A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THAI AND MALAY SHORT STORIES WRITTEN BY REGIONAL WRITERS FROM SOUTHERN THAILAND AND NORTHERN MALAYSIA

NUREEYAN SALEH

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Abstract

This thesis offers a comparative examination of short stories written by writers from southern Thailand and northern Malaysia, namely Phaithuun Thanyaa, Kanokphong Songsomphan, S. Othman Kelantan and Azizi Haji Abdullah. The texts have been analyzed within the framework of comparative and reception approaches to highlight the similarities and differences between Thai and Malay short stories. An attempt has been made to identify their respective unique qualities. This study asserts that the authors use their work as a means of communicating an account and portrayal of the particular identities of southern Thailand and northern Malaysia and, more generally, of their countries as a whole. The regions of southern Thailand and northern Malaysia are chosen because of their particular political, social and historical interaction. Moreover, the short stories are chosen because, in both countries, they are used as a vehicle of self-expression and of social criticism. Furthermore, this study also shows that Thai and Malay writers are influenced by their oral tradition and the didactic aims of producing literary works.

This study comprises six chapters including an introduction and a conclusion. All chapters will address the significance of regional factors found in Thai and Malaysian short stories. Among the regional issues which form an element of this study are history, politics, religions, animistic beliefs, and ethnic perceptions. In conclusion this thesis contends the significance of the region as writers' source of inspiration yet the regional problems they have raised reflect the authors' commitment to their national society and religion and their sensibilities towards their national culture.

Table of Contents

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To the memory of my late parents
Fatimah Maidin Ghouse
and
Abdullah Saleh

Notes on Thai Transliteration

There are various systems for writing Thai in roman letters, each with its own advantages. This study uses the following:

Consonants

Vernacular	Romanization when initial medial	Romanization when final	Sound (approximate) as in
บ	b	p	บ้าน (baan)
ป	p	p	ป่า (paa)
พ,ผ,ภ	ph	p	พาน (phaan)
ต	t	t	ตก (tok)
ท,ธ,ถ,ฒ,ฑ,ฐ	th	t	ฐาน (thaan)
จ	j	t	จำ (jam)
ฉ,ช	ch	t	ฉิ่ง (ching)

Other sounds (such as 'm', 'r', 'l') are not included in this list as they are not significantly different from the English.

Vowels and Diphthongs

Vernacular	Romanization	Sounds (approximate) as in
อะ, อั	a	ปะ (pa)
อา	aa	ปา (paa)
อำ	am	ตำ (tam)
อิ	i	คิด (khit)
อี	ii	สี (sii)

อึ	eu	พรึก (phreuk)
อื	eu	หนังสือ (nangseu)
อุ	u	ผุ (phu)
อู	uu	พู่ (phuu)
เอะ , เอ็	e	เปะปะ (pepa)
เอ	ay	เซ (say)
แอะ, แอ็	ae	แพะ (phae)
แอ	ae	แสบ (saep)
โอ	o	โน (no)
เอาะ	or'	เสาะหา (sor'haa)
ออ	o'	ดอกไม้ (do'kmaai)
เออะ	euk	เจอะเจอ (jeukjoe)
เออ, เอิ	oe	เจอ, เปิง (joe), (poeng)
เอีย	ie	เพลีย (phlie)
เอือ	eua	เบื่อ (beua)
อัว	ua	รวม (ruam)
โอย	ooi	โรย (rooi)
ออย	o'y	คอย (kho'y)
เอา	ao	เขา (khao)
อาว	aaw	ข้าว (khaaw)
อาย	aai	ชาย (chaai)
ใอ, ไอ, อัย, ไอย	ai	ไหม้ (mai)
อุย	ui	ปุกปุย (pukpui)
เอย	oei	เสย (soei)

อวย	uai	รวย	(ruai)
อิว	iu	สิ	(siu)
เอ็ว	eo	เร็ว	(reo)
เอว	eow	เลว	(leow)
แอว	aew	แมว	(maew)
เอียว	iew	เคียว	(khiew)

The English spellings of authors' names reflect their own preference if it is known; otherwise, I have used the spelling that seems most reasonable to me.

Introduction

This study aims to compare Thai and Malaysian short stories produced by writers from southern Thailand and northern Malaysia to examine the role of the authors, the distinctive characteristics their writings share, and the regional and national affairs on which they comment. Such investigation poses the questions: what is the place of the region in the mainstream of modern Thailand and Malaysia's national literatures, and to what extent do writers play a significant role. No less important are the questions of how the writers perceive their regions, and what kind of content they inscribe in their works. The relationship between region and nation (periphery and centre) is also integral to an understanding of their writing career and their texts.

The comparative study is chosen here because, firstly, no comparative study of Thai and Malaysian short stories has been done by either Western or local literary academics; secondly, to support the Thai government's educational policy on comparative South East Asian studies; and thirdly, to contribute to the field of South East Asian comparative literature in general and to Thailand and Malaysia in particular.

I have chosen to concentrate on those two regions due to four main reasons. Firstly, it is due to my own knowledge and familiarity with those regions. Secondly, they are close neighbours. Thirdly, those regions are borderlands where cultural interaction amongst people from different ethnic groups—Malay, Chinese, Thai, Indian and Arab—occur all the time. Finally, there has always been a long historical relationship, political conflict and power struggle between the Thais and Malays to control the regions, and these matters are reflected in the fiction of present-day Thailand and Malaysia.

With regard to fictional genres, the short story is selected due to its distinct nature. As Ammons and Rohy (1999:xviii) point out, the "short story was the most common expression of regionalism" and, Reid's terms, "seemed especially suitable for the portrayal of regional life, or of individuals who, though situated in a city, lived there as aliens" (1977:24). Taking their viewpoint, I believe that the short stories written by the writers, who were born, grew up and might live in the region or have moved to the capital, will provide the reader with two literary characteristics—those

of regional and national literature. This will be done by giving special attention to the texts which discuss and present images and problems of the regions chosen, such as the themes of history, politics, religions and local beliefs, ethnic conflicts both at the regional and national levels. Moreover, I have chosen the short story because it has been a significant literary, political and cultural instrument both in Thai and Malaysian societies. This is a result of the fact that Thai and Malaysian short stories have grown and developed in relation to social, political and economical development and changes, and writers use short stories as a medium of self-expression to expose the on-going issues found in their societies.[1] To some extent this study is expected to promote the Thai and Malaysian literatures of the four writers in an inter-regional and international literary arena. It also addresses audiences who are involved in the study of Thai and Malaysian literatures individually or comparatively in national or South East Asian literary contexts.

This study also attempts by bringing out the relationships among the texts, authors and the regional matters which are the authors' concern to highlight the similarities and differences of the Thai and Malaysian literatures. An attempt has been made to keep a balance between the study of literature as art, and also as a reflection of Thai and Malaysian literary characteristics and societies. The texts have been examined in relation to the socio-political environment that has produced them which I hope to evolve as a model for thematic studies in the Thai and Malaysian context and also arrive at a better understanding of some of the common concerns of Thai and Malaysian literatures and their authors.

Organisation of the study

This study is divided into six chapters. The Introduction addresses the rationale and the framework of the study. This is followed by Chapter One which provides the theoretical ground and outlines the methodology upon which this thesis is based. This chapter also compares the characteristics of Thai and Malaysian cultures, and the significance of regional elements in Thai and Malaysian literatures. Chapter Two focuses on the backgrounds of the authors, and on the intellectual

[1]For further details see Appendix I.

associations to which they belong and which influence their works. Chapter Three provides an analysis of historical and political issues in the short stories to assert the regional and national concerns of the writers. Chapter Four studies the reflection of local religions and beliefs in the short stories to highlight the popular interpretation and practises of these religions and beliefs in animism and superstition. Chapter Five provides an analysis of ethnic identities found in the short stories to review how expressions of 'otherness' have been created by the centre as a view of the region, i.e. by the majority over a minority group. Chapter Six focuses on gender relations to reveal the level of inequality experienced by Thai and Malay women within a male dominated society as depicted by male writers. Finally, the conclusion suggests how this study is able to reveal the unique contribution made by writers to regional, national and intra-regional literatures.

Chapter One

Literature in the National Context

Introduction

This chapter has four principal concerns; firstly, to discuss literary theories which are relevant to the work of this study, secondly, to show the place of Thailand and Malaysia in general and southern Thailand and northern Malaysia in particular in the field of comparative literature, thirdly, to present local views on the use of national and regional characteristics in Thai and Malaysian short stories, and fourthly, to identify characteristics elements of southern Thailand and northern Malaysia—the home regions of the selected authors of this study and also the regions of which mainly form the background of the short stories.

The Selection of Thai and Malaysian Writers

In this study the regional writers are writers from the regions of southern Thailand and northern Malaysia. Two writers from each country have been chosen as the representatives of each country and each region. From Thailand are Phaithuun Thanyaa and Kanokphong Songsomphan, and from Malaysia S. Othman Kelantan and Azizi Haji Abdullah. I selected these, firstly, because all of them are recognised as national and international writers, having achieved success as international S.E.A. Write Awardees.[1] Secondly, their works have played a significant role in the construction of the national literature and identity of their respective countries. More significantly, all of them have experience of living along the border of these two nations. To some extent, this study hopes to look comparatively how writers of both countries present the national and regional matters in their short stories.

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[1]The S.E.A. Write Award is a Thailand national literary prize. This literary prize was first held in 1973 by the Oriental International Hotel in order to give awards to the best Thai and ASEAN writers every year, in hoping to promote Thai and ASEAN literary works in the area of international literature (Nittaya 1993:8-17).

