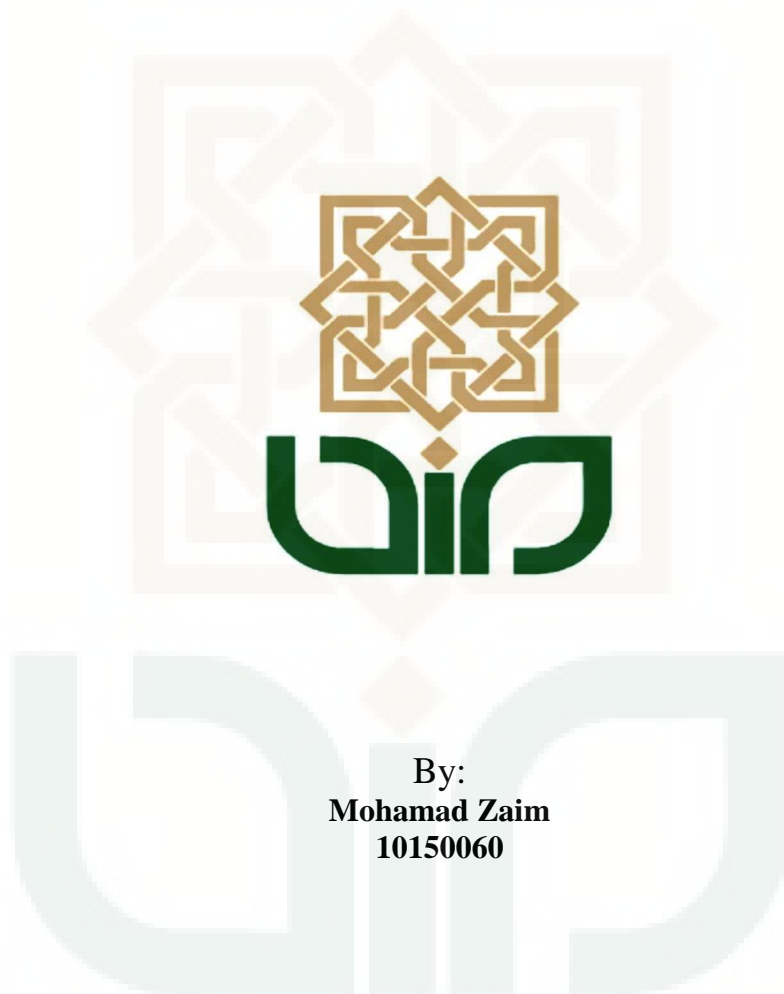


**PLIGHTS OF THE SLAVE’S LIFE AS SEEN IN SOLOMON
NURTHUP OF “12 YEARS A SLAVE” MOVIE**

**A GRADUATING PAPER
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for Gaining the
Bachelor Degree in English Literature**



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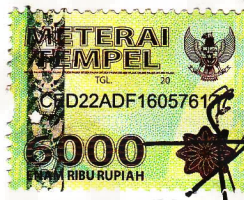
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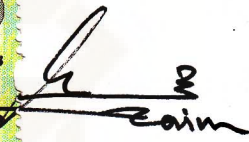
A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this graduating paper is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other writers' opinions or findings included in this graduating paper are quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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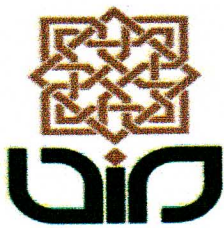
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Kami menyatakan bahwa skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan pada sidang Munaqasyah untuk memenuhi salah satu syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana Sastra Inggris.

Atas perhatiannya, kami ucapkan terima kasih.

