

**PRESERVING THE SAMURAI TRADITION IN EDWARD ZWICK'S *THE  
LAST SAMURAI (2003): A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH***



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher will present about background of the study, literature review, problem statement, limitation of the study, objectives of the study, and benefits of the study, theoretical approach, research method, and research organization.

#### **A. Background of the Study**

Literary works have given valuable contribution for the world of movie. Many directors get the idea of movie from novel. A play or drama offers another classical literary form that has continued to evolve over the years. It is also “*The Last Samurai (2003)*.” While Japan undergoes tumultuous transition to a more Westernized society in 1876-77, *The Last Samurai (2003)* gives epic sweep to an intimate story of cultures at a crossroads. In America, tormented Civil War veteran Capt. Nathan Algren (Tom Cruise) is coerced by a mercenary officer (Tony Goldwyn) to train the Japanese Emperor's troops in the use of modern weaponry. Opposing this "progress" is a rebellion of samurai warriors, holding fast to their traditions of honor despite strategic disadvantage. As a captive of the samurai leader (Ken Watanabe), Algren learns, appreciates, and adopts the samurai code, switching sides for a climactic battle that will put everyone's honor to the ultimate test. This makes director Edward Zwick's entire noble epic eminently worthwhile, even if its Hollywood trappings (including an all-too-

conventional ending) prevent it from being the masterpiece that Zwick and screenwriter John Logan clearly wanted it to be.

Instead, *The Last Samurai* (2003) is an elegant mainstream adventure, impressive in all aspects of its production. It may not engage the emotions as effectively as Logan's script for *Gladiator*, but like Cruise's character, it finds its own quality of honor. *The Last Samurai* (2003) is an action/drama film (History Channel Documentary). It was released in the United States on December 5, 2003. Epic Action Drama set in Japan during 1870s and the story opens at the crack of the 19th century with disillusioned Civil War hero. "*The Last Samurai* (2003)" translated into English, Japanese, and French, and language: French (Dolby Digital 5.1), English (Dolby Digital 5.1). There are Edward Zwick's movie and won; first is "Shakespeare in Love" Winning Oscar Award Category Best Film in (1999), Nominated Motion Picture Producer of the Year Award Category Best Direction in (1999), Winning Golden Satellite Award Category Best Motion Picture – Comedy or Musical in (1999), second is "*The Last Samurai* (2003)" Nominated at Saturn Award Category Best Director in (2004), Winning NBR Award Category Best Director in (2003), Nominated Motion Picture Producer of The Year Award Category Best Director in (2004).

And third is "Once and Again" Winning Humanities Prize Award Category 60 Minute Category (2001), forth is "Glory" Won of KCFCC Award in (1990), fifth is "Legends of the Fall" Winning Bronze Wrangler Award Category Theatrical Motion Picture in (1995), sixth is "I Am Sam" Winning of Stanley Kramer Award Category Best Director in (2002), seventh is "Thirty something"

Won WGA Award (TV) Category Episodic Drama in (1989), Nominated Emmy Award Category Outstanding Drama Series in (1989), Nominated Emmy Award Category Outstanding Drama Series in (1990), Nominated Emmy Award Category Outstanding Drama Series in (1991), eighth is “Special Bulletin” Won WGA Award (TV) Category Original Drama Anthology in (1984), Winning Emmy Award Outstanding Drama Series in (1983), Category 90 Minute Category in (1983), ninth is “Courage Under Fire” Winning Lone Star Film & Television Award Category Best Director in (1997), and tenth is “Extreme Close Up” Nominated Humanities Prize Category 90 Minute Category and any other’s movie.