Theoretical Concerns

Both Thai and Malay literary scholars argue that the word 'literature' and the field of literary criticism derive from the West. These terms are still relatively new and were introduced into the South East Asian region as a field of study only in the twentieth century. Muhammad Haji Salleh (2534:234-5) views that:

> "Malay literary theories...do not appear in the form of treatises, discussions or hypotheses. We have not uncovered even one document that has outlined, described or treated in an extended discussion the concept of literary creation, the status and function of the author, text, and audience. Literary aesthetics was and is practised, but was never defined."

Bunleua Thephayasuwan, a Thai scholar, also viewed that "A Thai literary theory has not been found yet" (Bunleua 1986:73) and "...literary criticism in Thailand can be said that it is still in the embryonic step" (Bunleua 2000:11). They believe that their literatures should be studied by taking account of the context within which those literatures are produced because "each literature is written from its worldview, from its ethno-perspective, whether the author realises it or not and it is only right and fair that they should be studied in the relation to their fundamental values" (Muhammad 2000:234-5), "...social and historical backgrounds that literature is produced" (Bunleua 2000:10).

However, this does not mean that Muhammad and Bunleua reject Western literary theory and criticism. They have a positive attitude towards Western literary theory. This is because they recognise that there is a lack of definition of their literature, coupled with a lack of literary treatises which discuss the concept of literature and the role and function of the author, the text and the reader as a field of study. Thai and Malay literary scholars therefore see the advantages of applying Western literary theory to the study of their own national literature. In addition, many other literary scholars prove that Western literary criticism and theory such as comparative approach, sociology, psychology, post-structuralism, feminism, reception and post-colonial theory are able to be applied to the study of South East Asian literature. Fore example, in a comparative field, A. Wahab Ali's *The emergence of Novel in Modern Indonesian and Malaysian Literature* (1991) compares the formation of modern Indonesian and Malaysian novels from a historical perspective,

while Sahlan Mohd Saman (1984, 1985) is interested in the theme of war. He compares the war novels of Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines by using the interdisciplinary theories of history, psychology, sociology and aesthetics. Krishanam Maniam (1993) compares Tamil and Malay short stories by making use of structuralism and viewing how literary texts relate to their historical, political and sociological contexts. Thelma B Kintanar (1988), a Filipino literary scholar, also uses the themes of individualism, alienation and exile, and social class in comparing South East Asian literatures. Since such themes are related to sociology, she uses a sociological approach to analyze the texts.

For women writers and the feminist approach, two works are pertinent: the first is Lisbeth Littrup's, *Changing Concept of Identity in Malay Literature after 1957: an Analysis of the Short Stories of Five Malay Women Writers* (1997) in which 'cultural feminist theory' is applied to analyse Malay women's writing. The other is Rachel Harrison's, *Writing and identity in the Short Stories of Sidaoru'ang (1975-1990)* (1995) in which the literary theories of post-structuralism, feminism, psychoanalysis and reception are used to analyse the texts within the Thai cultural context. This work shows the interaction or interdependence between a writer's own identity and the social, political, and psychological contexts in which works are produced.

No less important for this study is post-colonial theory which also attracts South East Asian literary scholars and westerners to analyse Malay literature of the post-independent era. It is not only because Malaysia used to be colonised, but because the theory itself discusses many issues which are related to the situation of Malaysia after independence, such as race-relations, the relationship between coloniser-colonised, cultural adjustment among immigrants, nation-building, gender issues, poverty, education, and political injustices. Post-colonial theory also analyses the context in which literature is produced, and is applicable to modern Malaysia. Zawiah Yahya (1988), a Malaysian literary critic, studies the Malay post-colonial novel in English in order to take a look at the Malay characters depicted by non-Malay writers in an attempt to establish whether the image is a true picture or bad reproduction. The study combines the literary analysis of characterization with a sociological analysis of Malay society, both in fiction and in reality. Lily Rose Roxas-

Tope (1998) compares post-colonial literature of the novel and poetry in English of Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines by focusing on nationalistic issues such as the role of English language, the effects of imperial domination on literature written after independence, and the formation of cultural identity.

With recognition of Thailand and Malaysia's literary characteristics and the advantage of Western literary theory, this study will not select the validity of one kind of critical theory or approach. As previously mentioned, South East Asian literature in general, and Thai and Malay literature in particular, can best be understood and appreciated through an interpretative approach that involves the consideration of South East Asian literary traditions and their individual national contexts (such as society, history, politics and economics). This study has therefore relied predominantly on three kinds of materials: firstly, the literary texts of short story, which is the broad source of this study; secondly, some commentaries on these texts produced by both local and Western literary scholars which are helpful in seeing different textual interpretation; and finally, interviews with the selected authors, academics and writers as well as the autobiographical documents. I believe that all these materials provide useful in-depth information to place the text as a product of its historical, social and cultural contexts and to investigate the interaction between text-author-reader in the process of literary production, and the writers' aspiration.

This study also makes use of some Western literary theories and other related fields such as sociology, anthropology and history to analyse, criticise and interpret the texts. One of these literary theories is post-colonial theory. When this is applied to Thai literature, one might raise the question whether modern Thai literature could be in the category of post-colonial text as Thailand is not a former colony. At this point I would not place modern Thai literature in the position of post-colonial writing but as literature which contains elements that can be found in post-colonial writing of the former Western colonies. This idea comes from the definition of post-colonial theory and the critical models of post-colonial literature suggested by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (1989) which can be applied to any national literatures, which are impacted by Western powers.

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin define the term post-colonial theory "to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day" (1989:2). Although Thailand was not formally colonised by a Western power, the country had been threatened by Western imperialism. The evidence lies in

the fact that Thailand lost its territories in the north and the south to the British and in the northeast to the French during the era of colonialism so as to maintain the major integrity of the nation. Thailand had to become westernised to preserve its independence, politically, culturally and spiritually. The country had also faced a crisis of identity, which was threatened by the West, since the time of King Rama IV (King Mongkut) and continuing into the period of Phibun's leadership. As a dictator, Phibun proclaimed the 'cultural mandates' (รัฐนิยม) forcing Thais to dress in Western style, as well as simplifying the spelling of the language without caring for the Pali or Sanskrit roots (Sulak 1991:13-26). In the era of globalisation and through the widespread presence of Western media, present-day Thailand has become more westernised which means that the Thai identity has still been threatened by the West.

Considering the critical models of post-colonial literature suggested by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989), modern Thai and Malaysian literature can be studied comparatively in the contexts of national and regional models, wider comparative models of thematic parallels, and the binary opposition of 'coloniser and colonised' or 'dominated and dominating', and the models of hybridity and syncreticity.

The first model, national and regional, focuses on the development of particular national literature and the collective elements which each national literature shares within a particular region. It is useful and essential to a comparative study across the boundaries of language, nationality, and race as viewed by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffins (1989:17). In their words:

> "The development of national literatures and criticism is fundamental to the whole enterprise of post-colonial studies. Without such developments at the national level, and without the comparative studies between national traditions to which these lead, no discourse of post-colonial could have emerged. Nor is it simply a matter of development from one stage to another, since all post-colonial studies continue to depend upon national literatures and criticism" (ibid.:17).

Therefore, Thai and Malaysian literatures fall into this category as their literature developed within South East Asian oral tradition, national tradition and the particular socio-political determinants.

Thai and Malaysian literatures can also be placed in the second model of thematic parallels, for example, ethnicity and identity, alienation, exile, gender relations and the power relations of 'coloniser' and 'colonised'. It is noteworthy that the imperial-colonial dialectic model can be applied to Thai literature because a colonial-style relationship existed in Thailand. Although Thailand is not a former colony, historically the Thai king used to exercise an imperial role over his neigbouring countries i.e. Laos and the northern Malay states, and over certain ethnic groups such as the Chinese, Malays, Indians and indigenous ethnic groups within the nation. In modern Thai history the country used to be under dictatorial governments; Field-Marshall Plaek Phibuunsongkhraam, Sarit Thanarat and Thanom Kitikhajorn held power for the decades that led up to the student uprising of October 1973 and the subsequent bloodshed of October 1976. In addition, the governing system of centralisation practised in Thailand can be interpreted through the lens of internal colonialism in which the central government rules over the provincial areas. Its power can be interpreted in terms of 'coloniser' and 'colonised' relations as well.

At present, the Thai central government controls the provinces. Nation-building is formed through the eyes of central government and leaves provincial concerns such as language, literature and culture as minor to the centre, classifying such as local languages/dialects, local/regional literature and folk culture. This policy of centralization stimulates the sense of regionalism in every part of Thailand to ask for equality in diversity. Race relations are implicit, especially for Thai citizens from the south who are of Malay descent and cannot be completely assimilated and integrated into mainstream Thai Buddhist-culture, sometimes leading to a feeling of alienation (see Surin 1985:270-1).

Thongchai Winichakul (2000:40-1), a Thai historian, is among the first to have noted the applicability of post-colonial theory to analyse Thai literary text in the context of power relations of the coloniser–colonised, and the racial relations of 'us' and the 'others within' the nation of Thailand. He analyses the Thai play *Ngo'Paa* (เงาะป่า), written by King Chulalongkorn (1906), as his source of ethnographic studies to illustrate that Thailand also played a role as an imperialist/colonialist within the nation by categorizing the Sakai, the indigenous peoples in the jungles of southern Thailand, as forest/wild people.

By contrast to Thailand, post-colonial issues are obviously seen in Malaysia as applying to a former colony. Malaysia has also faced the problem of nation-building, racial conflict, and the search for national identity. The Malay have been successful in rejecting English and placing Malay as their national language. European literary tradition and literary assessment are carefully chosen by Thai and Malay literary scholars to do justice to their literature. Malaysian literature in English is marginalised as a sectional literature not a national one, which is still controversial among writers of non-Malay races in the sense of alienation and implicit racial discrimination. This issue suggests that the sense of the 'others within' does exist in Malaysia.

