

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

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

Culture is a form of identity which shapes an individual or a community of people on how they see and communicate with people around them. Cultures that are owned by an individual can be their beliefs, traditions, arts, and also values that are shared with people who have the same culture. Culture runs a lot in people's daily activities, it can be one of many ways that people can represent their culture. Language also can be the way how people can show their culture to other people. There many languages that exist, because every country around the world has their own language. Some people even able to speak more than one language, due to the multiculturalism they have (Menadue & Cheer, 2017). The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) in Sitepu (2017) stated that multiculturalism is the existent of many cultures that are diverse (Sitepu, 2017). How people apply their culture is really important. It does not just the tools or culture things when it comes to a culture, but the member of it and how they apply it (Menadue & Cheer, 2017). Culture also has its own rules that can guide people. The rules existed can guide people on how they should act and behave. It is made to achieve the goals of the culture itself. People who are applying a culture should follow all the rules so that the goals can be achieved. The rules or values that culture has must be respected not just by the member of the culture, but also by other people. The differences of values in every culture around the world should be respected to avoid separation. If someone has done the rules and values of their culture and also has respected other culture as well, it will give a positive impact for themselves and also for others around them. (Kheryadi, Zuriyati, & Lustyantje, 2021).

Food is a medium that is connected to a culture, social, emotion, etc. It is one of the things that are used to see an individual's identity, relation, and value. Therefore, food is not only the source of health for the human body, but also a lens into a culture and the deeper meaning of it. The taste of the food particularly

connects with a sensory experience. The other factor that makes food can connect with a culture is the smell of the food. The smell of one specific food especially those that they used to eat can trigger and remind them to the things that have a relation with the food. An individual can gain their mood and emotion through food. In literature, food is seen as a culture identity, which can be divided into several topics. One of the topics is food can be used in a culture event. For example, food that has a meaning of happiness, wealth, and other positive meanings can be used in a wedding. Besides that, food also can be used in religious activities. The food can increase the connection of the individual to their religion (Ravindran & Gayathri, M. V., 2022). Furthermore, food also can be a representation of someone's memory. It happens if an individual has a memory with other person of eating or making something.

Memory is an important aspect in someone's mind. Every person has a memory that they may still remember or they have forgotten. It is a system in human brain to keep information of something that had happened in the past. Human memory is usually operating an information or event that happens not long ago. It needs time for the brain to remember something that happens a long time ago. Even, something that is unpredictable also can be remembered by a human brain. Someone's memory can disappear after decades (Bridge & Voss, 2014). Memory mostly influenced by where the event occurred, including things that related to it, for example like locations, people, etc. These will help or facilitate the individual to easily remember the memory itself. To keep this memory unforgotten, especially the most important memory, people use to keep the memory in digital. The sophisticated world of digital helps people to save their memories. Remembering memories is an activity which brings back what in the past to the conscious mind in the present (Hoven, 2014). Memory is seen as a precious thing, because it bonds relationship, forms a decision and plans for the future. It also has an important role to build an individual's identity. It is because an individual's history life will reflect the main aspect of self. Even though, sometimes an individual will face an error while remembering their past life. A human brain cannot a hundred percent completely remember the small details in the past (Scoboria, et al., 2016).