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PLIGHTS OF THE SLAVE'S LIFE AS SEEN IN SOLOMON NURTHUP OF "12 YEARS A SLAVE" MOVIE

ABSTRACT

12 Years a Slave movie is the true story of Solomon Nurthup as the main actor in the movie. The movie created by MeC Queen had ever won the best Oscar award in 2014. Solomon that dominated the background story of a slave told the story of his life as a slave in Washington. Spirit and never give up spirit in Solomon was his key to survive in such bondage. Bad treatments to a slave experienced by Solomon were extremely inhumane and full of cruelty and injustice. In this study, the writers limit the analysis to the main character, Solomon. Solomon's spirit and struggle became an important part in this movie and plights experienced by Solomon for being a slave. In this study the author uses the theory of Saussure's structuralism to describe the intrinsic elements contained in the screenplay or movie script about the plights of a slave being experienced by Solomon. In addition, the writer uses descriptive qualitative methods in analyzing the data that refers to a script of the movie. The problem of this analysis is how plights of the slave's life depicted in Solomon are explained. The results from this analysis is that there are eleven plights of a slave who was described in the script of the movie through the study of how a slave was used as a commodity, how a slave was considered as an animal, and how he executed the orders of his employer.

Keywords: *slave, plights, struggle, and life.*

PLIGHTS OF THE SLAVE'S LIFE AS SEEN IN SOLOMON NURTHUP OF "12 YEARS A SLAVE" MOVIE

ABSTRAK

Film *12 Years a Slave* merupakan kisah nyata dari Solomon Nurthup sebagai aktor utama dalam film tersebut. Film yang diciptakan oleh MeC Queen ini pernah meraih penghargaan Oscar award terbaik di tahun 2014. Solomon yang mendominasi latar belakang bercerita tentang kisah hidupnya sebagai budak di Washington. Semangat dan tidak putus asa menjadi kunci Solomon untuk bisa bertahan hidup dalam perbudakan tersebut. Perlakuan-perlakuan buruk terhadap budak yang diperankan oleh Solomon sangat tidak manusiawi dan penuh dengan kekejaman dan ketidakadilan. Dalam studi ini, penulis membatasi analisis ini pada tokoh utama Solomon, karena semangat dan perjuangan Solomon yang menjadi bagian penting dalam film ini dan gambaran-gambaran buruk yang dialami oleh Solomon selama menjadi budak. Dalam studi ini penulis menggunakan teori Strukturalisme dari Ferdinand de Saussure untuk mendeskripsikan unsur-unsur intrinsik yang terkandung dalam naskah film tentang gambaran buruk seorang budak yang dialami oleh Solomon. Selain itu juga, penulis menggunakan metode kualitatif diskriptif dalam menganalisa sebuah data yang merujuk pada sebuah naskah film tersebut. Rumusan masalah dalam analisa ini adalah bagaimana gambaran-gambaran buruk seorang budak yang digambarkan dalam hidup Solomon dijelaskan. Hasil dari analisis ini adalah terdapat sebelas gambaran buruk seorang budak yang terdeskripsikan lewat studi naskah film tersebut tentang bagaimana seorang budak dijadikan sebuah komoditas, bagaimana seorang budak dianggap sebagai hewan, dan bagaimana budak melaksanakan perintah dari majikannya.

Kata Kunci: *budak, gambaran-gambaran buruk, semangat, kehidupan*

MOTTO

INNAMA'AL 'USRI YUSRO

KHOIRUKUM MAN TA'ALAMAL QUR'AN WA 'ALLAMAHU

AL ILMU BILA 'AMALIN KASSAJARI BILA SAMARIN



DEDICATION

I dedicate this graduating paper for
My honorable parents H. Abdul Rosyid and Hj. Rusi
My beloved brothers and sister
and
All of my friends in this world.



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Assalamu'akaikum wr.wb.

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds, who has accompanied and blessed me in writing this graduating paper until the end. All salutation for the noblest prophet and messenger, Muhammad SAW as the best guidance in an entire era.

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I realize that this paper is not a perfect one. Therefore, any suggestions are gladly and warmly welcomed for improving this work.

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Mohamad Zaim

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Literature is a part of human creativities. It is a tool to express people's feeling, idea, thought and sentiment. It is also a medium to give criticisms, views and opinions toward phenomena of social-culture in particular area and age. Indeed, literature as human product contains sensitivity about humanity cases, freedom, even lifestyle. Literature is a cultural product in which the culture of people in particular time is told in the written text as literature. Besides, there is an impression that the word or term 'literature' for Indonesian people contains a concept that does not cause some problems, even though it is never stated in an unequivocal statement. (Soeratno, 1994: 6).