Thai and Malaysian literature can also be studied comparatively in terms of hybridity and syncreticity models. Mattani Rutnin (1978:4) argues that "modern Thai literature, perhaps more than any other of the arts, has undergone and is still going through such a process of synthesizing Western and Thai cultures". It could be argued that even though modern Thai literature did not emerge from within the imperial process, as mentioned by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989:2), it possesses the characteristics of hybridity and syncreticity like any other South East Asian country whose literature developed out of the combination of South East Asian and Western literary traditions.

Post-colonial theory appears useful here for the comparative study of South East Asian literature since:

> "the idea of 'post-colonial literary theory' emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing. European theories themselves emerge from particular cultural traditions, which are hidden by false notions of 'the universal'. Theories of style and genre, assumptions about the universal features of language, epistemologies and value systems are all radically questioned by the practices of post-colonial writing. Post-colonial theory has proceeded from the need to address this difference within the various cultural traditions as well as the desires to describe in comparative ways the features shared across those traditions" (Ashcroft et al 1989:11).

Although post-colonial theory is also a Western theory, it is considered by local literary scholars as one of the most suitable theories to be used as a tool to analyse and criticise their literary texts. This is because post-colonial theory derives from an attempt to place literature of non-European literary tradition into the

international level, the same as of the European literature and to reject the Western idea of universality of literature of different cultures in order to make Western literary critics recognise the diversity of literature originating from different cultures and to evaluate literature from the culture that the literature is produced.

Thai and Malaysian Literature in a Comparative Framework

This study is based on three main observations: firstly, the location of South East Asia as a literary cross-roads of the whole Asia; secondly, the shortage of existing research of a comparative nature; and thirdly, the Thai government's promotion of South East Asian studies in order to understand each other's culture and literature.

South East Asia as a Region of Contemporary Study

Both local and Western scholars deem South East Asia as a highly valuable region for comparative study. Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (1987:14-57), an Indonesian scholar, proposes the Malay name *Bumantara* for the region, which is derived from the acronym of the words *Bumi* (land) and *Antara* (in between). This differentiates the people and land of South East Asia from those of China and India. It also serves to emphasise the precise location of the region, in between the great civilizations of China in the East and India in the West, in between the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and in between the great continents of Asia and Australia. South East Asia is a land of diversity and similarity in differences. Its people are divided by their diverse ethnic cultures, each with its own language. On the other hand, the various cultures and languages also express many common traits, which unify them and distinguish them from their neighbours—the Indian, Chinese, Melanesian and Polynesian peoples. Distinctively, people in this region have experienced many ethnic intermixtures for hundreds and thousand of years, making it a land of multiethnicity.

Vladimir Braginsky (2000:1-14) also holds the same view as Sutan Takdir Alisjabana, pointing out that the regional identity of South East Asia is unique and represents an extremely important field of comparative literary study because South East Asian literature emerged from the melting pot of the three great Asian

civilizations; Arabo-Muslim, Indo-South East Asia, and Sino-Far Eastern. These zones were formed around the religious canons—Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, and Confucianism and Taoism, respectively, and integrated by religions, correspondent languages, and literary self-awareness which gave rise to the unity of intra-zonal and inter-zonal ties. In Braginsky's view, these three great Asian civilizations formed South East Asia as an 'Asia in miniature' and a literary crossroads of the whole Asia.

South East Asia is a unique region with shared literary traditions, mainly of Indian and Arabic origin, which spread into the region, and have mingled with indigenous oral literary traditions to produce a literature. Indian literature—the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Pancatantra*, and *Jataka* stories—has been influential in the development of South East Asia literature, evident in many South East Asian written texts and oral performances such as the shadow play.

Thailand and Malaysia are included into the 'Indo-South East Asian' civilization, with Thailand having adopted Buddhism from India and Malaysia Islam from India and the Middle East. However, Malaysia was influenced by Indian civilization both in literary tradition and ancient beliefs for many centuries, the same as Thailand, before turning to Islam. It adopted the Indian epics of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* as its own in the form of *Hikayat Seri Rama* in Malaysia and the *Ramakian* in Thailand. It also adopted the Indian *Jataka* and *Pancatantra* as a source of oral literatures.

The commercial activity and the system of political ties caused the aggregation of literatures and cultures in an intra-zone, noted by A. Reid (Reid 1993:19) as "South East Asia was a region united by environment, commerce, diplomacy, and war but diverse in its fragmented polities and cultures". When South East Asian nations were colonised by the West, they were torn apart and concerned with their own national affairs. The literature of each nation has developed in distinct political contexts. The experiences and fates of South East Asia in political history such as colonialism, and the struggle for independence have formed the literary identity and unity of the region. Malaysian literature is classified in this category but not Thai as Siam was never colonised. However, modern Thai and Malaysian literature can be compared because their modern literary development is in parallel with their national political movements. Their modern literary genres, such as the novel and short story, were influenced by the West, and the function of social and political justice in literature are also similar. In addition, comparative literature can

reveal the impact of colonialism on the literature of formerly colonised and non-colonised countries.

The shortage of existing research of a comparative nature

The unique nature of the region has attracted local scholars and academic researchers to study the literature of each country, to learn of each other's literatures and to promote the literature of the region in their own society and to the world outside their region. However, the number of works to engage with this are still limited. At present Thelma Kintanar's *Self and Society in Southeast Asian Fiction: Thematic Explorations in the Twentieth Century Fiction of Five ASEAN Countries* (1988) is found as a comparative study. This work shows her attempt to study the modern South East Asian literatures of five countries—The Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand—and focuses on the themes of the individual and his identities, alienation and exile, social class and the individual, and commitment. Kintanar applies sociology to the analysis of literary texts. Her work is interesting in that it opens up a comparative study of South East Asian literature. It asserts that there are similar points to be found across South East Asian fiction that can be studied comparatively and argues for literature as a tool for the reader to gain a better understanding of South East Asian peoples, society and culture. However, the shortcoming of this work is that it gives the reader a broad view of South East Asian literature rather than a detailed picture, perhaps because the author selects two genres—the novel and the short story—and does not discuss them separately so that the reader can see the similarities and differences of genre.

In Malaysia, the comparative study of South East Asian literature has been carried out mainly for two reasons. Firstly, it is the sense of belonging as the 'Malay World' or *Nusantara*, which has been colonised by Western powers. Researchers wanted to perceive and share their experiences and the feeling of hardship and oppression of being colonised. Since Thailand was never formally colonised, its literature is excluded from this literary frame. The second reason is to highlight the literary tradition of South East Asia and make people of South East Asia proud of their literature. Unfortunately, the scholar still meets with problems of the language in which South East Asian literatures are written i.e. in local or national languages of

their own. The study of literature in translation is therefore limited but is growing in popularity.

The existing works done within the concepts of Malay World and Malay literary tradition are of three Malaysian scholars; Muhammad Haji Salleh (1977), A. Wahab Ali (1991) and Sahlan Mohd Saman (1984 and 1995). In *Tradition and Change in Contemporary Malay-Indonesian Poetry*, Muhammad, a Malay poet, literary critic and university literature lecturer, asserts that the return of Malaysian and Indonesian poets to their own traditional form of writing, local cultures and themes is different. Indonesian poets return to their tradition as a reaction against the West because they are displeased with their society, which they feel is too westernised; whereas Malaysian poets return to their traditional roots not as a reaction against the West, but to continue and preserve their tradition and bridge the gap between the new and the old. Muhammad also argues that Western colonialism has brought changes into Malaysian and Indonesian societies such as urbanization and industrialization, which change people's lifestyle. This situation causes Malaysian and Indonesian poets to adopt and adapt Western forms of writing with their own elements and contents to suit their new society.

Like Muhammad's work, A. Wahab's *The Emergence of the Novel in Modern Indonesian and Malaysian Literature* (1991) asserts that Malaysian and Indonesian writing developed from a combination of its own literary traditions and of Western adoption and adaptation. A. Wahab argues that the Indonesian-Malaysian novel derives from a synthesis of *penglipur lara tales* (tales' of entertainers of sorrow), traditional *hikayat* and Western adaptations of novels of social realistic trend when there is a connection with the West.[2] Printing technology and modern education along Western lines help the writers to develop their literary creative talent and the novels gain wide readership. In short, both Muhammad and A. Wahab point out that modern Indonesian and Malaysian writing i.e. poetry and novels are reproductions of their literary traditions and are also adaptations from the West within their own context, or 'new crafts on old stock' as Muhammad phrases it (1977:177).

By contrast, Sahlan's *A Comparative Study of the Malaysian and the Philippines War Novels* and his *Novel Perang dalam Kesusasteraan Malaysia*

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[2] Muhammad Haji Salleh translates the terms *penglipur lara* as entertainers of sorrow, who is an oral story-teller or singer of narrative syair epic and *hikayat* (Malay traditional fiction).

Indonesia dan Filipina (A Comparative Study of Malaysia Indonesia and The Philippines War Novels) show that the historical element (war) was a significant source of inspiration for novelists, allowing them to reflect on human hardship in wartime. Moreover, the war novel also functions as a socio-historical document of the nation.