Edward Zwick was born in October 8, 1952, Chicago, Illinois, USA. Edward Zwick is well-known for his heroic movies that include *Glory* (1989), and the breathtaking works of art that include *Legends of the Fall* (1994). Zwick has also been known for his thoughtfulness as a director, and for his record of working with television series and other films as a producer. Born in 1952, in the city of Chicago, Zwick had a brother, Joel Zwick who was ten years his senior, and went on to become a film maker. This may have been one of Zwick's reasons to enter the film industry himself. After graduating from the AFI Conservatory in Los Angeles, California, Zwick worked as a journalist with the magazine *Rolling Stone*. He found work on television in 1976 as a producer, writer, and director. Zwick eventually moved on to higher grounds, though. This was another success for Zwick, and it earned five Oscar nominations at the Academy Awards: two for the lead actors, two for sound and sound editing, and one for editing. Zwick once again did not receive any nominations for directing. In 2008, his latest film,

Defiance (2008) finished filming and is set for a December release. It stars Daniel Craig, Jamie Bell, and Liev Schreiber as three Jewish brothers outrunning Nazi forces occupying Poland and protecting hundreds of Jewish refugees.

Edward Zwick is an accomplished film maker in American cinema, but he is also a veteran of television series, and frequently juggles movies with series as he works. It was at this time that Zwick returned to the director's chair with the epic film *The Last Samurai* (2003) starring Tom Cruise and Ken Watanabe. The film (which was about a U.S. military officer training soldiers in Japan how to fight against the samurai) was a success critically and commercially, earning four Oscar nominations for Acting (Watanabe), Art Direction, Sound, and Costume.

Captain Nathan Algren, a disenchanted ex-United States Army captain (once under the command of George Armstrong Custer and a veteran of the Battle of Gettysburg), is tortured by the guilt of his past transgressions against Native American civilians. He is recruited by his former commanding officer Colonel Bagley on behalf of a Japanese businessman, Mr. Omura, to help the new Meiji Restoration government train its first Western-style army. Algren, under the command of Bagley, trains an army of peasants and farmers in firearm techniques, and is forced to take them into battle, despite lack of sufficient training, against a group of samurai rebels led by Katsumoto, to defend Omura's investment in a new railway. During the battle, the samurai slaughter Algren's poorly trained and inexperienced soldiers, Bagley withdraws from the field, and Algren is captured. Algren, after killing some samurai himself with pistol, a saber and a broken spear, is taken as a prisoner to an isolated village, where he gradually recovers from his

wounds. He lives with the family of one samurai he killed, namely his widow Taka, her two sons and Katsumoto's son Nobutada.

Over time, Algren's mental and emotional state improves as he learns "the way of the samurai" (Bushido), develops romantic feelings for Taka, studies swordsmanship from a skilled sword master (Ujio) and converses with the local residents, gaining their respect. One night, as the people watch a comic play, a group of ninja assassins attack the village, intent on killing Katsumoto. The Samurai succeed in defeating the ninja, but suffer losses. Algren wins the respect and admiration of the samurai by fighting alongside them, and distinguishing himself in the battle by his defense of Katsumoto. Katsumoto confides in Algren that he believes that Omura is responsible for the attack.

With the arrival of spring, Nathan is taken back to Tokyo, where he learns that the army, under Bagley's command, is now better organized and outfitted with howitzers and Gatling guns. He declines Omura's job offer to lead the army against Katsumoto, to crush the Samurai rebellion. He also witnesses the brutality of the Japanese soldiers who enforce the new laws forbidding samurai to publicly carry swords and wear their hair in *chon mage*. At the same time, Katsumoto offers his counsel to the Emperor, to whom he was once a teacher. He learns that the young Emperor's hold upon the throne is much weaker than he thought, and that he is afraid to challenge men like Omura, who control vast wealth and political power.

