

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

History is something that really happened in the past time and gives really a big effect for the future, and can be developed as a source and inspiration for the other things (Stearns, 2013). *The Last Samurai* is a 2003 movie which is mainly about Captain Nathan Algren, a respected American military officer hired by the Emperor of Japan to train the country's first army in the art of modern warfare. In the beginning of the movie, he is introduced as an alcoholic and almost a lunatic as he takes a gun and begins to shoot toward the audience during a rifle show. As the audience screams and ducks for cover, one man remains standing, appearing impressed. The man convinces Captain Nathan Algren to take a position offered by Omura, an official from Japan, to help shaping Japanese army to be ready to eliminate *samurai* rebellion. The samurai rebels are led by a man named Katsumoto who disapproves with the modernizing *Meiji* because he thinks modernization kills the moral values and ancient cultures of Japan (The Last Samurai, 2003).

The Last Samurai is based on the situation that really happened in Japan during the Meiji Restoration era. Sumikawa (1999) explains that the Meiji Restoration of 1868 is a great turning point in Japanese history. The Meiji Restoration set Japan's development ahead of its neighboring countries from 1853 to 1868 (Sumikawa, 1999). Sumikawa (1999) continues explaining that this restoration, identified as the *bakumatsu*, is a border line in the history of Japan. The *bakumatsu*, which Japanese characters literally mean "end of the *bakufu*," is the transition period from the Edo period to the Meiji era.

During Meiji era, Japanese political thought changed radically as the Government of Japan opened their ports to the foreigners for modernization (Sumikawa, 1999). Sumikawa (1999) states that the most influenced treaty came from America which started by giving a gift for the Emperor. This policy divided Japan into two separate factions. The first faction agreed to embrace and learn from foreign powers. The first faction argued that it was impossible to refuse foreign demands and that the relation with foreign country could benefit Japan. On the other hand, the second faction argued that the foreigners would bring a negative effect on Japan's sovereignty, society, and economy. The second faction felt that receiving the influence of other nations and foreign people could corrupt and divide Japan as happened during the introduction of Christianity.

In general, Meiji Restoration era is an era of great importance in Japan as it marks the change of Japan from traditional to modern Japan. Using *The Last Samurai* as an object of the writer's thesis, the writer wants to find out the portrayal of Meiji Restoration era. The writer wants to reveal the details of situations of Meiji Restoration era portrayed in the movie. To help analyzing the movie, the writer uses Historical Approach.

1.2. Field of the Study

The field of the study is focused on literature, especially movie and Japanese history in the Meiji Restoration Era portrayed in *The Last Samurai*.

1.3. Scope of the Study

The writer focuses on the description of military, education, economic and political sector in Meiji Restoration Era portrayed in *The Last Samurai*.

1.4. Problem Formulation

The writer formulates the major problem in this research as “What are the portrayals of Meiji Restoration era in *The Last Samurai*?”

1.5. Objectives of the Study

From the problem formulation above, the writer has an objective to answer that is to find out the portrayal of Meiji Restoration era in *The Last Samurai* movie.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This research is intended to find out the portrayal of real historical facts of Meiji Restoration era contained in *The Last Samurai* movie. The writer hopes that this study could be used for the benefit of the students who analyze movie in that movie is not always a fiction because there are some historical facts pictured in it. The writer also expects that the thesis can enrich the knowledge about another event that happens in the other countries, in this case Meiji Restoration era in Japan.

1.7. Definition of Terms

In this research, the writer finds several terms that need explanation because these terms are in Japanese language. Those terms are as follow:

- *Bakumatsu*
Literal meaning “end of the *bakufu*,” was the transition period from the Edo period to the new Meiji era (Takano, 2010).
- *Bakufu*
Military rule of the country by a hereditary shogun, as opposed to rule by the imperial court and the emperor (Takano, 2010).

- Meiji Period

There is only a short explanation about Meiji Period based on book by E. Herbert Norman, and Lawrence Timothy Woods. In this book, the explanation about Meiji Period is also known as the Meiji era, is a Japanese era which extended from September 1868 through July 1912. This period represents the first half of the Empire of Japan during which Japanese society moved from being an isolated feudalism to its modern form. Fundamental changes affected its social structure, internal politics, economy, military, and foreign relations (Norman & Woods, 1940).

- *Samurai*

The samurai term was come from an obsolete or old verb *saburau*, which has literal meaning “to serve” (Bryant, 1989).

- *Shogun*

Japanese word for general in English. Shogun is appointed by the emperor to take control an army (Takano, 2010).