Considering Thai literature, these existing works show the possibility for the study of modern Thai literature in comparison to those of Malay-Indonesian literatures. It is because modern Thai literature has also developed from oral tradition and Western adaptation within its own context. Thus, at the moment there has been no comparative study between modern Thai and Malaysian or Indonesian literatures. What is available is a comparative study of Thai and Malay classical literature by Rattiya Salleh entitled *Panji Thai dalam Perbandingan dengan Cerita-cerita Panji Melayu* (Thai Panji in Comparison with Malay Panji Stories), published in 1971. This work is significant in the sense of sharing the South East Asian literature of the 'Malay World'; the *Panji* or *Inao* of the Javanese in Indonesia, with Malay and Thai societies. The purpose of the study is to look at the similarities and differences of the contents, characters and their role in different contexts in the work of these two countries. It shows that Thai literature has adopted and adapted Malay literature to suit the tastes of Thai people and their culture. This work is limited, however, to a Malay language readership.

These existing works on comparative literature reveal the premise that, despite having a common border as well as long historical and political contacts and shared literary traditions, none of the modern literatures of Thailand and Malaysia has been compared and made available in their respective countries. This study is an attempt to fill this gap.

Government promotion of South East Asian studies

Apart from these two factors, the success of economic growth and industrial development in South East Asian nations like Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand has brought them into economic and commercial cooperation. This has impacted on the educational curriculum in many South East Asian universities in which South East Asian languages have been taught to produce graduate students in the world of commerce and industry within the region. By contrast, the study of South East Asian

languages has inevitably impacted on and paved the way for the comparative study of South East Asian literatures. Students who take courses in South East Asian languages in Thailand and Malaysia have to study local literatures as well. Recently, Thai government, scholars and researchers have given strong support to the study of South East Asian literature at the tertiary level in which the teaching of South East Asian languages has been a major course for bachelor degrees. The Thai government supports many regional universities and colleges located near neighbouring countries to teach its neighbouring languages and literatures. In the north of Thailand, close to Myanmar, Chiangmai University is responsible for Burmese language and literature tuition. In the northeast, close to Laos and Vietnam, Khonkaen University and Mahasarakham University are responsible for Lao and Vietnamese languages and literatures; and in the south, close to Malaysia, Thaksin University and Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani campus, are responsible for Malay language and literature. This educational policy has been run to fill the gap between Thailand and its neighboring countries. Chetana Nagavajara, a renowned and highly respected Thai literary scholar, gives strong support to this policy because, as he argues,

> "Interest in studying neighbouring literature is an important base for the study of comparative literature for well-established reason that there has always been direct contact between South East Asian countries. This has provided a significant means of cultural exchange and has had a positive impact in the academic context" (Chetana 1988:120).

Malaysia, one of the formerly colonised nations of South East Asia, has paid attention to the significance of South East Asian literature. After gaining independence from Britain, Malaysians—with a strong sense of national consciousness, feel the need to search for national identities and cultures to move beyond the colonial legacy. However, they also need to know about the cultures of their neighbours. Comparative literature is one of their choices to serve this need. The result is that comparative literature has been taught at the tertiary level. Malaysian universities start with the study of their own national literature, then move on to compare it with neighboring literatures inside and outside the region. For example, the University of Science of Malaysia (USM) has taught comparative literature since the middle of the 1970s, focusing on the search for Malaysian identity and cultural roots in keeping with the growth of literature in other parts of the formerly colonised world

(Md. Salleh Yaapar 1999:19-20). The study of comparative literature in Malaysia led to the establishment of the Organization of Malay Comparative Literature in 1994, which still operates at present. The study of the comparative literature of South East Asia helps to form a sense of regional identity and fill the cultural gaps that exist between South East Asian nations.

The regional contributions on South East Asian comparative literary study

Regional collaboration in the promotion of South East Asian literature among and between local scholars and institution of tertiary education is to be found in the form of national and international literary prizes and literary journals. At the regional level, there is the S.E.A. Write Award given by Thailand to South East Asian writers to proclaim the potential of ASEAN writers. Currently, two ASEAN literary journals have been produced for international readers and literary scholars. One is *Tenggara* of Malaysia, which contributes the literary works of ASEAN writers such as short stories in English translation; and the other is the *SKOOB Pacifica Anthology*, of London, which is an English journal of South East Asian and Pacific literature in English.

At the national level, Malaysia has the National Literary Prize (Hadiah Sastera Malaysia) for good works in order to acknowledge the achievements of their writers and the National Malaysian Writer Award (Anugerah Sasterawan Negara Malaysia) to show the appreciation of the works by Malaysian writers for the contribution of the literary world. Likewise, Thailand gives a national literary prize as recognition of the quality achieved by the writer in certain literary works. They are the Literary Prize from the Committee Boards of Thailand National Literary Development, and the Prize for the National Writer (รางวัลศิลปินแห่งชาติสาขาวรรณศิลป์, *Raangwan sinlapin haeng chaat saakhaa wannasin*).

Thailand and Malaysia realise that they have to know each other's cultures better. The study of literature from a regional comparative perspective is one of the interesting ways in which this can be achieved. This view is supported by that of Mary Louise Pratt (quoted from Berheimer 1995:62) with regard to comparative literature,

> "as a site for powerful intellectual renewal in the study of literature and culture ... the big picture as an especially hospitable space for cultivation of

multilingualism, polyglossia, the arts of cultural mediation, deep intercultural understanding, and genuinely global consciousness. It can develop these things both as scholarly endeavors and as new forms of cultural citizenship in a globalized world".

Above all, comparative literature can unveil the literary creative talents of Thai and Malaysian writers to other parts of the world.

The Use of 'Local Colour' in Modern Thai and Malaysian Literature

One of the distinctive parts of the literary traditions of Thailand and Malaysia is the use of regional elements or *local colour* such as dialect, local beliefs, folk music, dress, customs, flora and fauna in order to project an image of the region and to add credibility and authenticity to their work. *Local colour* as a decoration to the text is known in Thailand and Malaysia as *sii san th'ong thin* (สีสันท้องถิ่น) and *warna setempat* respectively.

Generally speaking, Thai and Malaysian literatures with regional elements and local theme are not specifically regarded or treated by Thai and Malaysian writers and literary critics as *local colour writing*, a significant genre of its own, but rather as a literature with the scent of locality. This kind of consideration is an outcome of an idea that modern Thai and Malaysian literatures written in national language are national literature. Writers of the two countries absorb the regional elements and local theme into their works as an integral part of the production of national literature. They tend to use *Local colour* as literary device rather than as the essence of the text.

Both the Thai and Malaysian writers choose regional elements which they are familiar with and know well about them to add vigor and freshness to their writing. However, it can be argued that writers' use of *local colour* not only lends their work greater credibility and authenticity but also highlight the regional affairs that concern them, and is an implicit self-expression of the authors' attachment to their home region. As Elizabeth Ammons and Valery Rohy (1998: vii-xxviii) point out in their work on American local colour writing that *local colour* should not be simply considered as a literary device that makes the narrative more realistic, but rather as a literary technique which contains certain political messages and social issues. Among

of them are the clash between employer and employee, ethnic conflict, gender inequity, and political struggle between the region and the centre.

Ammons and Rohy provide helpful detail in thinking about the significant role and uniqueness of the use of *local colour* in literature which is also relevant to in Thailand and Malaysia. This study will therefore examine how the Thai and Malaysian writers make use of *local colour* in their work. The regions of southern Thailand and northern Malaysia will be the main focus of this study because the selected writers are from these regions. Having been born in and having experienced life in these regions, I believe that their works will offer some precious ideas and indicate particular characteristics of Thai and Malaysian national literature.

The Perceptions of Thailand and Malaysia

Geographically, Thailand and Malaysia are neighbouring countries. Thailand and Malaysia share similar problems caused by ethnic, religious, and cultural differences of people, economic inequity and social injustice. These problems are found in every part of the two countries as illustrated in Thai and Malay literatures and will be discussed in chapter Three to six. In terms of national symbols such as dominant language and religion, Thailand and Malaysia are different.

Images of the southern Thai and the northern Malaysian regions

From the perspectives of historico-politics and geo-political boundaries, in pre-modern history southern Thailand and northern Malaysia used to be seen as a single region since northern Malaysian states used to be Siamese territories (see Kobkua 1988).[3] This region has long been recognised by local scholars as one in

[3]There are even documented by Malay court authors in the historical Malay literatures such as the *Sejarah Melayu* ('The Malay Annals'), *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* ('The Story of Merong Mahawangsa'), and *Syair Sultan Maulana* ('The Poem for Sultan Maulana'). In her study of these work Siti Hawa Salleh (1990:1-15) reveals that premodern Malay authors admit the authority of the Thai kings over the Malay states, especially the state of Kedah. The relationship of the northern Malay states with their overlords in the north was predominantly defined by their struggle for independence.

which the interaction of various ethnic groups, original cultures and those introduced from outside, such as Chinese, Tamil, Arabic, Persian, Javanese, Malay and Westerners, add to its identity and help make it prosperous. Suthiwong Phongphaibuun (1990:1), a southern Thai scholar, notes that people and communities in the border region between the countries were once without boundary lines, like brothers and sisters of the same womb, sharing the resources and vicissitudes of life, cultures, and enjoying a closeness like a pair of strands woven together.

