

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the researcher's background explanation, the reason why the researcher is interested in taking the objects and the topic. This chapter also mentions statement of problems, research purposes, research significance, previous studies, and definition of research key terms.

1.1 Background

Slavery is a massive yet sensitive topic. Slavery becomes massive topic since it happened in many parts of the world, for instance Ancient Egypt, Ancient China, Ancient Greece, Roman Empire, Saudi Arabia, even in America. In fact, nobody wants to be born as a slave.

Slavery took part of human civilization history records, thus makes it important after all. Besides, slavery is a sensitive topic as well. Many people in the world know the fact that slavery ever occurred in several countries yet not many people talk about it. Since slavery is a hideous and serious issue, thus it is not a common thing to be a conversation topic. People are usually uncomfortable talking about it because they realize it is a cruel action. People usually feel taboo to talk about it, but again, this ever happened and no one can erase history.

According to Allain (2012, p. 1), slavery is status of person who must be obedient to one or all commands of his owner. There are various things that often connected when talking about slavery such as skin color differences, culture, economy, politic, social class, or combination from all of these. According to Sylvester (1999, p. 154) people whose skin are black considered inferior to people whose skin are white from physical and mental aspects so they are targeted to be slaves by white people.

Slavery may emerge due to the difference of people's economic level. The difference of economic level in society can produce social class, then social class triggers class conflict in that society. Class conflict occurs when there is tension between two antagonistic classes. The two classes here can be the rich and the poor,

freeman and slave, oppressor and oppressed. This a relation between two class which one class exploited while the othe class is exploited.

Slavery is conflict that happend between slave and freeman. Slaves become depending on wage their masters gave just to fulfill their daily needs. Whereas, the economic stability of these "masters" was the result of the hard work of the slaves. As ever happened in America in the 18th century, when some of Americans was aggressively developing their economic through cotton production with the help of black slaves who were mostly Africans. Further, slavery issue is also evidenced by it is discussed in religions. Slavery is discussed in Islam (in the Qur'an and Hadith) and discussed in Christianity (in the Bible). Both of these religions have their own perspectives in seeing slavery issue.

The interesting part is, Islam, the religion brought by *Rosulullooh*, the religion which came when slavery had been being practiced years before, teaches that *Allooh* wants slavery to be abolished in life because it is inhumane, yet we will not find a single text in the Qur'an that is explicitly states that slavery must be abolished (Mulyana, 2011, p. 11). One hadith that mentions about slavery is as follow

“Janganlah salah seorang diantara kalian mengatakan: Hai hamba laki-lakiku,

وَلَا يَقُلْ أَحَدُكُمْ عَبْدِي وَ أُمَّتِي وَ لِيُقُلْ فَتَايَ وَ فَتَاتِي

hai hamba perempuanku, akan tetapi katakanlah: Hai pemudaku (laki-laki) hai pemudiku (perempuan).” [HR. Bukhari No. 2552 dan Muslim No. 2449]

In English, that hadith means “and one should not say, my slave (Abdi), or my girl-slave (Amati), but should say, my lad (Fatai), my lass (Fatati), and 'my boy (Ghulami).” It can be understood from the hadith above implicitly, that *Allooh* insists that human beings must treat each other well. Therefore, during the period of jahilliyah, those who wanted to slavery still existed tend to reject Islam.

In Christianity with its Bible also has its own perspective towards slavery. In the Bible, there is a verse which states that slaves must obey their masters like they obey God, both the masters who are good and cruel, and in another verse, it is also stated that a master must treat his slaves well. Slavery is mentioned in Bible like in Ephesians 6:9, “And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten

them, since you know that he who is both their master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him”. On the other hand, Tyson (2006, p. 59) mentions that Bible has been used to be a *scapegoat* to justify the practice of slavery. The explanation above about slavery was found by researcher in films selected as research objects.

Some slavery cases are raised as theme in literary works. Two of the most famous slavery cases are slavery experienced by Bilal bin Rabah which became a film entitled *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero*, and slavery experienced by Solomon Northup which became a film entitled *12 Years A Slave*. The researcher assumed that the relationship of economic matters, politic, social class, and religion with slavery happened in these films. Thus, these two films are going to be objects of this research.

The first object, *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* is a 2015 animated film produced by Barajoun Entertainment, directed by Ayman Jamal, and done by 250 animators. This film was inspired by Bilal bin Rabah, who was a black man from Habsyah (now Ethiopia) and was enslaved by Umayya in Arab 6th century. This film depicts history of Bilal's twists and turns life who was ever kidnapped when he was child and became a slave until he was adult before being freed by Abu Bakr. Bilal is one of the important figures and is often discussed in Islamic history because he was appointed by the Prophet Muhammad as the first muezzin. Aside from being a film full of Islamic values portrayed by Bilal Bin Rabah himself, this film is also wrapped into an animated film with fine visuals that makes it even more interesting to discuss.

