

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Chinese people are rich in traditions. One of the traditions is the Chinese wedding ritual. Chinese traditional wedding is a “ceremonial ritual within Chinese societies that involves a marriage established by pre-arrangement between families”(Weny, Lubis, Sinar, & Muchtar, 2017, p. 321). In Chinese tradition, the wedding ritual is complex. It is not merely the wedding ceremony itself, but it involves some other stages. The pre-marriage arrangement of *Sangjit* is a stage that should be done before the wedding. *Sangjit* is a Chinese tradition handed down from one generation to the other. This tradition is done after the future groom’s marriage proposal to the future bride has been approved by both sides of the family. During *Sangjit*, the future groom brings wedding gifts to the future bride.

Literally, “*Sangjit* also means repercussion of the marriage proposal from the groom by giving the wedding gifts to the bride”(Weny, Lubis, Sinar, & Muchtar, 2017, p. 325). The tradition of giving wedding gifts from the future groom to the future bride does not only exist in Chinese traditional marriage, but it can also be found in the marriage ritual of other cultures. For example, it is called *seserahan* in Javanese custom or *sinamot* in Batakese custom” (Herman, 2016). Along with the development of a modern lifestyle, the tradition of *Sangjit* becomes more diverse and modern. However, despite the development of the era that influences this tradition, some parts of *Sangjit* tradition do not undergo much change. Chinese descendants prefer to shortening rather than changing *Sangjit* tradition.

As in the Chinese wedding tradition, in the *Sangjit* ritual, the red color becomes the dominant color. Red is the symbol of happiness and joyfulness (Qiang, 2011, pp. 99-100), [and therefore] almost all the backgrounds of Chinese traditional wedding ceremonies are

red. In some cases, the gold font is also used along with the red font in all writings during the wedding. The combination of red and gold font represents *Shuang xi* 囍 or double happiness. A red ribbon is usually hung above the entrance of the future groom's and the future bride's house which means that the family in the house is holding a happy event, a wedding ceremony.

After *Sangjit*, the family of the future groom and the future bride usually “would consultant astrologist to choose an auspicious day for the wedding ceremony according to the astrology to get some good fortune.”(Guo & Wang, 2016, p. 124) The next step is to decorate the groom's bedroom which is usually done a week before the wedding day arrives.

Many people of Chinese descendants who live in Semarang are not familiar with the traditions of *Sangjit* nor do they fully understand the meaning of *Sangjit* itself. They only continue holding the *Sangjit* ritual that is learned from their family tradition. A family cannot choose to do *Sangjit* as a standalone ritual or include *Sangjit* in the marriage proposal, or they choose to eliminate the tradition of *Sangjit* at all because it is troublesome. The writer's interest in *Sangjit* began when she gets involved in her sister's *Sangjit* on November 12, 2017. During the ritual process, the writer asked her family about the process and the meaning of *Sangjit*. Surprisingly, no one seemed to know the process involved in *Sangjit* and the meanings. When the writer asked her father why they held *Sangjit*, he said that he held it merely because it is a tradition that has been passed for generations. The writer's father does not really understand the symbolic meanings of the things involved in the ritual. The writer's experience of attending *Sangjit* prompts the writer to know more about it by doing research.

The writer acknowledges that the studies on Chinese rituals have been done by other students from the Faculty of Language and Arts, Unika Soegijapranata. The first researcher is Tan Nia Putri Evanthe whose research is entitled *Superstition among Chinese Indonesian Families in Semarang*. Her discussion deals with Chinese New Year, *Ceng Beng*, Funeral,

wedding, the shape of the house, and every day's belief. The second researcher is Siek Wihayati Santoso whose research is entitled *Confucians' Death Rituals, Rituals Objects, and There Superstitious Meanings among the Confucians Chinese – Indonesian Families in Semarang*. She focuses on death rituals in Confucians or *Kong Hu Chu* religion in Chinese tradition. The writer's research will be different in terms of the object studied. Her research will be one of the stages in the Chinese wedding tradition called *Sangjit*. By doing this research, the writer hopes that the Chinese descendants who still perform *Sangjit* will have a better knowledge of this tradition. The Chinese descendants who still adhere to *Kong Hu Chu* are most likely to carry out the *Sangjit* tradition. However, those who have already been converted to other religions might also do.

Lack of knowledge on *Sangjit* motivates the writer to research this area. Chinese descendants, especially young people need to understand this long-practiced tradition. For the writer, *Sangjit* needs to be preserved for the present and future generations because *Sangjit* is a legacy from the older generation. Therefore, it is very important to preserve it so that the next generation can learn and share knowledge about *Sangjit* to the future generation. In this study, the discussion is not exclusively about *Sangjit* as it involves the discussions on two other stages preceding *Sangjit*: asking consent from the woman's family and wedding proposal. By including these two previous stages, the writer hopes to provide a more thorough understanding of *Sangjit*.

1.2 Field of the Study

This research is related to the field of folklore, especially *Sangjit*, a wedding gift ceremony.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is analyzing *Sangjit* tradition. The research will only deal with aspects of *Sangjit*, particularly on the wedding gifts required in the Chinese wedding tradition in Semarang.

1.4 Problem Formulation

The questions to be answered in this study are:

1. What are the stages in *Sangjit*?
2. What are the wedding gifts required in *Sangjit* and their meanings?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

In terms of the research questions mentioned above, the writer aims:

1. To find out the stages in *Sangjit*.
2. To explain the wedding gifts required in *Sangjit*.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to know how the Chinese descendants perform the traditions of *Sangjit*, which is done before the wedding. The researcher hopes that the results of this study can expand the knowledge and the readers can understand the stages that should be done in the Chinese wedding tradition by Semarang's people, especially for *Khek* people in Semarang.

1.7 Definition of Term

1. Wedding
 - “A marriage ceremony, and the meal or party that usually follows it”(Oxford English Dictionary, 1884)

2. *Sangjit*

- “After accepting the betrothal gifts, the bride’s family would receive the wedding gifts from the bridegroom’s family. Wedding gifts varied widely depending on local customs and family wealth. Usually, the wedding gifts include: tea, fruits (oranges, read dates and pomegranates), coconuts, money and some other delicacies”(Guo & Wang, 2016, p. 124)