In interpreting and understanding literature, there are three important parts as a golden triangle. There are the writer, the reader, and the literary text itself. The heavy task for readers then is to describe and interpret literary works in clear and rational reasons (Welleck & Warren, 1990: 3). Thus, understanding social culture in the time when literary work itself composed is one of ways to understand the meaning in literary works.

Furthermore, understanding literary works as human product also has to consider the author's ideology or his/her social view which influences his/her work. A literary work will be easier to be interpreted by considering the circumstance of place, and the culture of the writer. Pradopo states that a literary

work does not come from a blank space; it comes dynamically as a response to phenomena of social culture in particular time (2010: 107). Besides, from the concept of interpretation above, there is a concept which the author or writer of literary work is not necessary to be discussed in details. The process of interpretation is only directed to the object of data itself. The way of this interpretation is called objective interpretation.

Recently, the term literature not merely refers to a written text, it grows up dynamically and spreads out into different media such as image, movie, song and film. The widest distribution of the media makes it become an effective tool to promote idea and become parts of human daily consumption. As a medium to promote idea, the existence of a movie becomes important in society. It is part of popular culture. Regarding this phenomenon, Strinati also states that “popular culture itself has to be seen as diverse and varied set of genre, text, images and representation that can be found across a range of different media” (1995:35).

Besides providing the idea and text, a movie also contains audio-visual which is very attractive for the audience. Due to its flexibility, the movie can be analyzed in one field or in the multidisciplinary studies. Through the movie, people can examine all aspects and elements inside. As a cultural product born in the modern day, the movie also presents various ideas, such as modern slavery, human trafficking, racism, etc.

There are many movies that can be analyzed, but the writer chooses *12 Years a Slave Movie* as the object of analysis. This movie is not only interesting, but also very inspiring. This movie talks about Solomon Nurthup, *12 Years a*

Slave. The movie begins with the atmosphere of a city with Black majority, Nigeria. The main character, Solomon Nurthup, is a black (Negro). In the movie story Solomon was an independent Negro who worked as a musician. One day, he met two guys offering the job to take a participation in the circus show. Unfortunately, the offer was fake. Nurthup woke up in a dark room and found himself as a prisoner. He was sold out for being a slave and he had been sent to New Orleans as a slave for plantation. He became a victim of human trafficking.

While being a slave, his name was changed into Platt. He was eventually sold to a plantation owner named Ford. The situation was much more different between the Negro slave and the white skin caste. Ford realized that Platt was not an ordinary slave so he did not want to take a risk then he moved Platt to Edwin Epps. As the victim of human trafficking, Solomon Nurthup was different from other slaves. In any ways, slaves would do anything positively or negatively to get freedom from their master. Solomon Nurthup actually tried to go against the thought of the slave in general. Yet, he followed the obligations and commands ordered by his master. Even, in most dialogs, he seemed to obediently do whatever his master instructed, he did it to survive. As seen in many dialogs, Solomon Nurthup was not passive, he tried to get freedom in different ways. He fought to survive although he showed the master cruelty in punishing the slaves who broke the rules, even they did not hesitate to hang the slaves when the slaves disobeyed the rule. By considering this situation, Solomon Nurthup had a great spirit to survive and then to be free from slavery which trapped his life with his own way.

In addition, this movie has the special point of attraction for audience. This movie gives the audience a moral value and motivation in their life. This movie gives audience the struggle of life and how to face the problem in this world. It is one of the reasons why the writer chooses the movie to analyze in this study. The other reason is that the movie can provide a direct interpretation of displayed audiovisual so it can give a clear understanding for the audiences. The most important point for the writer related to movie study is that life is not just to live but how to get a good life in the world. Based on the reasons, the writer tries to explain the movie in the work of Steve Mc Queen's *12 Years a Slave* with objective approach as seen in Solomon Nurthup character; a slave's life.

In this analysis, the writer focuses on the movie script that describes about the slave's life of Solomon Nurthup in order to get the plights from Solomon's life during slavery. In this research, the writer uses the movie script because the script is one of literary works. The script also provides rich imagination related to the story. The writer applies structuralism theory to analyze the data. The theory is chosen for specific reason that structuralism pays more attention to the general structure of narrative work. Saussure argues that the meaning of text is arbiter and conventional, thus to interpret the text, the interpreter should understand the meaning conventionally (Charter, 2006:42).

