

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Bramantyo's *Kartini* is a film about Kartini, a historical figure in Indonesia celebrated as a national hero for her fights to get women equality (Aprillia, 2005). The film is set in the late nineteenth century when Indonesia was a colony of the Netherlands. At that time, Javanese women, including those from noble families, did not have formal education and followed traditions that often treat women unequally (Kartini & Symmers, 1921). Symmers, in the introduction of *Letters of a Javanese Princess*, writes the answer from Kartini's older brother to Kartini's question, "What am I going to be when I grow up?" that she would be a Raden Ayu, a title Kartini would have received when she married a high-rank noble Javanese (Kartini & Symmers, 1921). According to Dwita & Sommaliagustina (2018) that *Kartini's* filmmakers have tried to transfer the concept of gender equality and the struggles against traditions that bind women.

On the women's position, Dwita & Sommaliagustina (2018) write that Bramantyo positions women as the main character to voice their own concerns on equality and the fights against them. *Kartini*, the film, depicts some scenes describing Kartini's struggles against the rules and traditions she must have followed as a woman

from a noble family. The film portrayed how at the end Kartini's fights for women equality are finally paid up with her able to get education and in changing Javanese marriage ritual (Dwita & Sommaliagustina, 2018).

According to Wati, Satvikadewi, & Andika (2018) Bramantyo's *Kartini* is interesting, because Bramantyo details the traditions Javanese women had to follow from their teenage years until their marriage. Bramantyo also portrays the detail of Kartini's ordinary life; the place she sleeps, who the servants are, the traditions she needs to follow and must not be broken, the rituals she needed to do before marriage, and other activities she must do daily in a noble family household (Wati et al., 2018). Wati, Satvikadewi, & Andika (2018) also write that Bramantyo also portrays traditions broken by Kartini. For example, Bramantyo shows that Kartini expresses her wish to get a higher education and teach both of her sisters and the women in her neighborhood. Kartini is also shown to get out of her house when she is supposed to be confined in a tradition called *pingitan* before she gets married.

As discussed previously, the *Kartini* film by Bramantyo has already been studied by Dwita & Sommaliagustina (2018) and Wati, Satvikadewi, & Andika (2018). Another study is done by Oktaviani (2019), who uses Barthes' semiotics theory to analyze the film. Although using different approaches to analyze the film, those three studies have one thing in common; that the studies focus on Kartini as the film's main character. Upon watching the film, the writer found out that other interesting female

characters are in the film. Kartini's two sisters, Rukmini and Kardinah; Kartini's mother, Ngasirah; Kartini's stepmother, Moeriam; and Kartini's teacher, and Kartini's stepsister, Soelastri. Those women are represented interestingly differently from each other by Bramantyo. The writer will analyze each of the characters to support the writer's study about the representation of *the Kartini* movie. In the writer's understanding, their representations enrich the representations of nineteenth-century Javanese women, such as gender equality, education, and tradition. Therefore, the writer wants to discuss the representations of women in *Kartini's* film more thoroughly using gender studies theory.

1.2 Field of the Study

The field of the study is gender studies

1.3 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the representations of the nineteenth century Javanese women in Bramantyo's *Kartini*.

1.4 Research Questions

In this study, the question that the writer wants to answer is: "What are the representations of nineteenth century Javanese women in Bramantyo's *Kartini*?"

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to find the way the nineteenth century Javanese women are represented in Bramantyo's *Kartini*.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to give information on the representations of women in the *Kartini* film by Hanung Bramantyo. Through this film, readers can see how Kartini's life and other women characters live in the 19th century are represented in the film.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Gender

Gender is a concept used to separate men and women biologically and non-biologically. According to Lori A. Rolleri, The term “gender” distinguishes the set of learned expectations, behaviors, and attitudes about being a man or woman from our biologically determined traits – collectively termed our “sex.” (Rolleri, 2013)

1.7.2 Representation

Representation is a definition for a sign or parable in showing an understanding. According to Aprinta (2011), representation is a concept that shows the social process of interpreting the existing sign system, such as video, film, text, photography and so on (Aprinta, 2011)