This research discusses the representation of slavery system in Thailand in Margaret Landon’s *Anna and the King of Siam* published in 1944. In this research there are two research questions. The first question is about how the slavery system is described in the novel. The second question is about how the impacts of slavery system abolishment in Thailand is described in the novel. This research is qualitative research. Documentary method is also used in this analysis. This research is analyzed by using Alan Swingewood’s sociology of literature theory. From the analysis, it can be concluded that Margaret Landon through the novel wants to show that Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia which is never colonialized by colonizer, in fact the country is colonialized by themselves through the slavery system. The representation shows that the upper class can control someone by wealth and power.

**Keywords:** Representation, Slavery System, Alan Swingewood, Sociology of Literature.
**Introduction**

Thailand (Mueang Thai) is a country in Southeast Asia which is bordered to the east by Laos and Cambodia, to the south by Malaysia and Siam Bay, and to the west by Myanmar and Andaman Ocean. The meaning of “Thai” is “freedom” in Thai language. It is called as “the land of freedom” because Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia which is never colonized by colonizer. Even though the meaning of Thailand is the land of freedom, it does not mean that this country is free from slavery system. In fact, slavery happened in Thailand before 19th century. According to merriam-webster dictionary “slavery is condition in which one human being is owned by another.”([http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/slavery](http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/slavery)).

Anna and the King of Siam was a novel written by Margaret Dorothea Mortenson, usually called Margaret Landon, in 1944. Anna was the main character in the novel. She was presented as a trail young English widow who went in the 1860s as a governess to the court of King Mongkut of Siam. She succeeded to give her idealism about freedom, democracy and the rights of the individual to the crown prince, Chulalongkorn, who would reign his father in being a King. Chulalongkorn says, “Mem cha, if I live to reign over Siam, I shall reign over a free and not an enslaved nation.” (Landon, 1944: 353).

He promised Anna to free the nation from slavery system if he became a King. In 1868, he became King of Siam. He abolished slavery and introduced many social and educational reforms to his Siamese people. He also abolished the old custom such as prostrated in front of the King, the application of the rights of Thai people to the land ownership. The story of Anna Leonwens based on true story. The story is based on Anna’s memoirs when she came in the Siamese Court to teach the royal family until she left Siam. It is a true and moving story of kings, princes and concubines, of their children and slaves.

The explanation above discussed that Margaret Landon through Anna and the King of Siam represents the slavery system and the impacts of slavery system abolishment in Thailand. The slavery would be abolished in the reign of King Chulalongkorn. Therefore, the representation perspective used in this research is taken from Alan Swingewood’s sociology of literature theory. His book entitled: “Sociology of Literature”.

Bogdan (1975:5) states that qualitative method is a research procedure that produces descriptive data such as written words or verbal expression from the people and their behaviors that have been observed. Thus, this research is qualitative because the data analyzed are in the form of words, not numerical data.

In order to collect the data, documentary method is used in this research as the technique of collecting data. Blaxter et al (2006: 154) states that documentary method is a method in collecting data by using written materials as a basic for the research. Therefore, the data in this research are devided into two kinds. They are primary data and secondary data. The primary data of this research are facts and information related to the slavery system and the impacts of slavery system abolishment issues in Margaret Landon’s novel entitled Anna and the King of Siam. This research also uses the secondary data to strengthen the arguments in analysing the primary data. The secondary data are any facts and information about history of slavery system in Thailand. The secondary data are taken from books, journals, and articles.

In this research, There are two steps in analyzing this research. The first step, Alan Swingewood’s sociology of literature theory is used to find the slavery system in Thailand in 1862 represented in the novel. The theory is used as a framework, specifically the social phenomena and perspective, to make the general description about slavery system in Thailand in 1862. In addition, this theory is also used to support that literature stands as a mirror of age and reflects the situation of social phenomena. Thus, this step is used to answer the first question of this research. Based on the finding of the representation, the second step leads to the understanding on the impacts of slavery system abolishment in the novel. Both explanations related to slavery system in Thailand in 1862 and the impact of slavery system abolishment are juxtaposed between the condition in the novel and in reality. So that, this step is used in order to answer the second question of this research.

**Discussion**

In this analysis, the representation focuses on two aspects: slavery system and the impacts of slavery system abolishment in Thailand. Slavery system is represented through the slave L’Ore who wants to redeem herself from slavery.