The samurai leader Katsumoto is arrested and confined to his quarters in Tokyo when he refuses to remove his sword in the Emperor's presence, but

Algren, having learned that Omura has ordered his assassination, and narrowly escaping an assassination attempt on his own life (through judicious use of martial arts he learned in Katsumoto's camp), decides to rescue him with help from several of Katsumoto's loyal followers. During the rescue mission, Katsumoto's son Nobutada is killed while allowing Algren, Katsumoto and the rest of the team to escape. Katsumoto is still mourning the loss of his son when he receives word that a large Imperial army unit is marching out to battle the samurai. Forces of warriors, numbering only 500, are rallied. Algren receives a katana of his own. He is also given, by Taka, the armor of the samurai he killed. She dresses him into the armor, and they share a kiss just before Algren leaves.

The samurai plan, with the assistance of Algren, is to make their final stand, using a combination of superior close-combat ability and their enemy's over-confidence. When a large Imperial Army, under the command of Omura and Bagley confronts the samurai's forces to put down the rebellion, the samurai fall back to higher ground. Omura immediately orders the infantry to pursue them, as expected. The samurai lead them into a trap, setting a fire to cut off their escape routes. The samurai then unleash volleys of arrows on the infantrymen, killing many.

Drawing their swords, the samurai, Algren and Katsumoto amongst them, charge the confused and wounded infantrymen. A second wave of Imperial infantry follows behind and quickly joins the battle, as does the Samurai Cavalry. After a savage melee that leaves many samurai and infantrymen dead, the surviving samurai resolve to make a final charge. They charge on horseback,

being cut down by Japanese cannons and then by another unit of infantrymen. During the battle, Bagley shoots Katsumoto but does not kill him, and Algren then throws his sword into Bagley, killing him and saving Katsumoto's life. Against all odds, they manage to make it through the enemy lines.

On approaching the imperial rear line, and progressing enough to scare Omura, the Samurai are suddenly cut down by the Gatling guns the soldiers had acquired from the Americans. Katsumoto and Algren are badly wounded from the encounter, and are seemingly the only survivors. The Imperial general (who was originally trained by Algren), against Omura's wishes, orders the Gatling guns to cease fire, feeling the emotional pressure from the dying samurai. Katsumoto, obeying bushido in order to keep his honor, commits seppuku (ceremonial samurai suicide) with help from Algren, ending his life. The Imperial troops, many of whose comrades have also been killed, show their respect by bowing to the fallen samurai. Algren, who survives the battle heavily wounded, stays at Katsumoto's side. Later, as American ambassadors prepare to have the emperor sign a treaty that would give the US exclusive rights to sell firearms to the Japanese government, the injured Algren offers Katsumoto's sword as a present to the Emperor and urges the emperor to turn away the American ambassadors' offer. The Emperor agrees and tells the American ambassador that the deal is not in the best interest of Japan. Omura objects and the emperor - realizing he does not need to live in fear of Omura – confiscate his estates and fortunes. Omura is greatly distressed at this, so the emperor offers him Katsumoto's sword to commit seppuku if the dishonor is too great to bear; Omura however, lowers his head and



stumbles out. Algren then returns to the samurai village where he was imprisoned earlier, and to Taka.

Language is not a neutral medium but comes with the contexts, ideologies and social intentions of its speakers written in. Words are living entities, things which are constantly being employed and only half taken over: carrying opinions, assertions, beliefs, information, emotions and intentions of others, which it has partially, accept and modify. In this sense speech is dialogic, has an internal polemic, and Bakhtin's insights into the multi-layered nature of language (heteroglossia) can be extended to poetry.

Based on this research the first reason is about samurai is one other of Japanese culture. It means that a shape of literature (fantastic's and myths) has a large popularity in the sociological community. The creation of the labor will bring forward to show to the public or society. However, the urban of the labors have dependent means to distortion of social fact appropriate with their idealism. That is the reason if sociological approach more talks about the relation between the writer with the sociological life from the shape until the content of literature happen from situation environment and social strength of the period in certain of the time. In this matter, literature looks as the reflection of the period, because of "it" can be proof of the period, and also the imagination aspect and manipulation, constant own inside literature, social aspect also must be notice.

