

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of the Study

*Amistad* is the true story of 1839 mutiny aboard a slave ship that is traveling towards the northeastern coast of America. Much of the story involves a court-room drama about the free man who led the revolt. This movie was based on the true story of a slave mutiny that took place aboard a ship of the same name in 1839, and the legal battle that followed. *Amistad* (1997) movie is directed by Steven Spielberg, he is undoubtedly one of the most influential film personalities in the history of film, Steven Spielberg is perhaps Hollywood's best known director and one of the wealthiest filmmakers in the world. Spielberg has countless big-grossing, critically acclaimed credits to his name, as producer, director and writer. He was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1946. He went to California State University Long Beach, but dropped out to pursue his entertainment career. He directed 127 movies such as *Transformers* (2011), *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* (2011), *The Legend of Zorro* (2005) and many others.

The film begins in the depths of the schooner *Amistad* at 1839, a slave-ship carrying captured West Africans into slavery. The film's protagonist, "Cinqué" (Spanish name) painstakingly picks a nail out of the ship's structure and uses it to pick the lock on his shackles. Freeing a number

of his companions, Cinqué initiates a rebellion on board the storm-tossed vessel. In the ensuing fighting, several Africans and most of the ship's Spanish crew are killed, but Cinqué saves two of the ship's officers, Ruiz and Montez, who is believed can sail them back to Africa. After six weeks have passed, the ship is running out of food and fresh water. Unsure of their location, a group of African men takes one of the ship's boats to shore to fetch fresh water. They are captured by the American Navy, and taken to a Connecticut Jail.

In the House of Representatives introduces John Quincy Adams, the elderly former President and politician. While strolling in the gardens, Adams is introduced to two of the country's leading abolitionists, the elderly freed slave Theodore Joadson and Christian activist Lewis Tappan. The two have heard of the plight of the *Amistad* Africans and attempted to enlist Adams to help their cause. Adams, apparently verging on senility, refuses to help. He claims that he neither condemns nor condones slavery. News of the *Amistad* incident also reaches current President of the United States, Martin Van Buren , who is bombarded with demands for compensation from the juvenile Spanish Head of State, Queen Isabella II of Spain . At a preliminary hearing in a district court, the Africans are charged with "insurrection on the high seas", and the case rapidly dissolves into conflicting claims of property ownership from the Kingdom of Spain, the United States, the surviving officers of *La Amistad*, and the officers of the naval vessel responsible for re-capturing the slave-ship. Aware that they cannot fight the

case on moral grounds, the two abolitionists enlist the help of a young attorney specializing in property law Roger Sherman Baldwin.

At the jail, Baldwin and the abolitionists, along with Josiah Willard Gibbs, Sr., a nervous Professor of Linguistics, attempt to talk to the *Amistad* Africans. Unable to communicate, they decide that their priority must be to find a way to communicate with the Africans. They eventually happen upon a black sailor in the Royal Navy, James Covey. At the Supreme Court, John Quincy Adams gives a long and passionate speech in defense of the Africans. He concludes by arguing that, if a verdict in his favor should hasten a civil war, the war will simply be the final battle of the American Revolution. His case made, the United States awaits the Supreme Court's ruling. On the Day of Judgment, Justice Joseph Story announces the Supreme Court's decision on the case. Believing that the *Amistad* Africans were illegally kidnapped from their homes in Africa, United States laws on slave ownership do not apply. The Supreme Court authorizes the release of the Africans and their conveyance back to Africa

This movie has good acceptance from many people, for example Jeff Derecki from New York, United States (December 10, 1998) in his reviewing “A film unfairly compared to box office winners that should have received far more recognition”. The main point of his reviewing is many elements from this movie are the best, including cinematography, actors, story and also costumes. The second good acceptance is Emanuel Levy in *EmanuelLevy.com*

at February 13, 2006. “Aiming to instruct and entertain, and often struggling to reconcile these goals, *Amistad* lacks the subtlety of tone and simplicity of form that made *Schindler's List* one of Spielberg's very best; here, however, every idea and image are too explicit”.

Besides the good responses, *Amistad* also got some negative response. Edward Guthmann, *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 18, 2002, “an admirable but disappointing effort...[Spielberg] veers between stoic political correctness and mushy Hollywood platitudes”. And James Kendrick, *Q Network Film Desk*, February 27, 2001, “Spielberg's considerable talent is not quite enough to unearth it”.

It is written by David Franzoni and started by Djimon Hounsou, Matthew McConaughey and Anthony Hopkins. The languages in this movie are English, Mende and Spanish. The release date of this movie is 10 December 1997 in America. The setting of this film took place on several sites on location in United States of America, there are Boston, Massachusetts, Coast, San Pedro, Los Angeles, and many other place. The distributor of this movie is DreamWorks Distribution L.L.C. The movie runtime is 180 minutes and nominated for 4 Oscars, another 6 wins and 22 nominations. The Budget of this movie is \$36,000,000 (estimated), this movie has \$22,236,673 (USA) (1 January 1998) (726 Screens), the gross in opening weekend is \$44,229,441 (USA) (14 May 1998). The best rank of this movie is in the second weeks, it is in fourth rank in Box office.

