

# CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Literature can be considered a way for humans to express themselves artistically, reflecting social and cultural realities through imagination. According to Wellek and Warren (1949), literature is a creative and imaginative work that does not merely record historical facts, but reconstructs reality through artistic expression. This view shows that literary works are not only entertainment, but also a tool for conveying the values, ideologies, and life experiences of society. In the current era of literary studies, the boundaries of literature are no longer limited to writings such as novels, plays, or poetry. Movies and TV series are now considered part of modern literature because they have story structures, characters, conflicts, and ideological messages that can be studied in depth. According to Alfathoni and Manesah (2020), film is a form of audiovisual narrative that combines visual images, dialogue, sound, and performance to construct meanings and represent social realities. Thus, movies and TV series can be seen as cultural texts that are full of meaning.

Movies and TV series are never neutral. As cultural products, they always convey a certain perspective when depicting social reality. According to Stuart Hall (1997), representation is the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged through language, images, and signs. Representation is not merely a reflection of the real world, but an active process that creates meaning through a system of signs. Therefore, what is shown in the media is a construction, not an objective reflection of everyday life. Stuart Hall's theory of cultural representation emphasizes the role of the media in shaping the understanding and

Meaning of a culture. According to Hall (1997), meaning is produced through representational systems that operate within specific cultural and social contexts. Media, including films and TV series, use language, images, stories, and symbols to create specific meanings about social and cultural life. The TV series Wu-Tang: An American Saga Season 1 is an example of media rich in cultural representation practices. The series was created by Hulu and first aired in 2019. It was developed by RZA and Alex Tse, with RZA also serving as executive producer. Wu-Tang: An American Saga is inspired by the true story of the formation of the hip-hop group Wu-

Tang Clan and depicts the life of a community in Staten Island, New York, in the early 1990s.

Through stories of street life, social relationships, and the economic and environmental conditions of the characters' living environments, *Wu-Tang: An American Saga* presents various forms of cultural representation. These elements are not merely narrative background, but function as a system of signs that construct particular meanings about the social and cultural realities being portrayed. In this sense, the series can be analyzed as a cultural text that communicates social experiences through different practices of representation.

Many studies on media representation have applied Stuart Hall's theory, particularly in discussing issues such as nationalism, feminism, and identity. However, studies that specifically examine cultural representation in the context of African American urban life, especially as reflected in everyday communication, family structure, and survival experiences, are still limited. Therefore, this study aims to address that gap by analyzing how cultural meanings are constructed through Stuart Hall's perspective of representation.

Theory of cultural representation, this study seeks to reveal how cultural meaning is created, conveyed, and reproduced through three main aspects presented in the series: (1) Representation through Language and Communication, which appears in the use of slang and everyday speech; (2) Representation through Family, which reflects collective responsibility and extended kinship roles; and (3) Representation through Street Survival and Masculinity, which illustrates strategies of survival, power relations, and identity formation within marginalized urban environments.

Although Stuart Hall's theory has been widely used to analyze representation in films and television, there remains limited research that focuses specifically on how these three aspects of African American urban culture are represented in *Wu-Tang: An American Saga Season 1*. Most previous studies emphasize general themes of race or identity, rather than exploring how cultural meanings are constructed through daily language practices, family-based support systems, and the realities of street survival. Therefore, this study analyzes how cultural meanings are represented through those three dimensions as depicted in the series.

## 1.2 LIMITATION OF THE PROBLEM

This study is limited to the analysis of cultural representation in Wu-Tang: An American Saga Season 1 (2019). The analysis focuses on selected scenes that portray African American urban culture through language and slang, family dynamics, and street survival experiences. This study applies Stuart Hall's theory of cultural representation as the primary analytical framework and does not examine other seasons or employ additional theoretical perspectives.

## 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on the background explained above, this study seeks to examine how cultural meaning is constructed and represented in the series. Therefore, the research question is formulated as follows.

1. How is African American culture represented in Wu-Tang: An American Saga Season 1 based on Stuart Hall's theory of cultural representation?

## 1.4 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze cultural representation in Wu-Tang: An American Saga Season 1 using Stuart Hall's theory of cultural representation.