

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Culture is a national identity or the reflection of self nation. Indonesia also known as an the largest archipelagic country which is inhabited by many people from various regions who have different tribe, cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity. Each region has its own distinct cultural characteristics. Regional culture is reflected in various aspects of people's lives in all regions in Indonesia. More deeply, the meaning of culture is a system and concept that are passed down from generation to generation in a symbolic form through communication between humans about culture and attitudes towards life. These symbols are reflected in actions that give meaning to life, which in the end human life is always associated with symbols, as well as cultural products in the form of traditional rituals or ceremonies consisting of symbols that have meaning, which is formed from a system of cultural values and traditions.

Clifford Geertz in Auliaamafaza (2022), says that culture refers to a value system, knowledge system and symbol system. (Ayyi Imana Auliaamafaza, 2022). Confirming this statement, Geertz in Sobur, says that culture is a pattern of meaning contained in symbols passed down through history (Sobur, 2006, p. 178).

Culture has many signs that we can find around us, each sign has a specific meaning and purpose that represents a signifier. But sometimes many people don't realize that the signs found in human life, especially in the cultural aspects have the sign's meaning and can be explored. Geertz in Zulfauzan (Zulfauzan, 2020,

p. 33) sees culture as a text that needs to be interpreted rather than as a concrete pattern of behavior. Anything can be a sign as long as someone interprets it as 'signifying' something - referring to our 'standing for something other than itself. We interpret things as signs largely unconsciously by relating them to familiar systems of conventions. (Chandler, 2007, p. 13).

Human as social beings need language to communicate as a means of expressing messages in the form of emotions, thoughts, opinions, and information to others. Language expressed by humans can be in the form of signs and words. Signs can be in the form of objects, images, words, body languages, sounds, act etc. Language is a part of linguistics, because linguistics analyzes human language as a system for relating sounds (or signs in signed languages) and meaning. As Finegan stated that linguistics is often defined as the systematic research into human language - into its structures and uses and the relationship between them, as well as into the development and acquisition of language. (Finegan, 2008, p. 22)

Linguistics has many sub-fields concerned with particular aspects of linguistic structure, one of them is semiotics. Semiotics is a science that examines the signs in human life, which the signs should be interpreted (Hoed, 2014, p. 3). It means that all the signs that is present in human life is seen as a sign that is something to be given meaning.

In addition, Umberto Eco states in (Chandler, 2007, p. 2) that 'semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign'. Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as 'signs' in everyday speech, but of anything

which 'stands for' something else. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects. Semiotics are studying how meanings are made and how reality is represented.

Semiotics is the study of signs, and the scope of signs in human life is very wide. Because human life is full of and pervaded by signs in sharing aspects of life, so signs play an important role in human life. Related to it, Semiotics could be found anywhere in every aspect of human life, the sign can also be found in the cultural aspects of society.

There are two theories that are dealing with the signs. First, Saussure in (Chandler, 2007, p. 14) defines a sign as being composed of a 'signifier' (significant) and a 'signified' (signifie). Second, Pierce's theory which classifies a sign into three types: icons, indexes and symbols. An icon is a sign that is made to resemble, simulate, or reproduce its referent in some way. An index is a sign that refers to something or someone in terms of its existence or location in time or space, or in relation to something or someone else. A symbol is a sign that stands for its referent in an arbitrary, conventional way. (Sebeok, 2001, pp. 10-11).

Certainly Indonesia and culture have connected with each other. Indonesia cannot be separated from culture because Indonesia is a civilized country. Javanese tribe is the largest ethnic group in Indonesia, originating from Java and is embraced by the Javanese society, spread throughout the country. Amin states that Java is an island that still holds the principle of the existence of customs or traditions that have been passed down by ancestors in ancient times, because Javanese society is a unity of people bound by the norms of life because of

history, tradition and religion. This can be seen from the characteristics of Javanese society (Amin, 2000). Javanese culture prioritizes balance and harmony in daily life. Javanese culture upholds modesty and simplicity. The history, culture, traditions and forms of Javanese art are still quite well embedded in Indonesian regions. The traditional ceremony is a form of tradition that is hereditary in nature which is carried out regularly and orderly according to the customs of the community in the form of a series of application activities as an expression of gratitude. One of the Javanese traditions that still exists, but is almost replaced by foreign cultures is *Tingkeban*.

Tingkeban or also known as *Mitoni*, *mitoni* comes from the word *pitu* which means 'seven'. While *Tingkeban* comes from the word *meteng jangkep* which means full term pregnancy. This is meant that *Tingkeban/mitoni* is a ritual that is carried out exactly when the baby is seven months in the womb or the seventh month of pregnancy, because it was the time that the Lord breathed the spirit of the baby. This statement is supported by Bratawidjaja who states that *Tingkeban* ceremony is one of the traditions of the Javanese society which is carried out if the pregnancy age of a person is seven months and it is the first pregnancy (Bratawidjaja, 2000, p. 21).

The normal pregnancy period for a woman is around nine months. Because the period of pregnancy is considered to be a critical or precarious period, people hold *Tingkeban* ceremonies for the safety of everything. (Supijatun, 1989, p. 9). The aim of this *Tingkeban* ceremony is the realization of the baby's family's gratitude to God, for the blessings given to God, the descendant. Then this

Tingkeban ceremony was held to ask God to pray for salvation for women who are pregnant and for babies who are conceived so that the birth process runs smoothly, the baby is born with a healthy and perfect without lacking any one. All family members and closest relatives pray to get rid of obstacles and disturbances that might frustrate the birth of the baby.