Significantly, during the British colonisation of Malaysia (Malaya) and as a result of the Anglo-Siamese treaty of 1909, Thailand (Siam) lost some of the northern Malay territories to the British, which has resulted in the modern borderline between southern Thailand and northern Malaysia. Not only did this modern demarcation cause southern Thailand and northern Malaysia to become a divided zone, it also made native people become ethnic minority groups in their own land, displacing them from their original ethno-cultural roots and causing racism within and across the border. For example, the Thais who were living in northern Malaysia and known as the *Sam-Sam*, were cut off from their Thai counterparts on the Thai side of the border. Conversely, the Malay Muslims in southernmost Thailand were cut off from their fellow Malays in northern Malaysia. These social phenomena became apparent when Malaysia gained independence. The separation of people of the same race for political reasons became clearer and was reinforced by the system of area and national demarcations to place them in units of government with set territorial perimeters. People were separated and placed under the name of nations i.e. Thailand and Malaysia. The names of the countries and of the citizenship—Thai and Malaysian—imply different political, cultural and ethnic identities and create a sense of 'us' and 'the other' between people of the two countries. In addition, racial discrimination within the countries and regions has become a distinctive political issue. Fortunately, racial discrimination in Thailand is not strong or openly exhibited in contrast to Malaysia. Furthermore, geo-political demarcation has distinguished the Malay world of northern Malaysia from the Thai one of southern Thailand.

No less important was the pre-modern image of the borderland itself. According to Cheah Boon Keng's *The Peasant Robbers of Kedah 1900-1920: Historical and Folk Perception* (1988), northern Malay states and southern Thailand in 1920-30s was notorious as a 'Banditry Area' of Robin Hood style robbers led by

the famous Siamese *Sam-Sam* Muslims, such as Saleh Tui, Nayan and Din Prum.[4] These people came from southern Thailand and were known as 'Cow Robbers' by the northern Malays. Keng concludes that the factors which gave rise to this frontier robbery and led to international conflict between the British officers of Malaya and the Thai government were "the laxity of Siamese overlordship, poor police patrols, border geography, socio-economic underdevelopment, and the Sam-Sam population at the Kedah-Siamese border" (Keng 1988:124).[5]

Southern Thailand and northern Malaysia are a region of multi-ethnic societies, multiculturalism and illegal activities. The authorities on both sides of the border have to deal with smuggling of drugs and contraband goods, crime involving guns, dual citizenships and the illegal migration of workers from south Asia and Myanmar. Hence both the Thai and Malaysian governments regard the area as troublesome.

As an individual region, geographically, southern Thailand denotes 14 provinces collectively known as *Paktai* (ปักษ์ใต้), a corruption of the word *paak tai* (ปากใต้).[6] This region is considered by the Thais to be the richest area of natural resources such as tin and rubber, as well as having many tourist attractions. In contrast to this positive image, southern Thailand itself is commonly denoted as a region of conflict, unrest and terrorism by non-southerners in general and northern Malaysians in particular. Malaysians see Thailand in general and southern Thailand in particular as the land of criminality, black magic and sex-tourism. Negative media images can

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[4]According to Kobkua (1994:135-62), the Sam-Sam are Thai-speaking Muslim communities found in the northwestern Malaysian states of Kedah, Perlis, and Perak as well as in some southern Thai provinces of Trang, Phang-nga, Songkhla, and Satun. Officially, however, there have been no identifiable Sam-Sam communities in both Malaysia and Thailand since 1911. There is no consensus about the ethnic origin of the Sam-Sam. They are now regarded as Malays in Malaysia or as Thai Muslim in Thailand.

[5] For further details see Keiko Kuroda, 2003. "The Siamese in Kedah under nation-state making", http://www.aa.tufs.ac.jp/-rnishii/South_Thai/working_paper/kuroda001b.html.

[6]Suthiwong Phongphaibuun (1995:218-9) explains that "A royal decree of the Ayuthya period (1084 B.E. or 541 A.D.) called it ปักษ์ใต้. The Luang Prasert version of Ayuthya historical accounts used ปักใต้. The spelling ปักษ์ใต้ was found in the Brahman Legend of Nakornsrithammaraj, whose year of completion was indicated as 2277 B.E. (1734 A.D.). As for the designation ภาคใต้, it was probably used initially in public administration in the reign of Rama VI in an announcement about the Viceroy's duties and power, dated December 13, 2458 B.E. (1915 A.D.), while earlier the southern region had been labelled ภาคปักษ์ใต้ with the title of Viceroy having been inaugurated as อุปราชปักษ์ใต้ 'the Viceroy of the southern region' ".

be found of hired-gunmen and terrorist acts carried out by separatist movements among the small numbers of ethnic Malay in the five southernmost provinces. For Thai southerners themselves, however, they do not live in fear of such violence and see their home region as peaceful and abundant.

On the other hand, the northern Malaysian states—Kelantan and Kedah—each have their own distinctive images. For example, Kelantan is considered as the centre of Malay culture and Islamic education, Kedah the rice-bowl of the country. Northern Malaysians perceive their region as being safer and more developed than southern Thailand.[7]

Overall, both Thai southerners and northern Malaysians do not differentiate their regions from one another since geographically both regions are flanked by the sea and are similar in climate and natural resources. These factors have made the people share the same lifestyles, such as fishing, growing rice and rubber tree tapping. Thus people of this region are mostly peasants.

Images of the majority of Thais and Malays

This construction of 'self' and 'other' that appears in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia is not specific to this region alone. The majority Buddhist Thais and Muslim Malays identify themselves and their neighbours in terms of racial, cultural, religious and national unity or difference and not in terms of place of birth. In Thailand race and religion appear to be the two distinctive factors officially used to identify its diverse ethnic groups and foreigners. For example, Buddhist Thais identify foreigners, such as Arabs, Indians and Malays, as *khaek* (แขก), literally meaning 'guest', but not the Chinese, who are called *jek* (เจ๊ก). These terms imply a sense of 'otherness'. Conversely, the Malaysian Malays call the Buddhist Thais *Siam* or *Siamese*. Worse than this is a negative expression that northern Malays have of their neigbours across the border, *Siam perut hijau*, translated literally as 'Thais with green belly' – green being slimy and bad.[8] Buddhist Thais were perceived as having bad

[7]Such perceptions are true in the sense that Thai southerners are impressed by Kedah's modern highway which is far better than any in their home region.
[8] Personal discussion with a Malaysian journalist Mrs. Zaharah Othman on 16 October 2003.

intentions, which could be attributed to the fact that the northern Malays were once under the oppressive rule of the Thais. Thus it is not surprising that they have such a perception of the Thais.

In contrast, politically, economically, socially and culturally, Malaysian citizens are divided into two primary groups; the *Bumiputera*, (lit. the sons of the soil), and *non-Bumiputera*. The first group refers to the Malays racially and include those who are speak Malay and practise Malay culture as well as to the indigenous non-Islamic Malays, such as the Kadazan, Iban etc. Importantly, the ethnic Thais (Siamese) in the northern Malaysian states, mainly in Kelantan and Kedah, are also classified as *Bumiputera*. This is because their ancestors had emigrated to and become native settlers of those areas since the Peninsular was under Thai rule. The *non-Bumiputera* refers to the Indian and Chinese immigrants who were brought to Malaysia during British colonial rule. The division of the population of Malaysia into ethnic groups has been made by the Malaysian government to grant special consideration for the *Bumiputera*, such as in education, employment, investment and other opportunities. Officially, while all Malaysian citizens are called Malaysian, the ethnic composition of Malaysian population is made up of Malays, Chinese, Indians and others such as Siamese, various ethnic groups from Indonesia, Arabs, Khmer, Eurasians and Caucasians).

Comparatively, both the Thais and Malays see their race as being superior to one another, but from different dimensions. The Thais have seen themselves as superior to the Malays in general and northern Malays in particular from the perspective of power relationship, being overlords of the northern Malay states for centuries. In addition, Thais see the Malays as behaving racist against the Chinese. On the other hand, the Malays see themselves as superior to the Thais in terms of morality, as noted by sociologist Alexander Horstmann (2003): "In contemporary Malaysia, Thais have the reputation for being alcoholic, criminal, poor, illiterate and stubborn. In addition, in the context of rapid Islamization of Kelantan, the Thai environment is seen as ritually dirty and religiously polluted" (ibid.:7). In other words, Muslim Malays see themselves as being morally higher than Buddhist Thais.

Images of Thai southerners and northern Malaysians

The questions of how Thai non-southerners identify southerners and how southerners identify themselves are distinctive factors reflecting their sense of collective identity. Thai southerners, both Buddhist and Muslim, are called *khon tai* (คนใต้) or *southerners*, both by non-southern Thais and amongst themselves. There are expressions used by non-southerner Thais to refer to southerner identities. One example is the derogatory term *khon tai jai dam* (คนใต้ใจดำ), literally meaning 'black hearted' or merciless southerner. This image has been created as a result of their skin colour. It takes the basis of skin colour as an indication of character i.e. as a representation of hostility, an image strongly rejected by Thai southerners themselves. Another expression is *sato' saamakkhii* (สะตอสามัคคี), literally meaning the solidarity of the *sato'* (สะตอ). The word *sato'* refers to the *Parkia specisu*, a kind of southern vegetable which has a pungent odour but is very popular in the southern region. It is one of the commercial plants which symbolises the identity of the region as *din daen thin sato'* (ดินแดนถิ่นสะตอ). The word *sato' saamakkhii* is used in particular to refer to southern politicians and to southerners in general since they are viewed as being a tight-knit group.[9] This can be either positive or used negatively by outsiders, in which case it implies nepotism and corruption. This is especially the case when the Democrat party, the majority of whose members are southerners, is in opposition.

Historically speaking, Thai southerners have been described as strong-minded and self-confident people who are sometimes difficult to deal with and are politically minded or *kho' kaanmeuang* (คอการเมือง). This widely-held belief is explained by the fact that their historical past and the prosperity of the region has imbued a love of politics. As Rattana Yaawapraphat (1974) argues, "The southerners of Siam are interested in politics more than northeasterners... they are the heirs of those adept at

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[9]The southerner's reference to the indigenous *sato'* bean is in contrast to the northern Malays, especially Kelantan and Kedah people. Although they also grow the *sato'* or *petai* in Malay, this word is not used to refer to the people of this region because there are Malays from other states, such as from Negeri Sembilan, who also grow and eat it. However, reference to such plant is found in Malay proverbs, such as *menjual petai hampa* or to sell a fruitless *petai,* which means talking nonsense (*Kamus Dewan* 1994:1030).

verse-making and are controversialists, the heirs of the callers for justice and rights. Thus they will fight for justice till the end" (ibid.:22-3).

