

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

“Get back to the kitchen!” Kinzaemon bellowed. Rie was careful not to let her anger and disappointment show. She bowed, dropped the brush, and ran toward the door leading through the earthen corridor to the rooms of the house. The kitchen. That was the place of women. How unreasonable of her father to expect her to only a confined “girl in a box” (Lebra, 2009:7).

What should a woman do when she is confronted with statements similar to that above? Can she behave as the society expects her to do? If these words come from a father to her daughter, will the daughter still appreciate her father? Does she have a big dream in the future? Will her dream come true?

The Scent of Sake is a novel written by Joyce Lebra, an American historian of Japan and India. Her interest in feminism and women’s history was ignited in 1975, and she has continued to “give voice to the voiceless” as a feminist historian, novelist and a lecturer. As a novelist she studied about women’s roles in Japan. She concluded that women are treated differently in society; they experience gender inequality, gender oppression, and structural oppression. She was the first American woman to earn a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Japanese history works. She lived for almost ten years in Japan and three and a half in India doing research on the history of Japan and India. She produced twenty nonfiction papers and has written in three books and some fifty articles in scholarly journals. Gender inequality is a situation when women and men are treated differently. A woman’s place was in the home as wife and mother; the man’s

place was in the public sphere (August, 2009:1). Then, gender oppression is a system which someone or groups are disadvantaged because of their gender. Woman is criticized for every single thing such as she is too fat to be a model, etc. While, an article of *The Dynamic System of Power, Privilege, and Oppression* says that systematic oppression is the way in which history, culture, ideology, public policies, institutional practices, and personal behaviors and beliefs interact to maintain a hierarchy – based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and or other group identities – that allows the privileges associated with the dominant group and the disadvantages associated with the oppressed, targeted, or marginalized group to endure and adapt over time. (<http://opensourceleadership.com/documents/DO%20Definitions.pdf>). These are the different definition of gender that treated differently in society.

The Scent of Sake tells about Rie, the only daughter of Omura house. Omura is a family name in Japan. It produces the best *sake* in Kobe, Japan. *Sake* is already recognized with the pleasure and the good smell in Japan. Rie cannot be an heir of Omura House because she is a woman. This family has a son named Toichi, an heir of the next generation. When he was several months old, he fell onto a well and he died. So, the family has no son as the heir of the business. Rie, however, cannot be the heir to replace Toichi because she was a girl. Now, she has the obligation to produce an heir for the family. In Japan, all authority is the domain of men; including an heir. There is no space for woman to take part. However, Rie has a desire to lead her family's business. She wants to make her parents proud of her but she has to face some struggles as woman in the middle

of male domination. Women were not allowed to express her opinion in business meeting or something of man's discussion for business.

In Japan 1830, *sake* is a prosperous business for this country. *Sake* as a Japanese alcoholic drink made of fermented rice, yeast and water. At a time when Tokugawa shoguns were on the verge of collapsing, the real economic strength was in the hands of merchants. So, among them *sake* brewers are the most powerful. As one of the merchants of Japan at that time, *White Tiger* (Omura's Business) was certainly very thought of competition, good name and regeneration. *The White Tiger* was one of the old and good *sake* producer at the time.

Sake and *sake* brewing are close to man's society. All the process is done by men. It is a public sphere. There is also meeting the mandatory drink between employers and some other Japanese ritual which was led by man. For some rituals in Shinto – name of popular religion in Japan – people drinks *sake* on special occasion such as festivals, marriages or funerals.

Women are close to domestic sphere. Women are not allowed to join or work near to *kura* – a row of towering brown wooden structures where *sake* is being brewed – in Japan. Furthermore, it was Japanese beliefs that if woman come into a *kura* all the *sake* inside will be sour. *Sake* is a symbol of a pure alcoholic beverage for Japanese culture. Women can make the *sake* sour and they totally fail. Based on their beliefs, Rie has to face some struggles when Toichi passed away.

After the incident, Rie felt guilty because she could not keep her young brother as the next heir. That is why, Rie was very excited to help her father,

Kinzaemon IX. She takes a job of cleaning some barrels near *kura* but she got reprimanded by her father.

Finally, she married a man named Jihei. He is an adopted husband or *mukoyoshi*. Their wedding is for *White Tiger's* future as the famous *sake* brewing in Kobe, Japan. Several months after their wedding, Rie has a miscarriage and they lose the baby. Actually, Jihei does not love Rie and neither does she. After the incident, Jihei was depressed by Omura family about business. After his duty all day long, he went to Sawaraya a place of *geisha* (a Japanese hostess trained to entertain men) for several nights. He met a geisha named O-Toki. Then, they have a son named Yoshitaro. Jihei success to give an heir for Omura family but not from Rie's womb but from a geisha. Next, the baby brought by Jihei to their family as the next heir. Rie's parents were very happy without thinking of their daughter's feelings which very hurt because she failed to birth an heir for the Omura house. She knows that Omura's future of an heir is more important rather than her feelings. She has sacrificed herself and her feelings to maintain a family business.

This is the reason why the present writer chose this novel, *The Scent of Sake*, to be analyzed because Rie's courage to have a big dream for her family business in the future. She has to face some struggles to make it happen. Therefore, this *skripsi* focuses on discussing the main character's struggles, Rie Omura, in her position as a women in male domination.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This *skripsi* goes to answer these following questions:

1. What is the general condition of Japanese women in the world of *sake* in the novel?
2. What are Rie's struggles to survive the male domination in the *sake* business?
3. What are the results of Rie's struggles through the world of *sake*?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study is aims to:

1. To know the general condition of Japanese women in the world of *sake* as described in the novel.
2. To know Rie's struggles to survive male domination in the *sake* business.
3. To know the results of Rie's struggles through the world of *sake*.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The present write does this *skripsi* through the portrayal of Rie as the main character who has a dream in the future. This *skripsi* is to know about sake and its significance, to know about the condition of Japanese women during 17th century and to know the condition of Rie's struggles in the novel.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

Joyce Lebra has written some historical novels such as *Durga's Sword* (1995), *Sugar and Smoke* (2005) and *The Scent of Sake* (2009). However, the present writer will only talk about one of Lebra's novels titled *The Scent of Sake* (2009). There are several topics to analyze in the novel such as theme, love, culture in Japan, woman's struggle and marriage system in Japan. There are several female characters in the story; Rie, Hana (Rie's mother), O-Toki (Jihe's favorite geisha), Tama (Yoshitaro's wife), O-Natsu (faithful family servant), etc. However, this study limits its discussion to only a discussion on Rie as the one only daughter in the family business.

1.6 Status of the Study

There are several research projects that analyzed about *The Scent of Sake* by some students, like Dewi Yohana (2014) titled *Analisis Feminisme Tokoh Rie dalam Novel The Scent of Sake* (2009) from Universitas Sumatra Utara talked about the position and role of women in the novel. While, ES Palupi (2014) titled *Women's Power as Depicted in The Scent of Sake* from Universitas Kristen Satia Wacana which talked about the inconsistency in portraying the main character as the protagonist. However, there is no students in Fakultas Sastra Universitas Kristen Indonesia has researched about woman's struggle as portrayed by Rie in the middle of male domination.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This *skripsi* consists of four chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, consisting of background, statements of the problems, purpose of the study, the importance of the study, the scope and limitations of the study, and organization of the study. The second chapter is a review of related literature that will be used to analyze the novel. The third chapter is analysis of the novel and the fourth chapter is conclusion and suggestion.