*Amistad* is an interesting movie, there are five aspects that make this movie really interesting. The first is real story of African slaves in long time ago. They are kidnapped by their family or other people then they are sold in rich people to become slave. They think that slaves are like an animal, and they do anything to the slave. They don't give clothes, foods, and bad place. One day, there are many slaves thrown in the sea like a trash by crew of *Amistad's* ship.

The second is the character of Cinque. Djimon Hounsou as Cinque is an African's slave. He is a great man in his land (Africa) but when he is captured and becomes slave for European people, everyone looks him like an animal. Then he moved to Cuba with *La Amistad* ship. In the ship, he fights to get a freedom for himself and many other slaves. He is cooperation man, we can look when he has communication with Baldwin and how they communicate without speaking. In the district court, he shouts "give us, us free" powerfully.

The third aspect is setting of this movie. This movie set in many location such as Boston, Massachusetts, Coast, San Pedro, Los Angeles and many other place. The movie uses society in America in eighteen century as setting. This movie shows how the condition, tradition, and the way of people's habit at the time. So, the audience can know the life of society in America at eighteen century.

The fourth is Plot. The plots in this movie use traditional plot, it is including the Exposition, Complication, Climax, and Resolution. Every part

has some entertaining points. Because of it, the audience becomes interested to follow the story until finish.

The last is the oppression against of the African's slave to get a freedom is one of appealing aspect to be studied. Steven Spielberg, the director, wants the audience to underline that the oppression the African's slave to get a freedom in the America that happened in 18s. In the eighteen century, the people think that human being can be sold and bought.

Based on the explanation above, the writer will observe *Amistad* (1997) by using Marxist Criticism. The writer takes a title: **AGAINST HUMAN TRADE IN STEVEN SPIELBERG'S *AMISTAD* MOVIE (1997): A MARXISM CRITICISM.**

## **B. Literature Review**

There is no previous study on Against Human Trade in Steven Spielberg's *Amistad* (1997): A Marxism Criticism at least in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, Sebelas Maret University of Surakarta, and The State University of Yogyakarta.

## **C. Research Problem**

In this study, the writer proposes a single problem statement, the major problem is how the oppression against human trade to get a freedom in *Amistad* (1997) is viewed by Marxist perspective.

**D. Limitation of the Study**

The limitation of the study is how the oppression against human trade to get a freedom in *Amistad (1997)* is viewed by Marxist perspective.

**E. Objective of the Study**

The objectives of the study are described as follows:

1. To analyze the film based on its structural elements.
2. To analyze the film based on Marxist approach.

**F. Benefits of the Study**

There are two benefits of the study:

**1. Theoretical Benefit**

Theoretically the result of the study contributes to the larger body of knowledge particularly literary study.

**2. Practical Benefit**

This study is expected to help the writer and to get deeper understanding about the movie and how to use Marxist theory in analyzing a literary work.

## **G. Research Method**

### **1. Type of the Study**

The kind of this research is descriptive qualitative research. The qualitative research is a type of research that does not include calculation or enumeration. It consists of exactly data and library research that merely focuses on the analysis of textual data. The writer also applies Marxist approach.

### **2. Object of the Study**

The researcher takes *Amistad* (1997) as an object of the study. This movie is directed by Steven Spielberg and published in America.

### **3. Type of the Data and the Data Source**

#### **a. Type of Data**

The data of this research are text and image of *Amistad* (1997). The text consists of words, phrases and sentences.

#### **b. Data Sources**

While the data source, there are two sources namely primary and secondary data sources. The primary data source is the text of film *Amistad* (1997) directed Steven Spielberg. The researcher takes the secondary data source, including reference and materials related to the study whether picking up from books or internet.

#### **4. Technique of the Data Collection**

There are some techniques of data collection:

- a. Watching the film several times and determining the character that will be analyzed.
- b. Reading some related books to find out the theory, data, and information required.
- c. Making notes of important parts in both primary data and secondary data.
- d. Capturing of image from the film.
- e. Classifying the data into categories.
- f. Interpreting the script of movie script
- g. Drawing conclusion to get the last result

#### **5. Technique of the Data Analysis**

The researcher employs descriptive qualitative analysis. Descriptive qualitative research is a research which the data are in the form of written and oral words that are descriptively analyzed. Here, the researcher tries to describe the structural elements of the film and Marxist analysis. Hence, the collected data will be interpreted and analyzed in detail through Marxist approach.

## H. Research Paper Organization

In order to make the research is easier to follow; the research paper is organized into six chapters. The first chapter is introduction which explains the background of the study, literature review, problem statement, limitation of the study, objectives of the study, benefit of the study, theoretical approach, research method, and research paper organization. The second chapter is underlying theory of Marxist approach; it covers nature of Marxism, major principles, human trade, and theoretical application. The third chapter is the social background of America in 20<sup>th</sup> century; it deals with social, economical, educational, religious, political, science and technological aspects. The fourth chapter is the structural analysis. The researcher describes the structural elements of the film *Amistad* and discussion. The fifth chapter presents the Marxist analysis and discussion related to the problem of the movie. Finally, the sixth chapter is the last one, integrating the overall discussion, and bringing it to the conclusion of the study and also the suggestion of the researcher.