The model of interpretation of Saussure firstly introduced text as sign. Saussure divided sign into two, langue and parole. Langue is language system which people all share and it is unconsciously drawn when people speak, while

parole is a language which is actually realized in individual utterance (Charter, 2006:42).

The data in this research is narrative. Thus, the writer pays attention in the model of interpretation of structuralism related to sign, signifier and signified. Signifier is the symbol of the text while signified is the concept conveyed in the signifier (Chaer, 2003:67). The meaning of sign in narrative work is subject that creates conventionally as code to inform its meaning. In Saussure's theory of structuralism, the meaning of signs is created conventionally and arbitrarily. It means there is no logic relation between signifier and signified (Chaer, 2003:67).

Regarding *12 Years a Slave's* script as the data, this movie includes some issues such as racism, culture, and economy. All of them are packed neatly by the writer of the movie so the audience can understand from the beginning to the end. Considering the whole parts of event, attitude, and actions taken by the main actor, the writer decides to discuss about the plights of a slave's life as seen in Solomon Nurthup. Besides, the writer also focuses on the movie script. Through this, the writer can easily break down the data and interpret the text with close reading.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of study, in this research, the writer discusses the following question:

What are plights of a slave's life as seen in Solomon Nurthup of *12 Years a Slave* movie?

1.3 Objective of Study

Related to the research question above, the objective of this research is to explain the plights of a slave's life as seen in Solomon Nurthup.

1.4 Significance of Study

Hopefully, this research is able to give an important point about the plights of a slave's life. Furthermore, this research can be significant for theoretically and practically.

For theoretically, this research can give more explanation about literary works, especially the structuralism analysis of Solomon's life of *12 years a slave* by Steve MeC Queen and also to give a additional information and learning for reader about slavery in the movie. Practically, this research improves our awareness in how cruel slavery is. The victim of slavery is not adult, but also children. The practice of modern slavery increases criminal cases such as human trafficking.

1.5 Literature Review

In this part, the writer presents some prior researches related to this research. The first is Bagus Ardian's research entitled "Human Right Violation in *12 Years a Slave Movie*". Ardian was a student of State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga. In analyzing the data, he used New Criticism theory. His problem statement was "What are human right violations found in the *12 Years a Slave*"

movie?. The object of the study which he analyzed was about human right violation. Based on his research question, he explained about the cases of violations which happened in the movie of *12 Years a Slave* by considering the laws obtaining in that country, UDHR and Preamble United Nation. The whole of violations happening in that movie were based on the laws and preamble of United Nation. Finally he found that there were 12 kinds of violations that happened in the movie of *12 Years a Slave*. In conclusion, he attached some evidents of laws and cases which violated human rights having been written on preamble of United Nation and the laws obtained.

The second research is from Herjuno Widi Yulianto. Yulianto was a student of English Department from Udayana University Bali. He conducted the research entitled "Representation of Racism against Black Man". In his research, Yulianto discussed the racism in the media and movie as the message construction. In his research, Yulianto found that the most influential factor of violence is racism.

The third is an essay entitled *12 Years a Slave: An Essay 2013, A Review*, written by Rachelle M. Turple which describes the terms of history and violence as it relates to enslaving and violating human beings. From her article, she says that Patsey reminded audience that black women existed for three reasons, namely: to labor, to bear commodities and to satisfy the lust and desires of their controllers.

By seeing the prior research above, the writer can conclude that this research has differences and similarities one another. The first research, Bagus Ardian has similarity with the object of study that is the movie. Bagus Ardian uses

new criticism theory to analyze the movie which focuses on human right violations, whereas in this research, the writer, by applying the same theory, describes plights of s slave in the movie. In analyzing this research, the writer focuses on Solomon Nurthup's life as object of research.

Furthermore, the second and third researchers use different theories. They have similarity on the object of study, *12 years a slavery*. This research uses the theory of Structuralism. Whereas Herjuno Widi uses racism which analyzes about the moral value on media; on the other hand, Rachelle M. Turple uses feminism about the definition and level of a woman (Patsey) who has to get life worthy. Based on this prior research mentioned, this paper is the first research that explains and discusses about plights of slave's life as seen in Solomon Nurthup with Structuralism by Saussure, and surely it is different from the other researches above.

