

BOOK REVIEW OF *BATTLE HYMN OF THE TIGER MOTHER*

WRITTEN BY AMY CHUA

Martha Monica

13020111130050

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES DIPONEGORO UNIVERSITY

SEMARANG

ABSTRACT

This project analyses a novel by Amy Chua entitled *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*. The aims of the project are to make a summary of the novel by exposing the difference between Chinese and American parenting system and revealing the implicit opinions of the society in the novel about the Chinese and American parenting system. The method that underlies this project is cultural heritage method by Helaine Ruggles, D Fairchild The methods used in this study are library research and. The analysis shows that in this novel the writer represents the Chinese parents with Chinese parenting system and compares with the American parenting system that later creates society's opinion.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Pablo Picasso said “Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up”. (Chadwick, I. 2012; and again, more misattributed quotes online; <http://ianchadwick.com/blog/and-again-more-mis-attributed-quotes-online.html>. Accessed on 16 December 2015). This statement tells us that children basically have their own gift, but not all children can preserve and develop it. Parents are the biggest influence for children. The parenting way and parent’s attitude are some factors of establishment of children’s characters and future.

Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother is a novel by Amy Chua. She gets the award from the *Time* magazine as one of one hundred most influential people in the world. This novel was first published on January, 11th 2011 by Penguin Press and had gone into The International Bestseller Novels. (<http://www.amazon.com/Battle-Hymn-Tiger-Mother-Chua/dp/0143120581>. Accessed on 16 December 2016) This novel tells about how a Chinese woman, Amy Chua, who is a wife and a mother, manages her family. When managing her family, she always uses Chinese culture. Instead, it brings a pro and contra by people around her.

The writer chose the novel *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* because it has an interesting story. It tells how immigrant parents come to another country, but they do not adopt all the parenting system applied in that country. Amy keeps cultural heritage and makes her daughter succeed by using Chinese parenting system. The purpose of this project is to make a summary of the novel entitled *Battle Hymn of*

the Tiger Mother by Amy Chua by exposing the difference between Chinese and American parenting system, and revealing the implicit opinions of the people in the novel about the Chinese and American parenting system.

To describe the differences of parenting system between Chinese and American, I use cultural heritage method that is relevant with the way parents raise their children. According to Silverman, Helaine Ruggles, D Fairchild in *Cultural Heritage and Human Rights*; "Heritage is a concept to which most people would assign a positive value. ...but heritage is also intertwined with identity and territory, where individuals and communities are often in competition or outright conflict." (2007:3). so with this method, I will describe first about the Chinese culture and the American then synchronize with the parenting system of China and America. As I have explained before, parenting is also affected by cultural heritage as their identity and their standard in behaving. Children are the next generation that will represent their parent's culture, so parents also inculcate their cultural heritage to their children because they do not want their children to forget their culture.

1.2 Organization of the Project

INTRODUCTION:

It deals with background of the study, method of writing, biography of the author and organization of the writing.

SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL:

In this section, the writer gives summary of *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*

REVIEW OF THE NOVEL:

It deals with an explanation of different parenting system between Chinese and American. In this section I will show some opinions of the society about the quality of the Chinese and American parenting.

CONCLUSION:

This is the summary of the previous section.

1.3 Summary of *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*

The Chinese woman is Amy Chua; she married to Jed, a Jewish, and they have two daughters. Sophia is their first daughter and Lulu is the second. Both of them become Chinese-Jewish daughters. They live nomadic in the United States, because of Chua's and Jed's job. As a Chinese, Chua maintains her culture by managing her family and teaching her daughters in Chinese way. Nevertheless, as a wife of Jewish husband, she has to be fair to acquaint their daughters about Jewish tradition as well.

Asian kids in the United States are well-known as outstanding students because they are raised by their Asian parents. Yet, the parents, who are always make a list of everything which is allowed to do or not. The children have to have an extra credit, get an A for all classes, and they cannot disobey or talk back to their parents. The reason is that the Asian parents have higher dreams for their children. In the novel, Chua pushes her daughters so hard that they will get best achievements.

American parenting way is very different from Chua's way of parenting. American parenting gives their children some privacy and freedoms, etc. However, for Chua, those things will not bring her daughters to be successful kids in the future. Yet, Chua also wants her daughters to get the benefits from the best aspects of American society.

2. REVIEW OF THE NOVEL

After reading *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, I realize that there is an interesting point such as the differences between Asian and American parenting system that are affected by their culture. Furthermore, this novel also shows some implicit opinions of society about Chinese and American parenting system.