The second reason is on *The Last Samurai (2003)* movie is telling the reader about loyalty to God and to the emperor, is hard for the samurai community, because their aspects of social life will reflected into the literature,

but the young emperor is obsessed with western culture's. This research also told about the captain Nathan Algren how to find the truth and endure Japanese culture or hold out Japanese culture whereas he is veteran of the American civil war whose personal and emotional conflicts bring him into contact with samurai in the wake of the Meiji Restoration in the Empire of Japan between 1876 and 1877. This is also told how to preserve Japanese culture with control vast wealth and political power by the young emperor.

And the third reason is the researcher wants to give more understanding to the reader about tradition *The Last Samurai (2003)* society, then the history of *The Last Samurai (2003)* tell about the labors by samurai society in Japan to make sure their emperor knew if they are have loyalty with Japanese culture. Because of the blame for something is being shifted to the buildings.

In fact the whirring bureaucrats seem to grow out of the fabric of buildings, and the labors do not really know if the way is constructing these webs of buildings is meant literally or metaphorically. The rationalization of sociological approach present by Glickberg (1967: 75) that "all literature, however fantastic or mystical in content, is animated by a profound social concern, and this is true of even the most flagrant nihilistic work." Thus, the writer wants to analyze preserving the samurai tradition on this movie.

The fourth reason is from *The Last Samurai (2003)* movie the reader can learn how to preserve the samurai tradition of Japan. Because they think that the change is too fast for Japan from traditional country into modern country. It is reason the writer takes the title "PRESERVING THE SAMURAI TRADITION

IN EDWARD ZWICK'S *THE LAST SAMURAI* (2003): A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH.”

## **B. Literature Review**

The last samurai by Edward Zwick is a famous movie and very interesting to watch. As far as the writer concerns, the research on *The Last Samurai* (2003) movie has been conducted by two students in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. The first researcher is Fuad Fauzan (2005) Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta; the title is *An Analysis of Readability of Expanding Words in Subtitling of The Last Samurai (2003) Movie*. The researcher investigates readability of expanding words in movie subtitling. The study has three findings. First, the types of expanding words concerning with sentence found in the subtitled text are declarative sentence in positive and negative forms, the positive and negative interrogative sentence, the imperative sentence with only the positive form, and the very last and the positive form of exclamatory sentence. Second, the readability of expanding words cannot be achieved at all in the subtitling. The analysis show that there are 75 readable subtitle which covers 93, 75% for its percentage whereas 6, 25% or 5 subtitles for the rest of them as unreadable subtitles.

The readable subtitles reach more than 90%. Therefore, the expansion in the subtitling of *The Last Samurai* (2003) is readable and understandable as expected. The most issue occurred in this part is achieving the highest node while segmenting the related subtitles. Third, to extend of equivalence, there are also

some expanding word which are regarded as non – equivalence. The subtitling of *The Last Samurai (2003)* is still graded as a good subtitling as it gets more than 70% from the total subtitling. It can be noticed then the readable subtitle does not promise equivalence.

The second research is done by Joko Yulianto (2008), who conducted research entitled *An Analysis of Elements within Direct Speech of Subtitling in The Last Samurai (2003) Movie*. In his research, Joko Yulianto is dealing with the translation besides; the research focuses on analyzing the direct speech as the object of the study. The researchers concerning with the source of data. He takes the data from the movie in spoken form, while the researcher takes the data from book, it is a written by form.

Originally the writer found that in this researcher focus on *Preserving The Samurai Tradition In Edward Zwick's The Last Samurai (2003)* in sociological approach. The researcher conducts this research by collecting the data from the movie of *The Last Samurai (2003)*. The writer position is fundamental mainstream on sociological approach. The indispensable reason is that *Preserving The Samurai Tradition In Edward Zwick's The Last Samurai (2003)* movie have been elaborated through the sociological study. The main target of this research is to be the starting point of other researcher to conduct another research such as this. The researcher will focus in preserving the samurai tradition In Edward Zwick's *The Last Samurai (2003)* movie. The researcher will conduct this research by structural element and Sociological approach. The research would be different from the previous research. The researcher does the analysis about the

“PRESERVING THE SAMURAI TRADITION IN EDWARD ZWICK’S *THE LAST SAMURAI (2003)*: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH”.