Food is one of the culture aspects that can easily spread around the world and enjoyed by so many people. Hence, food is a culture heritage that will continue to develop and also make the culture itself stronger. Culture, food, and memory have a unique way of being connected. Food as a culture heritage will bring strong memories related to its specific and unique tastes, ingredients, smells, experiences, etc. Food as a basic need which is needed every day makes people have a need to eat every day. The culture food that they eat in their daily life makes food becomes an important culture aspect. Culture food increases the individual's self-identity. Food that comes from family sometimes become the food that people want or even need in their adult time when they are in a frustration or stress especially because of longing of an old taste (Almerico, 2014). Culture has its own specific foods that also contain a specific culture recipe. The recipe usually has a rich history and meaning that identical to the culture. The recipe will continue in each generation, and it does not close the possibility that there will be changes or developments in the recipe. In a culture events or celebrations, food is the main role of it. For example, a wedding will serve foods that have a symbolic meaning which has a good purpose. Food and value of one culture are two of the important points for a sense of belonging for the member. It also can help people to feel that they are present in the society by joining in cooking food which is part of the culture activity (Varghese & Parui, 2019). Therefore, culture food is not served just to be enjoyed by many people, but also it has a very strong meaning. It is connected to an individual's memory through the smell, flavor, or ritual of eating the food that can trigger the past experiences. Food can be explored in an individual's memory. This happens because of an individual can build a communication of their emotions or pleasure through food. They also identify their uniqueness through the media of food (Raviya & Sharma, 2022). But it is mostly connected to memory because of the individual's emotions in how they enjoy the food. This phenomenon explains the connection between culture, food, and memory.

Memoir is a narrative text which made by the author and also from the author's perspective. It is also written based on the author's past personal memories. Memoir is often focused on a person's life at a specific period of time.

*Crying in H Mart* is a memoir by Michelle Zauner published by Pan Macmillan. It is a memoir, which is a non-fictional book. It was published in 2022 with 256 pages. This memoir also got an award as Book of The Year in The Financial Times, Sunday Times, Stylist, New York Times, Washington Post, Time, and The Times of India, and on Pitchfork.com and Vulture.com. It is also The New York Times best seller from the Grammy-nominated indie rock star Japanese Breakfast. The memoir of *Crying in H Mart* by Michelle Zauner talks about Michelle herself who grows up as a Korean in America, she loses her mother, and how she tries to find her identity. It started when she was still in school in Eugene, Oregon. She was one of the Asian American kids there. She struggled with her mother's wishes and expectations toward her. She grew up with a strict and demanding mother. When she was growing up, she went to college and had a band. She always wanted to prove that she is not just an ordinary singer and guitarist. Michelle and her mother sometimes had a problem, they used to argue. That is the reason why Michelle became a rebellious teenager. After being so long in the United States, she felt that she started to lose her Korean side. Plus, after her mother was diagnosed with cancer and then passed away, she had the urge to get her identity as a Korean back. She realized how important her mother's role is in her life. She tried to bring herself to the taste, language, and history from where she actually came from. She regularly went to H Mart after the death of her mother. H Mart is an Asian supermarket that sells several of Asian ingredients. She felt it like a therapy to go to H Mart. The ingredients that she bought, she usually cooked herself a Korean food while reminiscing about the time she spent with her mother. Michelle thought that every food that came to her mouth, it can bring back memories, happiness, and also strengthen her culture. Every time her mother got angry, she always had time to make food for Michelle. Even though, sometimes Michelle got angry when she saw a woman with her daughter eating, she thought why her mother cannot eat just like them. She felt it was unfair, she used to blame another person irrationally. Those foods constantly brought Michelle to her mother, also gave her identity back as a Korean. This memoir also tells us how Michelle had mental breakdown and trauma because of her unhealthy lifestyle, and her traumatized grief of losing her mother. She overcomes it by spending her

days working and cooking food. After she got her success, it reminded her to her mother who always demands her things. But she believes that her mother is relieved seeing her in the right place (Zauner, 2021).

Through this memoir, the writer will examine the background of Michelle in the memoir which will be connected to the writer's discussion on how the connection of Korean food with Michelle's memory, and how it strengthens Michelle's cultural heritage. Therefore, the writer found that the memoir of *Crying in H Mart* by Michelle Zauner is suitable to be analyzed with Characters by René Wellek and Austin Werren, Characterization by Albertine Minderop, and Holistic Culinary by Abarca Calls.

### **1.2 Statements of the Problem**

1. How is Michelle's background portrayed in the memoir?
2. How is the connection of Korean food and memory portrayed in the memoir?
3. How do Korean food and memory strengthen Michelle's cultural heritage?