The second object, *12 Years A Slave*, is a 2013 film produced by Regency Enterprises and directed by Steve McQueen. This film is one of the films discussed in Survey of American Literature course in Semester 3. It shows how Americans, specifically in South Americans in 18th century back then, began to develop their economic from agriculture and plantations sector by using slave labor. It is adapted from a memoir *Twelve Years A Slave* by Solomon Northup, a black skinned man who experienced slavery and whose father was ex-slave as well. Knowledge of

American history needs to be known by student of English Literature, so this topic is worth to be elaborated.

These two films which talk about slavery, reminds the researcher to the Comparative Literature study in sixth semester that allows comparing two objects based on its similarities. Thus, based on the explanation above the researcher decided to make this research. The researcher is going to analyze how is slavery portrayed in *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* and *12 Years A Slave* films and their relationship to economic matters, culture, and religion by using Marxism as the literary criticism to support this research.

To conduct this research, the researcher is going to use descriptive analysis to describe how slavery is portrayed in each object. Comparative literature theory is used in this research as well to find similarities and differences between two objects.

1.2 Statement of Problems

Slavery ever happened in various parts of the world including Arab in the 6th century as experienced by Bilal Bin Rabah which this story becomes inspiration a film entitled *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero*. In addition, at different time and place, slavery also happened in America in the 18th century as experienced by Solomon Northup, which became the inspiration behind a film entitled *12 Years A Slave*. Slavery that happened in Arabia and in America must have similarities and differences but in general it might happen due to various reasons such as economic, cultural, and religious issues. Thus, the researcher is interested in comparing slavery in *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* film with slavery in *12 Years A Slave* film through comparative literature and Marxism theory. Thus, based on explanation above, the researcher formulated three statement of problems as follow:

1. What are signs that portray slavery in *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* and *12 Years A Slave* films?
2. How are signs that describe the the relationship of economic, religion, and culture with slavery in *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* and *12 Years A Slave* films?

3. How are signs that describe the struggle of slave to obtain freedom in *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* and *12 Years A Slave* films?

1.3 Research Purposes

Based on the research questions, therefor the researcher focused on:

1. To find out the signs of slavery portrayal in *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* and *12 Years A Slave* films.
2. To find out the signs of the relationship of economic, religion, and culture with slavery in *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* and slavery in *12 Years A Slave*.
3. To find out the signs of the struggle of slave to obtain freedom in *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* and slavery in *12 Years A Slave*.

1.4 Research Significance

The significance the researcher expects from this research is divided into two:

1. Theoretically

The research finding of slavery portrayal from two objects is expected to enrich knowledge about slavery history that ever happened in the world.

2. Practically

In addition, the researcher also expects some practical significance from this research.

- a. The Readers

The researcher hopes this research can provide knowledge related about slavery history in Saudi Arabia society in 6th century and America society in 18th century. The researcher also hopes the reader could learn about comparative literature and Marxism approach.

- b. Other Researchers

The researcher hopes this research gives benefits and becomes reference for other researchers. In addition, the researcher expects the other researchers could do better.

- c. English Literature

Since the researcher applies comparative literature and Marxism approach to conduct this research, therefore the researcher hopes it can give contribution at least for comparative literature and literary criticism courses.

1.5 Previous Studies

The researcher had found several previous studies which either related to the object or the topic. The first one is an Undergraduate Thesis entitled *The Representation of Islamic Values in Bilal: A New Breed of Hero Movie* which was written by Ainun Qurotin. She was an English Literature student of Faculty of Adab and Humanities, State Islamic University of Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. This previous study is related to the object Bilal: A New Breed of Hero film. What distinguishes this previous study with research which is going to be made by researcher is, although the object is Bilal: A New Breed of Hero film, but the topic is different since this previous study discussed the Representation of Islamic Values and not slavery. Besides, this study is also not a comparative literature research.

The second previous study is a journal entitled *Slavery of The Main Character Solomon Northup In The 12 Years A Slave Movie* which was written by Alfred, Muhammad Natsir, and Ririn Setyowati. They are from Faculty of Cultural Studies of Mulawarman University. This previous study is related to the object 12 Years A Slave film. Besides, it also discusses slavery. What distinguishes this previous study with research which is going to be made by researcher is, although the object is 12 Years A Slave film and also discusses slavery, this study is not a comparative literature research and does not discuss Bilal: A New Breed of Hero film at all.