Not only are southerners viewed as having strong political minds, but they are also seen as *khon hua mo'* (คนหัวหมอ) i.e. controversialists. Jen Songsomphan (1993:11) explains that this is the result of the upbringing of the southerner ancestors who have implanted in their children the need to study in order to wear a 'law gown' or *rien pheua suam seua neti* (เรียนเพื่อสวมเสื้อเนติ), i.e. to be a lawyer. This contrast with Bangkokians, who teach their children to become powerful aristocrats or bureaucrats or *rien pheua hai pen jao khon naai khon* (เรียนเพื่อให้เป็นเจ้าคนนายคน). According to Jen, southerners encouraged their children to study law as a result of social injustice and ineffective laws in the past. Modern education has opened the way for them to learn how to protect and fight for their rights. Jen's viewpoint is supported by Pramuan Maniirote's study (1994) on the formation of the bandit communities in Phatthalung in the early twentieth century. According to Pramuan, among the reasons for their appearance was the popular refusal to recognise the power of the state and its oppressive authorities. As a result, robber gangsters sometimes played a Robin Hood-style role, as the protectors of their village or community from other robber gangsters of other villages, since in remote areas villagers could not rely on help from the state. This led to the attitude that community leaders should possess certain gangster characteristics. In addition, such experience imbued southerners with a strong taste for self-rule, independence and resistance to the concept of feudalism in general and to central Thai feudalism in particular (Pramuan 1994:8-9 cited in Jaruun Yuuthong 1999:39).

Like the Thai southerners, northern Malaysians are also politically conscious. For example, the Kelantanese are perceived by non-Kelantanese and themselves as being politically-minded. Evidence of this lies in the fact that the Islamic political party PAS has been based in Kelantan for many years (Wan Abdul Kadir 1985:199) and has become the political icon of Kelantan. Added to this is the fact that Kelantan has long been the centre of publishing houses and Islamic traditional education which has produced many Malay scholars (see Roff 1974:171-2). However, the Kelantanese are also seen by outsiders as conservative owing to the influence of the Party PAS, which wants to form an Islamic state, and maintains some aspects of Malay culture.

Critically, PAS's aspirations have been interpreted as being anti-modernisation and have brought backwardness into the state, compared to neighbouring Kedah and Perak. Yet, to some extent, such a negative attitude towards PAS has highlighted the Kelantanese's individualistic view of politics.

In addition to political awareness, the Kelantanese are business-minded, especially women, who are prominent in markets, unlike in other Malaysian states. They have a reputation of being gentle, beautiful and attractive. These can work against them and be regarded suspiciously, especially by non-Kelantanese women. They regard Kelantanese women as a threat to the stability of their marriage as men are generally attracted to the qualities described above.

In contrast to the Kelantanese, Kedah people are collectively known for their sense of humour and hospitality, and being fun-loving and approachable. To say that Kedah people are less politically aware than the Kelantanese or other Malays can be misleading because two former Malaysian Prime Ministers come from Kedah; Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.[10]

No less important is the question of how Thai southerners of all ethnic groups identify their neighbours and vis-a-vis. The Buddhist Thai southerners still identify the Malaysian Malays as *khon khaek,* while the Thais are referred to by the Malaysian-Malays as *orang Siam* or *Siamese,* in return reflecting their Thai race. In addition, the Malaysian-Malays call the Muslim Thai-Malays *orang Melayu Siam* or *orang Melayu Thai*, and the Thai Muslims call them *orang Malaysia*. Such terms assert the fact that the concepts of nationhood and race have affected the way Thais and Malaysians identify 'self' and 'other'. This evidence is further suggested by the images of ethnic groups constructed by themselves or others, as discussed below.

Images of ethnic minority groups in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia

As previously mentioned, southern Thailand and northern Malaysia are peopled by multiethnic communities such as Thais, Chinese, Malays, Indians and other indigenous groups such as Sakai (in southern Thailand). The main ethnic groups

[10] Further details will be discussed in Chapter Three.

of interest in this study are the ethnic minority Malays in southern provinces known as *Thai-Muslims* (ไทยมุสลิม) and the ethnic minority Buddhist Thais in northern Malaysia.

The Muslim Thai-Malays still recognise themselves as *orang Melayu* or Malays. It is a fact that they are Muslims, practise Malay culture and speak in the Malay dialects of Pattani and of Satun as their first language.[11] Furthermore, in the last fifty years, most of them were illiterate and could not speak Thai. They could not understand what 'nationhood' was or differentiate between the concept of 'nation' and religion. To be Thai, for them, is to be Buddhist and to be Malay is to be Muslim. Nowadays, the young generation, especially in the provincial capitals, is assimilated and integrated into Thai society through the educational system and mass media. They are bilingual and prefer speaking Thai at home and elsewhere. However, the sense of 'Malayness' amongst many of the senior members is still strong, although they are officially registered by law as Thai citizens whose nationality and race are Thai due to the political purposes of unity for nation building. They still identify themselves as *orang Melayu* within their own community, so reflecting a sense of oneness as Malays and as Muslims. This sense of belonging exists because they are living close to Malay culture and to Malaysia.

Similarly, the ethnic Thais of northern Malaysia are called by the majority northern Malays and by themselves *orang Siam* (lit. Siamese). This is because they are Buddhists share Thai Buddhist culture, speak in southern Thai dialect, enjoy Thai food, and dress in an identical manner to their Thai counterparts across the border. Nevertheless, the Malaysian Siamese distinguish themselves from the Buddhist Thais by geography, nationhood and certain moral etiquette.[12] For example, they call their Thai neighbours as *khon muang thai* (the Thais in Thailand) opposed *to khon muang rao* (คนเมืองเรา, Thais in our polity) or *rao khon Malaysia* (เราคนมาเลเซีย, we Malaysians).

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[11]The Malay dialect of Pattani is used in Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and in some districts of Songkhla. The language is similar to the Malay dialect of Kelantan and Terengganu. In contrast, the Malay dialect of Satun is used in Satun and it is similar to the Malay dialect of Kedah and Perlis.

[12]Most Kelantanese Thais speak in the southern Thai dialect of Taak-bai district and most ethnic Thais in Kedah speak in southern Thai dialect of Songkhla.

This implies that they are ethnic Thais and loyal to Malaysia.[13] Nevertheless, they perceive themselves as siblings of Thai southerners (Johnson 2003:4,5). Their sense of Thainess is reinforced by their love of watching Thai television programmes which "allow them to reflect on their position as a diasporic minority in Malaysia" (ibid.:3), by listening to local Thai radio programmes of Thai folksong, and by participating in border criss-crossing religious activities.[14]

Language

The most significant marker of the distinct identity of each country and region is language. Both Thailand and Malaysia have national and regional languages, i.e. standard Thai or *phaasaa Thai maatrathaan* (ภาษาไทยมาตรฐาน) and standard Malay or *bahasa Malaysia baku.* Furthermore, each region within the country has local dialects (ภาษาถิ่น), identifying people of certain regions.

Why does a nation need a national language? Politically, the concept of national languages derives from the need to identify 'nationhood' and to solve the problem of communication with members of the societies of racial and linguistic difference. Normally, the selection of a national language from various linguistic diversities is not problematic if the selection is within the same family root. In this case Thailand is different from Malaysia in which the Thais accept the 'Central Thai' dialect or 'Bangkok dialect' as the national language. In Malaysia, at the early stages of choosing Malay language to be the national language, there was a sense of resistance among the Malay elites, Chinese and Indians of English education. These

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[13] When the Malaysian-Siamese are loyal to Malaysia, this can be understood in terms of the concept of the nation they belong to and the perception of the ethnic group they identify with. Working on Kelantanese Siamese identity, Johnson suggests that the Kelantanese Siamese share the Thai identity with the Buddhist Thais of southern Thailand and not with the Bangkok ones. If the Thai calendar with the photograph of King Bhumiphon can be found on the wall of many Kelantanese Siamese's houses, it is they think that the photograph is beautiful and because they also appreciate the king for his hard work for his subjects. On the other hand, images of the Kelantanese sultan are rarely exhibited in the house, Johnson argues, the reason for this does not derive from a sense of Thai national pride but rather from the sense of being neglected by the Malay ruler (see Johnson 2004:3). Therefore, to conclude that the Kelantanese Siamese are loyal to Thailand instead of Malaysia, can be misleading.

[14] For further details see Irving Johnson, 2003 "Movement and Identity Construction Amongst Kelantan's Thai Community", http:www.aa.tufs.ac.jp/-rnishii/south-Thai/working-paper/johnson001b.html.

people prefer English rather than Malay as an official language, while the Malays of Malay education fight for Malay language to be the official and national language of Malaysia.[15] Currently, the use of Malay language (Bahasa Malaysia) to represent 'Malaysianness' is largely due to the fact that Malaysians of ethnic Indian and Chinese prefer to speak in their own mother languages and use English to communicate with others of different racial extraction.

While national language is a symbol of the nation, so regional language is the symbol of a region and its people. In Thailand, Thai dialects are differentiated by qualifiers of the regional boundaries within the country: 'northeastern Thai' or *phaasaa Isaan* (ภาษาถิ่นอีสาน) and 'southern Thai' (ภาษาถิ่นใต้). By contrast, Malay dialects are differentiated by qualifiers of the name of the state boundaries within the country: Kelantan dialect and Kedah dialect. In addition, there are ethnic languages within the region. For example, there are the Malay dialects of Pattani and Satun of the 'Muslim-Thais' speaking in the southernmost part of Thailand and the southern Thai dialect of the Malaysian-Thai descendants in northern Malaysia.