2.1 The Differences between Chinese and American Parenting System

Chinese and American parents have different styles in parenting system. The differences are mostly influenced by each culture. Although they have different styles, they have the same goal, which is giving the best for their children. In this project, I will reveal the differences between Chinese and American parenting systems from cultural point of view which are collected from Chua's style in parenting and other characters' implicit opinions about both parenting system

2.1.1 Chinese Parenting System

Dragon is the nation symbol of China which pictures the strength of China. The using of dragon as the nation symbol of China is because dragon has great power and is made up of seven animals. Then it also become part of their art culture that is *Barongsai*. The values of the symbol are also shown in the parenting system of Chinese family. In this novel, Chua's methods represent the power of parents in parenting system of Chinese which reflects the power of the dragon. According to *Beyond Parental Control and Authoritarian Parent Style: Understanding Chinese Parenting through the Cultural Notion of Training*: "Chinese parenting has often been described as "controlling" or authoritarian. ...and yet the Chinese are performing quite well in school." (1994:1111). Chinese parents always prepare their kids for the future.

Chinese also believe that good or bad thing can be happen in life. For Chinese, aspects of life is the results of the change and interplay between passive and active, it is called Yin Yang. Family, especially, has a big role in someone destiny that is way Chinese respects the family so much. They also respect their ancestor, they keep revere their ancestor to get a better luck. That is the reason why Chinese especially Chinese parents always their children with their cultural heritage. Their parenting system requires extreme discipline. For example, from the novel, Chua makes a schedule for her daughters, Sophia and Lulu, to be obeyed everyday with no excuses even the excuse of illness. The children must practice violin and piano everyday even on their holidays. They also have to spend more time than others to study, especially when they cannot afford grade A

for each subjects. Other method that represents the power of parents in Chinese parenting system is that the children must respect the authority. Children are not allowed to question and disobey or talk back to the parents, because Chinese parents believe that they are the only one who knows what is the best for the children and nothing is negotiable.

Another method for preparing Chinese children is giving the best for the kids and getting the best from the kids. For instance, Chua does and gives the best thing for Sophia and Lulu when she travels across the town looking for the best piano or violin teacher for Sophia and Lulu. Then she directs Sophia and Lulu to master the instruments since an early age.

The Chinese model turns on achieving success. That's how the virtuous circle of confidence, hard work, and more success is generated. I knew that I had to make sure Lulu achieved that success-at the same level as Sophia-before it was too late. (Chua 2011: 146)

The school is also the focus of the Chinese parenting system. In this case, Chua does not accept any grade less than A. If Sophia or Lulu gets any grade less than A, Chua will give extra credits for the daughters until their grades become A.

Chinese are also well-known as a hard-working people. They create a national identity based on the ideals of equality and hard work. For example, in the economy system, they try many ways to develop their economy such as free market, gross domestic product and so on, until they become the second largest economy in the world.

On the other hand, the Chinese parenting system has some bad effects. The discipline which is applied is too hard for Sophia and Lulu because there is no

excuse for any bad condition that happens to Chua's daughters. The schedule that Chua makes also ruins the Sophia's and Lulu's childhood. Chua never allows her daughters to attend a sleepover, have a playdate, watch TV or play computer games, or choose their own extracurricular or hobbies.

Chua, who represents Chinese parents, wants her daughters to be the best in everything, so she presses her children so hard. Chua always arranges Sophia's and Lulu's schedule with a lot of practices and no time for playing. Chua thinks that playing only wastes her daughter's time because it is useless for her daughters' future.

... You have to give your children the freedom to pursue their *passion* when it's obvious that the 'passion' is just going to turn out to be Facebook for ten hours which is a total waste of time and eating all that disgusting junk food... (Chua, 2011: 227)

Sometimes it makes the children under pressure and stress. Their times for practice are longer than everyone else.

Chinese parents do not really care about self-esteem. If Sophia and Lulu's result are not the best, Chua does not hesitate to say them "garbage".

Once when I was young-maybe more than once-when I was extremely disrespectful to my mother, my father angrily called me "garbage" in our native Hokkien dialect. (Chua, 2011: 50)

The pressures make Chinese children only focus on themselves and do not really care about their environment and society especially heterogeneous society. Chinese are homogeneous societies. That condition causes them to only associate with their fellow.

2.1.2 American Parenting System

Then as know that Americans are extremely independent, individualistic, and like to be different from each other. America, as a liberal country, promises democracy for the citizen. The democracy is also shown in parenting system of America which is reflected from one of the elements of American Dream. The American parenting system is softer, and it gives children many kinds of democracy which is different from Chinese parenting system. The democracy is reflected on how American parents give choices to their children based on what they want without any compulsion. Parents always encourage their children to pursue their passions.

Western parents try to respect their children's individuality, encouraging them to pursue their true passions, supporting their choices, and providing positive reinforcement, and a nurturing environment. (Chua, 2011: 63)

American parents have some different ways to teach their children. American parents really care about the self-esteem of their children. They think that if they always control their children's life, the children will lose their self-esteem of their option. Then if parents always control their children's life, it will restrict their creativity.