1.6 Theoretical Approach

1.6.1 Structuralism

This research applies structuralism theory from Ferdinand De Saussure. The pioneer idea about structuralism as model of interpretation began about interpretation process between signifier and signified. Word, either written or spoken, does not refer directly to the meaning. Then Saussure argued that word is sign, what already written or spoken is signifier and what already thought is signified (Charter,2006:42).

Structuralism brings literature together with language. In A Glossary of Literary Term, Abram said that "As applied in literary studies, structuralism criticism views literature as a second-order system that uses the first-order structural system of language as its medium, and is itself to be analyzed primarily on the model of linguistic theory" (Abrams, 1993:280). It can be concluded that in literary interpretation, the model of linguistic interpretation also can be applied. It means the data analyzed is the internal structure of text itself.

In addition, Strauss also said that structuralism is philosophical understanding that views the world as structured reality (1978:7). As cited in Charter, Straus argued that

“The basic importance of structuralism for a study of literature derives from its interest in underlying structures of sign systems. The assumption is that such structures are even more basic than form, more basic therefore than conventional notions of literary form. Structures are considered as somehow enabling meaning to emerge”

It can be understood that literature that considers work of literature is an autonomous structure. It means there is internal relation concept which states that a literary work is a structure consisting of element that relates one to another. In addition Saussure also said that the model of structuralism interpretation can be applied not only in linguistic form, but also in whole phenomena (Charter, 2006:42)

In the literary interpretation model, structuralism also purposes the idea about the death of author. Structuralism rejects that the author is the originator of text with sole authority in the valid interpretation. Thus, generally structuralism has common idea about interpretation. The author of text is no more than the verbal even takes place and the The reader can therefore approach the text from any direction what so ever, and can interpret the text (the signifier) without respecting intended meaning (the signified)". (2006:102).

Saussure's structuralism emphasizes that the relation between signified and signifier or the relation between text and its meaning is arbitrary system which conventionally used. Thus to interpret the meaning, the author should pay attention to the internal structure of the text itself.

In the development of structuralism then, structuralism divided into several parts such as dynamic structuralism, generic structuralism, narratology structuralism and semiotic. Dynamic structure and genetic structure aim to improve the structuralism which prioritizes the intrinsic element of literature. Yet, genetic structure has more implication in relation to development of human science in general (Ratna, 2009:121).

Saussure's main concept of structuralism is about how to interpret sign through the concept of signifier and signified. These concepts also adapted in semiology that talk about how the sign will be associated with. The meaning of sign from what it stands for called as denotation, and the meaning of sign from what it associated with called as connotation (Charter, 2006:44).

1.7 Method of Research

1.7.1 Type of Research

This paper applies qualitative research in completing the analysis. The focus of this research is a character research where the information data about the movie are needed. The qualitative research focuses on interpretation in which the data are interpreted as well as described. The writer also uses some books dealing with some basic and supporting theories to analyze the subject.

1.7.2 Data Sources

In this research, there are two data, main data and supporting data. The main data are from the script of *12 Years a Slave* movie, the movie itself and some literary theory books related to the data, while supporting data are some books, journals, and other sources that relate to this research.

1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

For this research, the writer uses documentation technique by analyzing the sources that relate to the analysis including *12 Years a Slave* movie script, some related books, and the other sources that related to the research topic. There are some steps to collect the data. The first step is providing the plights in *12 years a slave*. The second steps are describing the plights and interpreting them. The last

step is counting the plights of slavery as the data. Hopefully, this research can develop and enrich the older researches.

1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique

This research is with descriptive analysis. It describes the object in real. It is a suitable technique since the subject of this research is a movie that based on true story. Solomon Nurthup experienced all about a slave's life and treatments shown in the movie. Thus, all of the data are analyzed to get the result and the conclusion about this research. In analyzing data, the writer needs to identify, classify, analyze, and find the conclusion. Therefore, the writer takes the following steps

- a. Identifying : The writer identifies the plights of slave's life as seen in Solomon Nurthup in this movie.
- b. Classifying : The writer classifies the plights of slave's life of Solomon Nurthup according to Structuralism theory by the providing the data, collecting the data, and counting the plights of slave's life of Solomon Nurthup.
- c. Analyzing : The writer analyzes the plights of slave's life by applying structuralism.
- d. Concluding : The writer gives the conclusion from this research.