However, a similarity lies in the fact that northern Malay dialects of Kelantan and Kedah distinguish between the different linguistic characteristics of these two states. It is a universal phenomenon that people communicate with others from their region in their own regional dialects. Regional dialect can be said to be the first language that people learn and implies local pride and a sense of comradeship. Unintentionally, however, it creates a division between 'us' and 'others' outside the region, leading to a perception of Thai southerners and northern Malaysians as regionalists more than people in other parts of the countries. For example, the southerners in Thailand always proudly speak dialect among themselves. They even think that it is shameful for a southerner who not to speak his/her dialect. However, this does not apply to the Thai-Malay Muslim in southern Thailand whose mother tongue is Malay. In contrast to the southerners, northeasterners seem ashamed to use

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[15] Malay language as we know it today belongs to the Austronesian family of languages. Long before the coming of the Westerners, Malay has been the lingua franca and the language of literature, commerce, administrative and diplomacy all over the Malay Archipelago. Evidence for the use of Malay dates back to the seventh century. The Malay Language used as a standard in Malaysia today is based on the Johore Malay dialect. For the history of the Malay language and the choice of Malay as the national language of Malaysia and Indonesia see Mohd. Taib 1961:1-18 and Sutan Takdir 1977.

their dialect in front of others.[16] When Bangkokians and southerners hear the northeasterners speak northeastern dialect (phaasaa Isaan), they call them 'siew' (เสี่ยว) or 'Laos'. In northeast dialect the word 'siew' means 'friend' but both the Bangkokians and southerners use it as derogative word. Since the northeasterners are culturally and ethnically Laotians, the Thais in general look down on them (See Platt 2001 and Reynolds 1993).

As with the Thai southerners, both Kelantan and Kedah people always speak their own dialects among themselves with pride. In the case of Kelantan dialect, besides showing local pride and friendship, Kelantan identity is even stronger when its people are living outside their own state, as noted by sociolinguist, Nik Safiah Karim (1985:127-8). Like the Thai southerners, Kelantan people are regarded by their fellow countrymen as cliquish and will look after each other's interest. This behaviour of excluding others from their network is not always well received by non-Kelantanese. In the case of Kedah, sociolinguist Asmah Haji Omar (1990) notes that "when the people of different dialects hear the Kedah people speak in their own dialects, they will give a satirical smile because, in their view, the sound of Kedah dialect is strange in the same way that Kedah people hear other people dialects (ibid.:2). However, unlike the Bangkokians and Thai southerners, the Malays of different dialects do not look down on the Kelantan and Kedah people when using their dialects. Instead, they usually try to imitate their language. Perhaps, this is because the word spelling and pronunciation of Kedah and Kelantan dialects are unique and very much different from other Malay dialects, which are close to the standard Malay and are not as difficult for other Malays to understand the meanings.[17]

Interestingly, the nature of dialects has also created the identity of the speakers. The pace of speech of southern Thai dialect is perceived as fast, and difficult for outsiders to follow. Hence, Thai southerners are seen by other Thais as fearsome, rather than gentle or humble.

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[16] Personal discussion with my northeasterner friend Miss Srisa-ard Kanasen on 31 May 2004.
[17] For further details of the nature of Kedah and Kelantan dialects see Asmah Haji Omar 1979 and Nik Safiah 1985.

Cultural performances

Nationally, cultural performances are significant factors which differentiate the Thais from the Malays. As a new nation after independence from the British, the Malays have fought for the sovereignty of the Malay culture to be their nation symbols. All Malay cultural performances from every Malay state are regarded by the Malays as the symbols of Malaysia which are superior to the cultural performances of other ethnic minorities—Indians and Chinese. This implies that the Malay cultural performances of every Malaysia states are equally important and represent the national culture. In Thailand, on the other hand, the court performances such as *Khoon* (โขน) and *Naangyai* (หนังใหญ่)—the classical Thai theatre and shadow puppet—represent the cultural performances of Thailand and are superior to the folk theatre of the various parts of the country. Noticeably, in Malaysia the cultural rivalry occurs between the majority Malays and the minorities groups of Indians and Chinese. By contrast, cultural rivalry amongst people of ethnic differences in Thailand is not a problem because most cultural performances in every region of Thailand are equally important and are regarded as of ethnic Thai, excluding of the minority group of the Malays in the south. They are only inferior to the cultural performances of the court.

Regionally, the southern Thailand and northern Malaysia show similarities and differences in performing arts. Thai southerners of Thai race have their own cultural performances, which differentiate them from the non-southern Thais. These include *Nora* (โนรา) and *Nang Talung* (หนังตะลุง). The *Nora* or *Menora* (มโนราห์) is a traditional southern dance theatre originating from Phatthalung, and the *Nang Talung* is a puppet shadow play which the Malays call *Wayang Kulit* or *Wayang Siam* (วายังซียัม). The *Nora* and the *Nang Talung* are very popular among the 'Thai-Buddhist' southerners and among the Malaysian *Siamese* from Kelantan and Kedah. The *Nora* and *Nang Talung* are not only representative of the cultural identity of Thai southerners, but also of the Malaysian Thai Buddhist communities across the border. [18]

The Thai Muslim majority of Malay speakers in Pattani also have their own version of *Nang Talung*, which is called the *Wayang Kulit Melayu*, performed and communicated in their own dialect. In addition, they also have other performances,

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[18] Some Muslim Thai-Malays who are not living in the five border provinces also love to see the *Nora* and *nang talung* performances.

such as *Mak Yong* (มะโย่ง), *Main Puteri* (ไมนปูตือรี), and *Dikir Barat* (ดีเกร์บารัต). The *Mak Yong* is a Malay dance drama originating from the royal court of Pattani before it came under Thai control (Sheppard 1972:58-9). The *Main Puteri* is a Malay traditional treatment for a patient who was believed to be ill due to a spirit or magic. It was believed to have originated from Cambodia, dating back to the pre-Islamic period and widely practised by the Malays in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia (*Ensiklopedia Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Melayu* 1998:1404). The *Dikir Barat* is a group performance of song which also originated from Pattani, and remains popular among the Muslim Malays both in southern Thai and Kelantan (ibid.:667).

As a result, the *Nora* and *Nang Talung* can be seen as symbols of both the Thai Buddhist southerners and Malaysian Siamese, whereas the *Mak Yong*, *Main Puteri* and *Dikir Barat* are symbols of the Malay Muslim communities both in southern Thailand and in Kelantan. Such performances cannot be shared among those of different ethnic backgrounds as a result of the language barrier.

The cultures of Kelantan and Kedah are classified as Malay, despite their differing local dialects. In terms of cultural performances, what makes them similar and different? There is a Kelantan claim that they are the 'bastion' of Malay culture and custom (Roff 1974:245) based on the fact that many Malay cultural performances have their roots in Kelantan tradition. Kelantan can be seen as the successor of the Malay cultures of the Patani kingdom. Since these performances have long been shared among the Malays of Kelantan and Kedah they have become part of Malay cultural identity in general.

Kedah and Kelantan are further differentiated by *Jikay* and *Mek Mulung*. Both are a folk type drama but the first is enjoyed by the Malaysian Siamese, and the second by the Malaysian Malays. The *jikay* is believed to be originally from the immigrant Siamese in northern Malaysian states. It is normally performed in the compound of the Siamese Buddhist temples during the Buddhist and Siamese festivals known as *ngaanwat.* It is very popular among the *Siamese* and the Malays in Kedah and Perlis.

The *Mek Mulung,* on the other hand, is believed to be firstly introduced by the immigrant Malays from southern Thailand. It is performed by the family members of the troupe at least once a year, i.e. during the *upacara puja guru* (rite of ancestral worship). Thus, in the past the *Mek Mulung* drama was regarded as a family

performance for ritual purpose rather than as an entertainment for communities at large. Since the opening ceremony of the *Mek Mulung* consists of superstitious elements, considered to be non-Islamic, this show is hardly performed in present-day Malaysia.[19] In contrast, the *Jikay* is not often performed among modern day Malaysian Siamese, not because of religious discourse but because of the dominance of modern day forms of entertainment, such as the cinema.

Animism and religion

In relation to animism, which can be traced back to pre-Hinduism, Thailand and Malaysia in general and southern Thailand and northern Malaysia in particular share the South East Asian beliefs in animism, ancestor worship, superstition and black magic. Significantly, most Thai and Malay believe in spirits related to their main occupations, such as the rice spirit *Semangat Padi* (Malay) and *Khwan Khaaw* (ขวัญข้าว) (Thai) and the sea spirits *Hantu Laut* (Malay) and *Mae Yaanaang* (แม่ย่านาง) (Thai). [20] In recent years, these beliefs have been rejected by Thai and Malaysian Muslims because they are against the teaching of Islam. In contrast to Muslims, Thai and Malaysian Buddhists continue to pratise these traditional beliefs. Other elements of shared cultural traditions include black magic and spiritual healing, which live side by side with the advance of medical sciences. Some Thai southerners and northern Malaysians who have suffered misfortune or mental illness believe that this is the result of black magic and seek the help of a shaman. It is widely believed by northern Malaysians that the southern Thai practitioners known as *Bomoh Siam*, a term referring to both Muslim Thais and Buddhist Thais, are highly proficient and skilled.