“I was seized, gagged, bound hand and foot, and brought back to this place. I was taken into the presence of my mistress, she ordered
me chained to this post. Here I was chained until my time came and my child was born. A month after his birth I was chained here again, and my child was brought to me to nurse. “I could free myself from these chains if I would promise never to quit the Palace”. (Landon, 1943: 160)

Through the quotation above, it is evidence that a slave L’Ore who tried to escape would get a punishment of whipped and chained. According to the law in Siam, there were rules that prevented the escaping slaves. In Siam that had a relatively strong government in the 19th century, could not prevent the slaves fled into the wilderness hinterland. If a slave in his escape had married an independent person then he/she remained a slave until he had children. If the children were born by those who were still slaves then their child would be the property of the owner because this child status was a slave. It was reported frequently that they sold themselves or their wives and children to rich people, especially in difficult times. If the debt was not paid, the debtor had to give himself to be a servant of the creditor.

If a slave worked and received salary for his work to pay the debt, it would be referred to the interest of the loan. The work was considered as the unpaid loan. The debt was not necessarily diminished by over time and generally permanent, so the bonds of servitude passed down from parents to their children. “My parents were Mohammedans, slaves of the father of my mistress, Chao Chom Manda Ung. When we were very young, my brother and I were sent as slaves to her daughter, Princess Butri.” “My parents sold themselves to my mistress’ grandfather!” (Landon, 1943: 151)

The quotation explains that if a person who has a debt to the debtor, he has to pay to serve a lifetime, including the entire family. It shows that the slaves can redeem themselves but need the difficult process. Slaves will be passed down through the generations by generations to the employers who provide the loan. The debt-slave is a major form of bondage, so this emphasizes from physical force to financial pressure. In Siam, the bondage of loan was predominant because they would serve voluntarily and needed money.

The economic condition explained the reason why this subject was forced selling themselves or their family. Freeman states “Debt-slaves have always been able to redeem themselves, though the process was made so difficult that few succeeded in doing so…” (1910: 100).

“That was their debt, which they have paid over and over again by their faithful service. You can insist that your mistress accept your purchase money.” (Landon, 1943: 152)

It can be concluded that even though the Siamese slaves had paid their debt on serving over and over again, their debt was considered to be unpaid, thus they sold the member of family and served for the lifetime. Their debt came from the economic problem, famine, and poverty that they had experienced for a long time. The economic condition became the reason why the people of Siam was forced selling themselves or their family into bondage. Their fear about the poverty and famine pushed this subject to debt to the rich people for accomplishing their need.

In Siam, the slaves were forbidden to marry with free people. Reid states that the employer was expected to provide a pair of slaves and the children will remain bound to the employer who has provided all costs, including for dowry (2004: 250).

Slavery in Thailand which is described in the novel Anna and the King of Siam talks about a slave named L’Ore. She was born by slaves and would still become a slave for her lifetime although she married to independent man.

In the reign of King Chulalongkorn, he abolished slavery system slowly and organized a better system of government. King Chulalongkorn stated that Siam should be free from slavery. The young King Chulalongkorn governed wisely. He saw that the Siamese would not have a future if they were still not free from slavery. Slowly, the young king fixed the government system of Siam.

Every slave consisted of children, women, and men would be released. Taxes would be used to pay the rulers that lost their slaves. Because of this declaration, slavery system in Siam was abolished.

The King also built schools throughout the kingdom. Everyone was entitled to a decent education with no exception for servants and the nobles. The missionaries also supported the building of hospitals and schools. Transportation facilities also increased. All government systems were reorganized. For this reason, the residents regard King Chulalongkorn as the Great Modernizer.
Conclusion

Margaret Landon’s novel entitled *Anna and the King of Siam* which was written in 1927 and published in 1944 represents the slavery system in Thailand. The slavery system represented through the slave L’Ore who wants to redeem herself from slavery. Slavery in Thailand is a reflection of a social condition that exists in a particular society and a particular era.

The highest levels of Thai society is the king who has the highest authority and has a full control over his slaves. People voluntarily sell themselves to become a slave caused by the problem of the economic sector. In other word, slavery in Siam is a part of the social system, which participates fully in two ways: to control the people with wealth, power and the need to have a high level of protection of the group.

A slave is a major commodity for an employer that can be traded and exploited because they are from a low caste. The slaves also add the prestige and power of the nobles and the merchants when dealing with the palace. To abolish slavery is needed a renewal system that can guarantee the life of the surrounding community.

Slavery could be abolished by the reformation system. To modernize his country, the king abolished slavery and introduced many social and educational system. Everyone has the rights to get education and proper work in order to get a better future. The change must be in all aspects that lead to the modernization.

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