As parents, Sy and Florence were determined to give their children the space and freedom they had been deprived of as children. They believed in individual choice and valued independence, creativity, and questioning authority. (Chua, 2011: 54)

They also teach and train their children with no pressure. They give rewards for their children if their children get some achievements.

I remember a girl named Aubrey, who was required to practice one minute per day for every year of her age. She was seven. Other kids got paid for practicing, with giant ice cream sundaes or big Lego kits. And many were excused from practicing altogether on lesson days. (Chua 2011: 27)

Learning to take some responsibilities since they are at early age is the rule that also applied in their parenting system. For instance, American parents usually give pets to the children so that they can practice taking responsibilities, such as feeding the pets, bathing the pets, and so on. It also trains their cognitions of real life things.

Even though the democracy that American parents give to the children has some good impacts, it also has some bad impacts. One of the bad impacts is that the children become undisciplined because their parents never force the children to do something so they usually take everything easily. The children also become “moody”, because they do not have any schedules to do from their parents.

The democracy that the American parents give to their children makes the children only focus on their own environment and do everything based on what they want without considering their parents’ opinions. They also do not respect their parents as they do not hesitate to yell at their parents if they think that their parents interfere their business.

2.1.3 Society’s Responds between Chinese and American Parenting

Most of the people know how Chinese or American raise their children, but they only see it from the surface. Some of them respond the differences and also

compare the system. Afterward, they make some opinions between Asian and American parenting system based on the children's achievements.

This novel shows some responses of society about the parenting system of Chinese and American. Most of the people say that Chinese parenting system is quite cruel. It can be seen from a part of dialogue in this novel

“Daniela felt sorry for me. She asked when I had time to do anything else. I told her that I don’t really have time for anything fun because I’m Chinese.” (Chua, 2011: 68)

It shows that Chinese parenting system grabs all their children's childhood.

Other response shows how obsess Chinese parents with their children.

Here’s a question I often get: “But Amy, let me ask you this. Who are you doing all this pushing for-your daughter”-and here always the cocked head, the knowing tone- “or yourself?” (Chua, 2011: 148)

Most people get the point differently from Amy. She thinks all the things that she does are for preparing Sophia and Lulu's future, but people think she does that because of her worries.

On the other hand, some societies give good responses about Chinese parenting system. Discipline and rules, which are applied by Chua, shape the personality of her daughters to be strong. They do not give up easily. They can handle anything such as exclusion, excoriation, humiliation, and even loneliness. Then many of them feel amazed because Sophia and Lulu have a lot of achievements since they were kids.

At a recent lunch, I met Elizabeth Alexander, the Yale Professor who read her original poem at President Obama’s inauguration. I told her how much I admired her work, and we exchanged a few words. Then she said

"Wait a minute-I think I know you. Do you have two daughters who studied at the Neighborhood Music School? Aren't you the mother of those two incredibly talented musicians?" (Chua, 2011: 213)

Then for American parenting system, society thinks that this system makes children more responsible for their decision. American parents allow their children to choose their own desire and parents do not interfere their children's responsibilities.

Most people also see that this system makes American children more creative and expressive. American children do everything based on their passions which let them do their best. Nevertheless, some people think that parents do not take full responsible on their children's future.

3. CONCLUSION

Parents and cultures are the biggest influence in system of raising children. Chinese parenting system shows the authorization of parents. Chinese parents apply discipline, especially for school. For them, school is the standard of children's success. Nevertheless, children can have another activity beside school that is chosen by the parents. Chinese parenting system also teaches children to always respect the authority.

Unfortunately, Chinese parents do not really care about self-esteem. They press their children so hard and they make a schedule for the children that should be obeyed. Since parents more understand about what their children need to prepare children for the future, children do not have the right to choose something for themselves.

The American parenting system is quite different from Chinese parenting system. American parents raise their children with democracy. Moreover, American parents are very concerned about the self-reliance of their children. That is why American parents always encourage their children to pursue their passions and teach their children without any pressure.

The differences also make some responses from the society. Chinese parenting system is quite cruel for most of society. The authorization of Chinese parents is considered to spoil children's childhood that should be something fleeting to be enjoyed. Some societies also think that Chinese parents are too obsessed with their children. Nonetheless, there are some opinions of society feel amazed with Chinese parenting system. Chinese parents raise children who is not a quitter. Then American parenting system in society's opinion is softer. The democracy which is applied in American parenting system makes American children more creative and expressive.

In short, the differences system between Chinese and American in parenting are due to their cultural differences. They still have the same goal, which is giving the best for their children.

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