The third is a journal *Perbudakan dalam Pandangan Islam, Hadith and Sirah Nabawiyyah: Textual and Contextual Studies* which was written by Abdul Hakim Wahid. He is a lecture of Ushuluddin Faculty in UIN Jakarta. This previous study is related to the topic slavery through Islamic discourse. What distinguishes this journal with research which is going to be made by researcher is, although it discussed slavery, this is not a comparative literature research and is not even including to literature research. It does not discuss Bilal: A New Breed of Hero film nor 12 Years A Slave film.

The fourth study is an Undergraduate Thesis entitled *Konsep Perbudakan dalam Tafsir Ibnu Katsir Karya Abu Al-Fida'i Isma'il Bin Umar Bin Katsir Al-Quraisy Al-Damsyiqi* which was written by Mulyana. He was *Tafsir Hadits* Programme student of Ushuluddin Faculty, State Islamic University of Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. This study is related to the topic slavery. What distinguishes this previous study with research which is going to be made by researcher is, although it discussed slavery, this is not a comparative literature research and is not even including to literature research. It discussed slavery concept through Ibnu Katsir's interpretation.

The fifth study is a journal entitled *Sastra Sebelah: Perlakuan Film sebagai Film* which was written by Yoga Sudarisman. He is a lecture of Visual Communication Design 'Film Theory' in Telkom University. This study is related to the film object. Because this journal provides explanation about how how to read or understand films through cinematographic elements of film.

The sixth study is an Undergraduate Thesis entitled *Perbudakan dalam Pandangan Mufassir Indonesia* which was written by Khamdatul Aliyati. She was *Tafsir Hadits* Programme student of Ushuluddin Faculty, State Islamic University of Walisongo Semarang. This study is related to the topic slavery. What distinguishes this previous study with research which is going to be made by researcher is, although it discussed slavery, this is not a comparative literature research and is not even including to literature research. It discussed slavery according to Mufassir Indonesia

The seventh study is an Undergraduate Thesis entitled *Pesan Moral dalam Film Animasi "Bilal: A New Breed Of Hero" (Analisis Semiotik Roland Barthes)* which was written by Mukhammad Shodri Rinjani. He was a student of *Komunikasi Penyiaran Islam* programme of State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. This previous study is related to the object Bilal: A New Breed of Hero film. What distinguishes this previous study with research which is going to be made by researcher is, although the object is Bilal: A New Breed of Hero film, but the topic is different since this previous study discussed the Moral Value and not slavery. Besides, this study is also not a comparative literature research.

The eighth study is an Undergraduate Thesis entitled *Analisis semiotik Makna Kebebasan dalam Islam pada Film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* which was written by Deden Ramadhan Amiludin. He was a student of *Komunikasi Penyiaran Islam* programme of State Islamic University of Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. What distinguishes this previous study with research which is going to be made by researcher is, although the object is Bilal: A New Breed of Hero film, but the topic is different since this previous study discussed The Meaning of Freedom in Islam and not slavery. Besides, this study is also not a comparative literature research.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding, in this section the researcher will explain several definitions of words that will often appear in this research thus it becomes clearer and more understandable.

1. Comparative Literature

“Comparative literature involves the study of text across culture, that is it interdisciplinary and that it is concerned with patterns of connection in literature across both time and space.” (Bassnett, 1993, p. 1)

2. Slave

Slaves were considered as property that their owners had the right to possess, enjoy, and whatever way as the owner wish (Bales, 2005, p. 56)

3. Slavery

Slavery happens between at least two people, namely slave and master. It is signed by imbalance power, exploitation, and violence (Bales, 2005, p. 56)

4. Film

According to Bluestone in Eneste (1991, p. 18), film is a combination of a variety of arts such as music, fine arts, drama, literature and wrapped with photography elements.

5. Economic

In Marxism, economic is motive behind all social and political activities, including religion, philosophy, education, government, art, technology, science, media, and so on (Tyson, 2006, p. 54)

6. Religion

According to Cambridge Dictionary online, religion is “the belief in and worship of a god or gods, or any such system of belief and worship.” While Marx (1992, p. 244) defined “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.”

7. Culture

While according to Marx, based on materialist understanding, culture was seen as an epiphenomenal superstructure built upon economic base (Smith, 2001, p. 7)

8. Struggle

According to Cambridge Dictionary online, struggle means “to experience difficulty and make a very great effort in order to do something”