Tingkeban ceremony is intended to interpret the blessings of God that have been given to humans in the form of descendant, so that humans will always be grateful and offer prayers to God. In addition to maintaining friendship between family, neighbors, and relatives by distributing sustenance through this *Tingkeban* ceremony. With the hope that later the presence of the baby both in the family and society can be well received and the baby is loved by the whole family and society.

The reason why the author is interested in discussing this research on *Tingkeban* ceremony is because of the Javanese cultural and language crisis that often occurs in the city of Pematangsiantar, even the tradition of seven months of pregnancy has begun to be replaced by western culture known as the *baby shower*, which is considered more popular and instant for the young generation. The influence of western culture is not the only reason for the Javanese cultural and language crisis as well as the erosion of the *Tingkeban* tradition in the city of Pematangsiantar. In addition, the crisis of Javanese culture and language is certainly more critical for the sons and daughters of Java who live in North Sumatra, who are a minority in Pematangsiantar city. Because the majority of the tribe is the Batak tribe or also known as the Batak land.

At the same time, it reminds the younger generation, especially the Sumatra-born sons and daughters of Javanese, who are starting to forget their identity as Javanese and neglect their inherited traditions. The younger generation who does not understand the true meaning of Javanese culture and language of the *Tingkeban* ceremony are more interested in carrying out more modern, popular and instant traditions such as *baby shower* than *Tingkeban*. Because it emphasizes elements of customs, there are several processions that must be passed and require quite a lot of preparation. For some people, this kind of thing is a little complicated and troublesome, so some people prefer to carry out a *baby shower* that is more popular and fun because it doesn't have to follow certain rules and of course a *baby shower* can be done according to the wishes of the mother-to-be, such as choosing the theme of the event, which is the royal party, the land of dreams, tea party, safari, vintage, rustic, to the simple. *Tingkeban* tradition is considered outdated, when in fact the younger generation simply does not understand the meaning of the culture and the Javanese language which is generally used in *Tingkeban* ceremony.

This phenomenon is very interesting to be investigated and encourages the authors to conduct this research because the young generation, especially Sumatra-born sons and daughters of Javanese should be able to understand their own culture, such as the Javanese language itself, the signs and the sign's meaning that exist in each tradition. In doing this research, the author hopes that the research can be a reminder to the young generation, especially Sumatra-born sons

and daughters of Javanese and also can be a source of information for readers who want to learn more about culture and appreciate their culture.

This research will focus on finding the kinds of sign in *Tingkeban* ceremony, how the signs realized in semiotic interpretation of *Tingkeban* ceremony, and the reason why the signs used in *Tingkeban* ceremony as they are by using Pierce's theory of signs.

B. Problem of the Study

1. What kinds of sign for semiotic interpretation are found in *Tingkeban* ceremony?
2. How are the signs realized in semiotic interpretation of *Tingkeban* ceremony?
3. Why are the signs used in *Tingkeban* ceremony as they are?

C. The Objectives of the Study

1. To find out various kinds of sign are used in *Tingkeban* ceremony.
2. To elaborate the realizations and meanings of the signs used in *Tingkeban* ceremony.
3. To explain the reason why the signs used in *Tingkeban* ceremony as they are.

D. The Scope of the Study

This study focused on discussing the kinds of sign in *Tingkeban* ceremony, how the signs realized in semiotic interpretation of *Tingkeban* ceremony, and the reason why the signs used in *Tingkeban* ceremony as they are. This study was conducted on the objects of the sign by Pierce's theory of signs: Icon, Index, Symbol.

The author is interested in conducting research on *Tingkeban* ceremony in the city of Pematangsiantar because the author as a Sumatran-born Javanese daughter who lives in Pematangsiantar chooses to research *Tingkeban* ceremony tradition in her hometown, Pematangsiantar, as a form of her concern to remember her identity as Javanese and preserve the existing cultural heritage. Considering that cultural crisis that occurred in Pematangsiantar city is quite bad because of the influence of western culture and the Javanese community who have a minority status and live side by side with other tribes in North Sumatra, known as Batak land. In addition, there are indeed differences in rituals or traditions at *Tingkeban* ceremony in each region throughout Indonesia. Because every region has its own culture and characteristics.

E. The Significance of the Study

In this thesis, the findings of the study are expected to be useful theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the research findings are expected to be valuable for:

1. For the English literature student, to enrich and increase their knowledge about semiotics' theory, especially in semiotic interpretation in *Tingkeban* on Javanese prenatal (pre-birth) ceremony.
2. For other researcher, to get information as an additional references who would like to conduct the research with the similar case especially about semiotic interpretation in Javanese ceremony.

Practically, the research findings are expected to be useful for:

1. For the readers and students, this research will give information and gain their interest in studying about the semiotic interpretation especially signs in Javanese culture.
2. For Sumatera-born sons and daughter especially in Pematangsiantar, this research will make them comprehend about the semiotic interpretation especially signs in Javanese traditional ceremony.

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