

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

One of the most catastrophic historical moments was the life of Native Americans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Significant events occurred between Native Americans and United States government during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in South Dakota (Lathrop, 1987, pp. 249-250). The initial encounters between Native Americans and White Settlers, the contemporary living conditions of Native Americans shaped by historical influences, and the ongoing struggle of Native Americans to reclaim their rights serve as notable examples. These examples led to desperations and unrest among Native Americans, becoming the reasons why resistance occurred in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, the resistance ended up with the loss of hundred Native Americans lives, particularly due to massacre. The massacre is known as the Wounded Knee Massacre.

The Wounded Knee Massacre in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century has evolved into the context for the researcher's decision to examine the policy implemented through Johan Galtung's imperialism theory that lead to Wounded Knee Massacre through a historical film entitled *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007). Acknowledging historical events from a different perspective provides insights into the changes in societies, cultures, and political systems over time and their effects on different communities, which can contribute to improving human understanding (Nawiyanto, 2021, p. 48). On the other hand, this understanding aligns with the

English Department's focus on historical context in literature, language, and film, recognizing how history enriches our interpretations.

According to Christian Metz, a film is made up of multiple photos, which raises all of the issues of montage and discourse, both of which are closely related to the impression of reality but should be examined individually (Tröhler & Kirste, 2018, p. 12). *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007) is a historical film based on a real event that happened during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in South Dakota, United States. *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007) was directed by Yves Simoneau and based on Dee Brown's 1970 book of the same name. The film conveys information regarding the condition preceding the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890 and how United States government was slowly taking over Native Americans power because Native Americans were under the General Allotment Act of 1887 known as The Dawes Act.

The concept of allotment was already well recognized in both theory and practice. The General Allotment or The Dawes Act is a legislative measure passed in 1887, which empowered the United States president to partition Indian reservations into 160-acre parcels (Carlson, 1978, p. 274). The Dawes Act was a significant manifestation of assimilation ideology that was established due to Manifest Destiny (James, 1999, pp. 147-150). Assimilation ideology hold that Indigenous knowledge, customs, and peoples are inferior to those of Western people. It is believed that full assimilation into the dominant or "superior" culture and language is necessary for Indigenous people to survive, with the goals of education being dominated by the dominant culture's economic and social aspects

rather than any Indigenous cultural, linguistic, social, or human rights imperatives.

Several illustration of how assimilation policies, stemming from the Dawes Act, are implemented are portrayed in the film *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007). Furthermore, despite the amount of meanings and values that can be examined, this thesis concentrates on the assimilation policies stemming from the General Allotment Act of 1887, also known as The Dawes Act, as portrayed in the film *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007).

## **1.2 Research Question**

This thesis explores several questions that require examination and clarification. The researcher has formulated questions that will be the focus of this thesis:

1. How are the intrinsic aspects portrayed in the film *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007)?
2. How does the film *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007) portray the implementation of assimilation policies through the Dawes Act?
3. What triggers the assimilation policies as portrayed in the film *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007)?
4. How do the assimilation policies influence the Native Americans society as portrayed in the film *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007)?

### **1.3 Scope of Study**

This thesis provides an in-depth analysis of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007), directed by Yves Simoneau, focusing on both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects to address the research questions. The study is limited to examining the characters Charles Eastman, Sitting Bull, and Senator Henry L. Dawes, and the conflict between Native Americans and the United States. For extrinsic aspects, Galtung's theory is applied to economic, political, military, communication, and cultural contexts, using credible sources. This study is limited to the film's portrayal of assimilation policies, excluding broader Native American history or Galtung's philosophy.

### **1.4 Aims and Purposes**

The aims and purpose of this thesis will be break down into several points:

1. This thesis aims to provide answers to the research question.
2. This thesis aims to explore and provide clarification regarding the description of the implementation of the assimilation policies stemming from The General Allotment Act of 1887, known as the Dawes Act, as portrayed in the film *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007).
3. This thesis is intended to be a resource for individuals interested in learning about and understanding historical context in literature, including conducting a research related to the researcher's topic.

## 1.5 Previous Studies

This thesis is supported by several previous studies. These previous studies cover a variety of subjects. One of the previous studies is an article entitled *The Enigma of Wounded Knee* (1960) Merrill J. Mattes. The journal provides information regarding the conditions on the battlefield of Wounded Knee, as well as the events leading up to the high pressure that culminated in conflict between Native Americans and the United States Army, resulting in the massacre.

The second previous study is a journal article entitled *Remember Wounded Knee: AIM's Use of Metonymy in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Protest* (2004) by Elizabeth Rich that discusses an American Indian Movement (AIM) in 1973, South Dakota. The movement intends to establish a project to present a greater historical viewpoint than that supplied by mainstream or government narratives. The journal provides information of what happened at the time before the Wounded Knee Massacre, talks about the resistance of Native Americans to colonization in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that led to massacre. Moreover, the journal provides information regarding assimilation policies that, at that time, were responsible for cultural genocide.

