

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

For over centuries, superstitious beliefs have already existed in the world. Citing Jahoda, Richard Wiseman and Caroline Watt said “Paranormal, superstitious and magical beliefs have been found in a diverse range of cultures for thousands of years” (Wiseman & Watt, 2004). Usually people practise superstitious beliefs to gain more luck or to avoid bad one. According to Webster, people who want to improve their luck, use rituals, lucky charms, positive thinking, philosophies such as feng shui, and divination techniques (Webster, 2014).

Superstition is part of folklore. According to Martha C. Sims and Martine Stephens, folklore also includes folk costume, folk dance, folk drama, folk belief or superstitions and more (Sims & Stephens, 2005). Superstitious belief is the traditional expressions that have conditions and results (Green, 1997: 89). For example if a black cat crosses your path, you will have bad luck.

Superstitious beliefs can also take the form of lucky charms. Lucky charms can be everything, as long as they can give the owner a good luck. Citing Paine, Gary R. Varner says that “A charm is something believed to bring good luck, health, and happiness...but protection is not its primary function.”(Varner, 2008: 6).

There are many superstitions about lucky charms from all around the world, for example, Japan. In Japan, there are many things that can be classified as lucky charms, such as, *Omamori*, *Daruma doll*, and *Maneki Neko*. These charms are also the most popular hand carry from Japan. Some say that if you go to Japan and you don't buy these things, it means you didn't go to Japan. Actually Japanese stuff in Indonesia is a bit rare, like *Omamori* and *Daruma doll*. Many Indonesian people are not familiar with Japanese lucky charms except *Maneki Neko*. *Maneki Neko* is pretty popular in Indonesia. we often see it in some stores or restaurants.

Maneki Neko, originating from Japan in the 17th century, is the charm that can bring luck. *Maneki Neko* means “Beckoning Cat” or “Lucky Cat” that can bring fortunes to stores and temples (Lucky Cat, 2011). The form of this cat is a statue made of ceramic or porcelain or sometimes made of plastic with one rise paw. A cat is a popular animal in some superstitions. There are so many beliefs about cat. A black cat crossing your path means bad luck will come; a cat with spotted fur come to your house means good luck; a cat washing its face means it will rain, and many more. In the ancient Egypt cat is the most sacred animal. They believed that a cat is a demigod. A cat is not an ordinary animal. There are many beliefs related to cats. The legend from Japan says that *Maneki Neko* actually is a cat which brings luck to the owner, so the owner made a statue to memorize it. That is the story of *Maneki Neko*.

Based on the discussion above, the writer was interested in studying superstitious beliefs about Japanese lucky charm, *Maneki Neko*. She used a

superstition theory to help her to analyze the belief of lucky charms. Also the writer will write the history of *Maneki Neko* in order to give a clear view about the origin of *Maneki Neko*. In this thesis, she would like to gain a better understanding of Japanese lucky charms used by interviewing some shop owners in Semarang.

1.2 FIELD OF THE STUDY

The field of this study is Folklore focusing on superstition.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study was carried out in the scope of Folklore because it deals with superstition. In this research, the writer analyzed the superstitious belief of Japanese lucky charm, *Maneki Neko* are placed in some stores in Semarang. The owners of the stores are Indonesian-Chinese. The writers selected 12 stores with *Maneki Neko* to study.

1.4 PROBLEM FORMULATION

- 1.4.1 What are the functions of *Maneki Neko* as lucky charms?
- 1.4.2 What do the store owners know about *Maneki Neko*?
- 1.4.3 How do they know about *Maneki Neko*?

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Regarding the problem above, the writer's goals are elaborated as follows:

- 1.5.1 To show the functions of *Maneki Neko* as lucky charm.
- 1.5.2 To find out what the people know about *Maneki Neko*.
- 1.5.3 To find out how they know about *Maneki Neko*.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Through this study, the writer hopes that the readers will have a better understanding about folk beliefs, especially a superstition in the form of lucky charm. In addition, the writer hopes that this study will provide some information on *Maneki Neko* to the readers.

1.7 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

1.7.1 Folklore

Folklore is many things; it can be folk songs, legends, quilts, jokes, nicknames, holiday food and many other things. Folklore exists everywhere. It presents in many kinds of informal communications, whether verbal, customary, or material (Sims & Stephens, 2005)

1.7.2 Superstition

Superstition is a traditional expression that has conditions and results, signs and causes (Sims & Stephens, 2005).

1.7.3 Charm

Charm is something believed to bring good luck, health and happiness

(Varner, 2008)