### **C. Problem Statement**

In this study, the writer proposes a single problem statement. The major problem is how preserving Japanese culture is reflected in Edward Zwick’s *The Last Samurai (2003)*?

### **D. Limitation of the Study**

The writer focuses this research in analyzing *Preserving The Samurai Tradition In Edward Zwick’s The Last Samurai (2003)* movie based on sociological approach.

### **E. Objectives of the Study**

Concerning with the problem statements, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze the film based its structural elements.
2. To analyze the film especially about the freedom and sacrifice using sociological approach based on sociological condition of Japan’s society in the era of Japan revolutionary war.

### **F. Benefits of the study**

The writer takes an expectation that this study gives benefits as follows:

### **1. Theoretical Benefit**

The result of the study is expected to broaden the writer's own comprehension about Edward Zwick *The Last Samurai* (2003). The study is also expected to contribute to the development of the larger body of knowledge, particularly literary studies on Edward Zwick's *The Last Samurai* (2003).

### **2. Practical Benefit**

The study is dedicated to the development of literary study in Surakarta University, especially in English Department and to give deeper understanding in literary field as the reference to the other researcher in analyzing the film that is analyzed in this research into different perspective.

## **G. Theoretical Approach**

This chapter deals with the theory that will be used in this research related to injustice, that is sociological theory. It consists of four significant points relating to the study of the movie. Those are the notion of sociology of literature, the Major Principles of Sociological of Literature, the structural elements of the movie, and the last is theoretical application.

## **H. Research Method**

### **1. Type of Research**

The type of this research is qualitative research, because there are no calculations in analyzing the data. Qualitative research is when the data are

the form of written or oral word descriptively analyzed. Descriptive qualitative method is researches that are not presented in digits or statistic but it yields the data and the result in the form of description.

## **2. Type of data and Data source**

### **1) Primary Data**

A primary data are taken from the script of the film *The Last Samurai (2003)*, it consists of dialogue, plot, theme, conflicts, and the whole narration, which are relevant to the object of the study.

### **2) Secondary Data**

While the secondary data sources are taken from some books, websites, other literary and other matters that support this analysis.

## **3. Research object**

The object of the study is *The Last Samurai (2003)* film to analysis the freedom and sacrifice reflected in the movie.

## **4. Method of Data Collection**

The writer uses literary research in collecting data, which involves several steps:

- 1) Watching the movie.
- 2) Searching the scripts of the movie from internet.
- 3) Reading the script repeatedly.

- 4) Marking the point in the script to make easy in analyzing it.
- 5) Taking notes of important in both primary and secondary data.
- 6) Classifying the data into groups according categories of elements of literary work.

## **5. Technique Data Analysis**

The writer uses sociological approach and applies it by using the descriptive analysis. In addition, the writer also uses the structural analysis work. Firstly, the data are arranged in a list of data. Secondly, the researcher is looking for a selecting the correlation of data by using the chosen approach. Thirdly, all data from the second step are arranged. Finally, a conclusion is drawn.

## **I. Research Organization**

This research paper is divided into six chapters the first chapter is introduction, which consists of the background of the study, previous study, problem statement, objectives of the study, and research organization. The second chapter deals with review of underlying theory involving the notion of sociological approach that will be used to analyze the data. The third chapter deals with the social background of Japanese culture in the second half of the nineteenth century; Zwick adapts a loose revisionist western format to Japan. The fourth chapter is a structural analysis. In this chapter, the writer explains the structural elements of the movie. The fifth chapter is sociological analysis. The last chapter is conclusion and suggestion.