Owen Luck's journal *A Witness at Wounded Knee, 1973* (2006) was one of the previous investigations on the Wounded Knee Massacre. This journal focuses into the portrayal of the Wounded Knee Massacre and its aftermath for Native Americans in South Dakota and American civilization.

A journal entitled *Reel Report, 2006-2007* by Robert Brent Toplin from *The Journal of American History; Oxford* is the fourth previous study. Toplin

discusses the history of America where he proposes the film *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007) as one of the large-scale historical projects. According to his remarks, the film portrays the tragic story of Native Americans being devastated by the United States's westward expansion. It follows three main characters: Sitting Bull, a Lakota chief who refused to submit; a young Sioux doctor with a Dartmouth education who advocated for assimilation; and Senator Henry L. Dawes, a key figure in the establishment of American government policies toward Native Americans.

The next previous study is a journal article entitled *Wounded Knee and the Ghost Dance: Christian Prayer, American Politics, and Indian Protest* (2011) by Louis S. Warren where in the opening of the journal, Warren suggests the Wounded Knee Massacre as the most notable atrocity in the America history. Nonetheless, the journal's primary focus is the Ghost Dance movement, which was carried out by Native Americans in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a form of resistance and to demonstrate their desire for justice.

Another previous study is a journal entitled *The Narrative World of Native American Seen from the Adaption of Ohiyesa in Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2020) by Rachmat Nurcahyo that focuses on the characterization of Ohiyesa in the film. Ohiyesa or as known as Charles Eastman is the main character in the film and a result of the forced assimilation. In the journal, there is also a statement found regarding the relationship between Native American and United States. The United States and Native Americans have a hegemonic relationship, in which one dominates the other. The American government justifies its regulation of natives

by considering itself to be the monarch of indigenous life. In other words, Native Americans were designated as the colonized and the United States as the colonizer.

The seventh previous study is a journal entitled *The Cinematic Othering of Sitting Bull in the Adaptation of Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2023) by Rachmat Nurcahyo, Dhita Hapsarani, Melani Budianta, and Bayu Kristianto, that discusses the marginalizations of groups or known as the “othering” process, based on the film *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007). The article provides the researcher information regarding the book that becomes the film adaptation and the film’s event in depth. The hardships experienced by Native Americans during their oppression by the United States have been shown in numerous films. The tragedy of Wounded Knee, in which the United States army killed hundreds of Sioux people, including men, women, and children, has been portrayed in some moving visuals. The Wounded Knee tragedy is still up for discussion and is still a contentious matter.

In the preceding discussion, various studies of the Wounded Knee Massacre have been reviewed. In contrast to other studies that focus on different aspects, this thesis contributes to the academic discourse by aligning Johan Galtung's imperialism theory and historical context into the analysis, offering an innovative and comprehensive understanding of the relationship between history of assimilation practice in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, films, and imperialism. This thesis not only introduces a novel lens through which to understand the complex dynamics of assimilation policies in American history, particularly in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as portrayed in the film *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007), but also

aligns with the English Department's emphasis on historical context in literature and film.

## **1.6 Research Method**

This thesis's research method is classified into three parts: data and source of data, method of collecting data, and method of approach. The researcher uses a qualitative research method centered on transcribed material from the primary data, the film *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007). To support arguments related to the primary data, credible sources, including books and journals is used (Taherdoost, 2021, pp. 11-12). For the method of collecting data, library research is employed, with data consisting of the film, its dialogues, and captured scenarios. This data will be collected, observed, and curated. The curated data will focus on information related to the implementation of assimilation policies stemming from the Dawes Act as portrayed in the film *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007). Moreover, the method approach involves an objective analysis of the film's intrinsic and extrinsic aspects, providing answers based on this analysis.

## **1.7 Organization of the Writing**

This section outlines the thesis organization of the writing. There are four chapters in the thesis in which is outlined as follows:

### **Chapter I: Introduction**

This chapter is used to introduce and clarify the topic's importance throughout the thesis. It includes background information, research question, objectives, scope,

previous studies, methodologies, and writing arrangement.

### **Chapter II: Theoretical Framework**

This chapter will elaborate on the theories used to demonstrate how they constrain the thesis's scope on intrinsic and extrinsic aspects.

### **Chapter III: Result and Discussion**

Based on the hypotheses and research questions provided in the previous part, this chapter will describe and analyze the thesis's findings.

### **Chapter IV: Conclusion**

The first three chapter is worth of materials will be combined into one lengthy summary of the thesis. This chapter will also contribute by making recommendations for additional thesis.