

Golden was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and was educated at Harvard college, where he received a degree in art history, specializing in Japanese art. In 1980, he earned an M.A. in Japanese history from Columbia University.

However, the portrayal of Geisha in the story is different from the real Geisha in Japan (Iwasaki, 2002: 21). In differences between her memoirs and fiction novel of Golden is portrayal of Geisha that Geishas are Japanese profession as same prostitutes, because when Japanese readers read the book, it is far from the real of what present in Japanese culture. Hence, the books tell the truth secret of a Geisha was published in 23, *Geisha*, *A Life Mineko Iwasaki*. This a memoir presents Geisha is based on the stereotype of the East.

Geisha are professional entertainers. Since Geisha as the cultural product of Japan, so they will be trained before a Geisha in a variety of Japanese traditional arts, such as dancing, singing, flute and Shamisen (a traditional Japanese three-stringed instrument), as well as the art of hospitality (Downer, 2003). The social status of a geisha has a special high position in the Japanese society, because they have good skills to entertain people but they do not sell their body. The perspective of Western toward Geisha as Japanese culture is different from the Eastern, which led controversies from some sides. Golden portrays Geisha from the view of West that Geisha is not only entertains but also as the object of romanticism, which the story tells the relationship between Geisha and man. However, as in the real Geisha that Geisha must be in professional, she must separate between love and business. They must keep the secret of their identity, especially for their business partner, and they do not have freedom in making love to others (Iwasaki, 2002).

Geisha's profession requires them to perform Japanese traditional arts, and communicate and please clients in the banquets. Every Geisha must be supported by a *danna*(patron), who is the one keeps the carrier of Geisha (Dalby, 1998).

The story begins in a poor fishing village in 1929, when as a nine-year-old with unusual blue gray eyes, she was taken from her home and sold into slavery to a renowned geisha house. She was a nine-year-old girl who grew up to be most famous of geisha in her time. Her name is Chiyo, as the main character on Golden's novel. Chiyo was the second daughter of a fisherman. Her father was very old and her mother was his second wife, and her father could not take care of his daughters. At first, Chiyo becomes a geisha, she attended to geisha school. She learned to dance, music how to properly serve the tea, and how to entertain men. The world of geisha was very competitive , that make her to struggle so much to reach what she deal. Hatsumomo, who is the antagonist character of the novel, is one of the top geisha in the city, but when Chiyo arrives, she recognized her as a threat. But, throughout the times she goes from lover to lover, she actually loved the Chairman. In the end, she became the Chairman's mistress. After the birth of their child, Chiyo who is now Sayuri, asked him to set her up in New York City, where she opened up a teahouse and became very successful (Majid, 2014:12).

Therefore, in this research, the writer would like to describe the portrayal of Geisha in Golden's novel *Memoirs of a Geisha* by applying Orientalism theory. Orientalism is introduced by Edward Said. The word originally comes from the "Orient" and the "Occident". The Orient is the East, traditionally comprising anything that belongs to the Eastern world, in relation to Europe, while the

Occident is the West as opposites of Orient. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other (Said, 1978: 341). Orientalism means a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between the Orient and (most of the time) the Occident (Said, 1978: 328). It means understanding or knowledge about stereotype of the world of East, such as culture, civilization, religion, language and so forth.

Orientalism is based on the perspective through which Westerners view languages, lifestyles, art, cultures, values, and sciences of the East, notably the Middle East. In this concept, the West has the authority to provide stereotypes and construct the East, which the purposes of these things are to show the domination of the West superiority to the East. Therefore, Said his book *Orientalism* claimed cultural differences between West and East are neither seen nor easily identified by Western attitudes, such as manners of speaking and thought, which were primarily responsible for creating early stereotypical views of the East among Westerners (Danielle, 1996: 156). It leads some critiques, especially from the East, because it such shows the discrimination between West and East that put the East inferior than West. The West claimed the Orient comes mostly from the consciousness of Europe as one of the influence in colonialization.

The reason for choosing the object of Orientalism in Golden novel is because the writer finds the Orientalism issue that appear in the narrative texts, which is the inequality between the perspective of West and East through the characters of

Geisha, like Sayuri and Hatsumono compared to the real life of Geisha in memoir of Mineko. These different stereotypes lead many critiques to that book and take a very controversial knowledge for the readers. In his novel, Golden purposed only to entertains Western readers, but Mineko claimed it as the slur for her. Golden,, as if portrayed Japan as lack of cultural background, that supposed Geisha as same as prostitutes as what the style of modern though of West (Lewis, 1982: 54). Therefore, to figure out the aspect of Orientalism itself is very important, because it can increase knowledge in understanding the basic thought of colonized country viewed the colony that think the West still dominate to the movement of the East, especially in art and culture, like viewing the secret life of Geisha.

The writer applies postcolonial approach. Griffiths&Tiffins (2003: 201) explained that postcolonial refers to impression or reaction to colonialism, since colonialization or after it. It has an aim to increase people awareness that they can choose their own way to free from imperialism. In fact, the use of this approach shows that the colonialism practice and the effects of it still exist till today, especially to Asian country, like Japan, and it takes a big impact to the economy, society, and culture. The main focus of postcolonial is the idea that Orientalism defines the East is constructed by the Western because of the impact of imperialism and the values dominate of the life the colonized nation (Danielle, 1996: 224). Therefore, this use of this approach will help the writer to find out the aspects that unclear and the inequality of perspectives between East and West as the main issue in Golden novel portraying the Japanese art and Japanese culture of Geisha.

In addition, the writer attracts to prefer this novel, because Golden preserved the insight into cultural mixing, the melting pot of modernity. However, it still lacks of authenticity, because there are very different views of what the East portrayed the life of Geisha in Japan. This novel also full of pages, but the author is very capable to play with the diction, which the texts are easy to be understood. In accordance with the case, the writer uses theory of Orientalism by Edward said

## **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the background of the study above, the writer formulated the research question into: How is the potrayal of Orientaism in Golden's novel *Memoirs of a geisha*?

## **1.3 Research Objective**

By formulating the research question, then the purposed of this research is describe the potrayal of Geisha in Golden's Novel: *Memoirs of a geisha*.

## **1.4 Uses of the Study**

The results of this research were expected to be beneficial for learners that divided into two major uses, namely theoretically and practically.

### **1.4.1 Theoretical Uses**

Theoretically, this research can be used as the future reference by new researchers who want to conduct similar research and also this study can contribute significant

information especially in the field of literature dealing with analyzing about memoir of Orient related to geisha as the Japanese culture portrayed in novel.

#### **1.4.2 Practical Uses**

Practically, this research would be useful for other students who also study literature especially in analyzing the perception of Orientalist toward geishas as the representation of Japanese culture, then it can encourage readers also to be more criticize to view about something that happen in a society and give actual opinion toward any issues that happen, by seeing from the characters and setting that preserved in literary works.

#### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

The writer narrowed the discussion on the portrayal of orientalism in *Memoirs of a Geisha*. The writer focuses on the descriptions of the main character (name) and describe Geisha's life, their physical appearances, their status in the society, and their job by using Said's Orientalism theory , 1978.