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

1. To describe how Michelle's background portrayed in the memoir.
2. To describe how the connection of Korean food and memory portrayed in the memoir.
3. To describe how Korean food and memory strengthen Michelle's cultural heritage.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study is expected to be beneficial because it addresses to a person's connection with culture and memory. Given the idea about how a person can use food and memory to explore a culture. Also, the action that proven that food and memory can strengthen a person's cultural heritage.

## 1.5 Methodology

The writer uses narrative qualitative methods to analyze Michelle Zauner's cultural exploration in the memoir of *Crying in H Mart* by Michelle Zauner. A narrative qualitative method is research which analyzes the data by collecting it from any studies and reviewing it. The writer found the data to support this study from the memoir of *Crying in H Mart* and then analyze it with Characters by René Wellek and Austin Werren, Characterization by Albertine Minderop, and Holistic Culinary by Abarca Calls. The writer did some procedures. First, the writer chooses *Crying in H Mart* by Michelle Zauner and also Characters by René Wellek and Austin Werren, Characterization by Albertine Minderop, and Holistic Culinary by Abarca Calls. Second, the writer tries to connect the memoir with the theories. Third, the writer took some excerpt from the memoir that explained as the background of the character, how the connection of Korean food and memory is, and how Korean food and memory strengthen Michelle's cultural heritage. Fourth, the writer analyzed and explained the excerpt with the theories.

## 1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on the food, memory, and Korean culture as portrayed in *Crying in H Mart* memoir by Michelle Zauner.

## 1.7 Status of the Study

The writer has found 2 studies that discussed *Crying in H Mart* memoir by Michelle Zauner. First study by Binu (2023) uses Memory studies theory, second study by Mohamed (2022) uses Trauma theory. From these studies, the writer found that Michelle had a trauma and she tried to get out of it by making a memoir. Mohamed (2022) said that the memoir can function as an "container" for experiences of trauma. By creating a container for the trauma, Michelle can extract a new meaning and possibility for herself and overcome it (Mohamed, 2022). Also, because of the Michelle has a lack of Korean culture, Binu (2023) stated that food has a connection with Michelle's memory which preserves her

culture identity. As Michelle cooked Korean foods that reminiscent her to Korean culture, food is a reflection of culture customs, forming culture memory. Food also contributes to the crisis and maintenance of barriers between cultures. It pulls memories from the past of people, places, and moments (Binu, 2023).

The writer also has found 2 studies that discussed food and memory. The first study is by Ravindran & M. V. (2022) analyses *Book of Rachel* by Esther David. In the study, they found that there is a food preparation by the protagonist in every chapter. The narrative contains many recipes and the combination of memories and ingredients from a food. Food is used as a tool that help one of the characters to maintain her ethnic identity. The character used food and its preparation as a theme for her family and her community (Ravindran & Gayathri, M. V., 2022). The second study is by Ambarwati, Hidayah, Murniatie, Ahmadi, & Funada (2023) analyses *Pulang* by Leila S. Chudori. In the study, they found that Dimas Suryo uses Indonesian food to maintain his relationship with his nation. He was unable to go back to his home due to an event that happened, he made an Indonesian restaurant abroad to maintain Indonesian culture as well. It was found that food has a role as vessel to keep a collective memory (Ambarwati, et al., 2023).

However, the writer had not found any study that discusses the connection of food and memory and how it can strengthen Michelle's cultural heritage in *Crying in H Mart* by Michele Zauner. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out how the connection of food and memory for Michelle and also how it can strengthen Michelle culture heritage.

## 1.8 Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 Introduction. This chapter explains the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the research methodology, the scope and limitations of the study, the status of the study, and the organization of the study.

Chapter 2 Review of Related Literature. This chapter explains the approach and the theory that the writer uses in the study.

Chapter 3 Analysis and Discussion. This chapter explains the findings and also explanation on why the novel is analyzed with the theory.

Chapter 4 Conclusion. This chapter explains the results of the study and also the suggestion and recommendation from the writer who wants to do a study with the same topic.