1.8 Paper Organization

This research is divided into four chapters. The first chapter describes the general information of the research including the background of study, research question, objective of study, significances of study, literature review, theoretical approach, method of research, and paper organization. The second chapter explains the intrinsic elements of the movie. The third chapter is the analysis of data. The last is the conclusion of the research.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

4.1 Conclusion

After analyzing the data, finally the writer concludes some points. This conclusion is based on research questions that how plights of the slave's life as seen in Solomon's life are described. This research uses structuralism as a knife to analyze the data. Thus the writer here focuses only in the data presented in the movie's script. The writer also reads the script deeply in order to understand the meaning of the script.

From the process of analysis, the writer states that first Solomon Nurthup as the main character of the movie was the victim of human trafficking. Solomon was an example in the slavery era, there were many cases related to human trafficking. Secondly, this movie presents plights of a slave's life in detail; starting from how a slave could be traded as commodity, how the slave was an animal in human body and how he should obey the order from his master. Thirdly, a slave would be a slave forever. He/she had no right even for his/her own life, indeed the slave would be dangerous for his/her master when he/she could read or write. Fourthly, this movie expresses the practice of slavery in American history. How the slave in American country held a lot of contributions either in economic, politic or civil movements.

The final point in this movie is Solomon's spirit and smart thinking to face his life through the poor slavery boundary. The adaptation process when he lived

as a slave and a rude environment around him made Solomon think smarter and more careful in making certain decision. At the end, he successfully found the educated way to free from slavery that was writing a letter for freedom to his friend by the help of Mr. Bass.

Furthermore, this research also has a relation with integration and interconnection to Islamic studies. As one of great literary works, a movie is not presented for merely to be entertainment but also to be an educative tool for the audience. Here, the movie carries much more moral values that can inspire the audience to live their lives.

At least, there are two points that the writer takes regarding the educative moral values found in *12 Years a Slave*, they are spirit and believe (do not be easy to get despair). These values are proven by Solomon's word "It is not just a life, it is about how to survive". These words prove that the main character of this movie has the great personality to achieve the success in his life, the success that he dreamt for long time. In line with this, there is a verse in Qoran:

فَأَنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

"So, verily, with every difficulty, there is relief" (Al-Insyiraq:05)

Moreover, the attitude of believing and not easy to feel in despair are the great moral values for daily life. Both of them are the good attitudes that will bring goodness for human as seen in Solomon's story when he suddenly felt that all his efforts were useless. Solomon had tried many different ways in many times. After a while, he realized that he had to wake up one more to get himself free. In Islamic view, there is recommendation for Muslim to set up the slave

freely. There are many efforts from Al-Quran that suggest abolition of slavery. One of the ways is through expenditure from rich man to set slavery free that is as stated in Surah Al-Taubah verse 60:

"انما الصدقات للفقراء والمساكين والعاملين عليها والمؤلفة قلوبهم وفي الرقاب والغارمين وفي سبيل الله وابن السبيل فريضة من الله والله عليم حكيم"

“Zakah expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed to collect (Zakah), and for bringing hearth together [for Islam] and for freeing captives [or slaves] and for those in dept and for the cause of Allah and for the [stranded] traveler-an obligation [imposed] by Allah. And Allah is knowing and wise” (Al-Taubah: 60).

This verse states clearly that Islam suggests to abolish slavery. One of the ways which can be gained is from expenditure. However, although slavery is exist in classical Islamic society, but Islamic rules try to reduce it through many ways. One of the ways is from expenditure.

4.2. Suggestion

Discussing about slavery and its cruelty never ends if human trafficking cannot be stopped. And it is not easy from time to time to deal with this issue. *12 Years a Slave* movie is one of movies talking about this issue. The writer thinks that plights of a slave’s life as seen in Solomon Nurthup is only one of plenty topics to discuss. There are many aspects that can be analyzed and discussed from the movie, such as history of slavery through the movie by using Marxism, psychoanalysis of Freud in Characters in the movie, and others.

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