Religion plays a significant role in the preservation and practise of cultural performances in Muslim communities in southern Thailand and in every state in Malaysia, opening ceremony rituals contain animistic elements which run contrary to Islamic teaching. Today, public performances of *Mak Yong*, *Wayang Kulit* and *Main*

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[19]The *Mek Mulung* used to be as popular in Kedah and Perlis as *Mak Yong* in Kelantan. They are often said to be rivals (ibid.:1998 and Rahmah 1979:45-9) since the performances are very similar, though not the performers. The main performers in *Mak Yong* are females in which the female plays the major role of a male character, 'Pak Yong'. In *Mek Mulung* however the major performers are males and they play the role of female characters.

[20]The rice spirit is also known as *Devi Seri* in Malay or *Mae Phosop* (แม่โพสพ) in Thai.

Puteri, are banned by the state authority of Kelantan, whereas in southern Thai, performances are used to promote for tourism and regional identity.

Conclusion

To sum up, both Thai and Malaysian literary scholars accept that some Western literary theories are able to be applied to analyse their literature. However, they contend that their literature should be primarily studied within the context of their own literary traditions and the socio-politics which the countries have undergone hence influencing the literature therein produced. A review of the literature suggests that the study of comparative literature of South East Asian literatures in general and of Thailand and Malaysia in particular needs to be carried out by not only local literary scholars and Western scholars, but also by scholars from other countries.

The important aspects of *local colour* in Thai and Malaysian literatures reveal that both Thai and Malaysian literary academics and critics do not consider contemporary literature with local elements as regional literature since it is written in the national language. The authors who come from the regional areas themselves produce their works within the context of national literature. They use the regional elements as a tool to impart political issues to their readers inside or outside their home region. In this context, regional element becomes the theme of the text which normally has national political implication. Usually, work in which *local colour* becomes the central part of the text can be called *local colour writing or regionalist writing*. However, this study illustrates how the regional identities of southern Thailand and northern Malaysia as portrayed in the short stories written by writers from these regions assert that it is part of the national agenda.

Chapter Two

Authors and Literary Associations

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the biographical details of the four authors in question, and the literary associations to which they belong. It makes the assumption that one of the significant and direct influences on the creation of their works has been that of their life experiences; and that another surrounds the ideologies of the literary associations with which they are connected. Although this relationship between the authors' life and work may not always be so clearly delineated in other world literatures, it is nevertheless frequently noted in numerous examples of South East Asian literatures from across the region. Moreover, this approach follows one commonly taken in the analysis of the work of individual authors by commentators on South East Asian fiction.[1]

Related to this issue of biographical data and literary association is the question of literary influence, at both the local and the international level. It is a fact that all four writers in this study have been influenced by the Western literature of social realism in general and by such world-renowned authors as Jean-Paul Sartre, John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, and Maxim Gorky in particular. Western literature has served for these four writers as a key source of external literary inspiration. Yet despite this, much of their fiction still has a strong local scent. It reveals something of the counterbalance between Western literary traditions and those of South East Asia in the modern literary works of the region. What is important here is that, together with the input of Western literary influence, the social background and the cultural roots of the region itself have also had a significant impact in shaping the authors' way of thinking and their worldview. Such an impact can be seen throughout their works. This observation asserts that 'local colour' is one of the most

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[1]For a good example of this approach with regard to Malay literature see Harry Aveling (2000) and A Teeuw (1997). With reference to Thai literature see Rachel Harrison (1995), David Smyth (1988) and Martin Platt (2001).

significant characteristics of their work and represents something of a trend in South East Asian fiction.[2]

This chapter therefore aims to provide an overview of each author's life, focusing on the principal factors which inspired each of these men to become writers. It examines this process in relation to their social and family backgrounds, their education and career, and the role they play in the literary associations to which they belong.

The Formation of the Authors

By what processes and as a result of what influences and events have these four men become writers? Who has inspired them to take an interest in writing and develop a love for literature?

In the case of these four writers, there are two major factors involved in their formation: one being their family background in childhood; the other their education, which has helped them to improve and shape their ideas and their writing style.

Social and Family backgrounds

With regard to the family background of the four writers, two aspects will be given attention to here—the socio-economic status of their family and the members of their family in inspiring an interest in literature. To begin with, the southern Thai writers, Phaithuun Sangkhaphanthanon (pseud. Phaithuun Thanyaa) and Kanokphong Songsomphan were both born in Phatthalung, though in different districts of the province. Phaithuun was born on 26 May 1956 at Baan Huurae, Khao Chaison

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[2]Shahnon Ahmad is the best known Malaysian writer whose works have portrayed 'Malayness' through the use of 'local colour'. His novel entitled *Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan* (translated by Adibah Amin as *No Harvest But A Thorn*) has been acclaimed as his best novel, full of the 'local colour' of his village, the Kampung Derdap, Kedah. His writing style has also been influential on many Malaysian writers of the 1960s, most especially Azizi Haji Abdullah. On the Thai side, Lao Khamho'm is the eminent writer who pays full attention to the Thai local colour of the northeast and introduced it into his work entitled *Faa bo' kan* (ฟ้าบ่กั้น). His writing style has influenced Thai writers of the younger generation.

district.[3] Kanokphong, on the other hand, was born on 9 February 1966 in Khuan Khanun district, therefore being ten years Phaithuun's junior. Similarly, both their fathers were schoolteachers and their mothers housewives (Kanokphong and Wachira 1987:15-6, and Poramat 1996:129-30). It is noteworthy that at that time teachers' salaries were very small and their families were therefore of poor economic standing. As a result, both of their parents also worked in their rice-fields to improve their families' economic status and similar to other rural children of peasant families, Phaithuun and Kanokphong helped their parents in this work.

Although poor and hard working, it appears from interview material that neither Phaithuun nor Kanokphong feel their childhood to have been particularly economically deprived. As a result, Phaithuun is therefore able to discuss his childhood without any sense of bitterness and he depicts it in his biography in a rather light-hearted and fun-loving way, through references to children's activities such as fishing and watching *Nang Talung*. It seems, in fact, that Phaithuun is relatively content with his childhood. This stands in complete contrast to Kanokphong's recollection of his early years.

According to Poramat (1996), Kanokphong's childhood memories are full of bitterness as a result of the political conflict between the government and the Communist Party in which his village was one of the conflict sites of the south. He therefore witnessed many brutal killings and saw how his fellow villagers lived in horror. Kanokphong believes that such events were responsible for destroying his childhood innocence and forced him to mature before his time. This has had such a significant effect on his adulthood that he feels he is often unable to gain access to the world of the child and this has made him particularly sensitive to disturbing films and documentary footage on issues such as genocide (Poramat 1996:129-30 and personal interview with the author). To recover his missed childhood, Kanokphong has currently been collecting children's tales to provide a source of help to him in writing children's literature, which he plans to do in the future (Poramat 1996:129-30 and personal interview with the author).

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[3] This is now called Baangkaew district.

The northern Malaysian writers, S. Othman Kelantan and Azizi Haji Abdullah, share distinct similarities with the southern Thai writers in terms of their families' socio-economic status and their parents' careers, though both come from different Malay states with some slight difference in local Malay culture.

S. Othman Kelantan (1974:34) is the pseudonym of Syed Othman Syed Omar Al-Yahya, born in 1938 at Tebing Tinggi, Kota Bharu, Kelantan. His birthplace is near Sabak, one of the biggest fishing villages in Kelantan. His father, Syed Omar Syed Hassan, died when he was three years old. So his mother, Tuan Sharifah Haji Nik Abdullah, and his aunts brought him up. It can be assumed that his family was poor because his mother was an al-Qur'an teacher of the village children and therefore, in keeping with tradition, given food as payment instead of money. In addition, when S. Othman grew up, he used to work as a fisherman to help his family. Yet, despite being poor, his family was respected by fellow villagers, perhaps as a result of either holding the 'syed' title or because they could trace back their religious duties as Imams of the village to the generation of his great grandfather.[4] S. Othman himself is no exception to this tradition, having been educated in a religious school and having Islamic teachings with his uncle and his mother at home. Azizi Haji Abdullah, on the other hand, was born in 1942 at Kota Kuala Muda in Kedah. Like S. Othman, his father, Haji Abdullah Mohamad Diah, was an Imam in the village. However, he was also a farmer and a fisherman. His mother, Saodah Haji Saad, was a housewife and a farmer, although she also taught the village children al Qur'an at home. In contrast to the two Thai writers, neither of Azizi's parents had a regular income. In addition, his parents owned some small rice-fields, whose productivity they enhanced by renting further fields from neighbours to meet the family's demands for food. The poor financial situation that faced Azizi's family obliged him to take on part time jobs to earn some additional pocket money.[5] It could be said that some of his short stories about village children derive from his own experience.

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[4] In the old days, many Malays believed that the 'syed' families were the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. Many of them were religious and some were Imams of the village and the Islamic teachers of the villagers. It is also to be noted that, traditionally, the Malays apportion respect to people by looking at both their family and educational backgrounds, either Islamic or secular.

[5] His jobs included fishing, selling balloons at the village fair, climbing areca palms to pick their betel nuts for chewing, and cutting the children's hair (Azizi, forthcoming).

The role of the authors' families

It is noteworthy that in traditional Thai and Malay societies, parents do not encourage their children to read fiction. Most of them believe that it is textbooks alone that are able to improve the intellect. In addition, many families are not able to afford books for their children. This is not to imply, however, that parents do not encourage their children to improve their intellect by writing. It is therefore possible to argue that the writers in question have received strong support from certain members of their families who held a positive view of literature. Who has played the most significant role in this regard, and in what ways have they played their role in the formation of the four writers?

Phaithuun Thanyaa comes from a family that loves reading and three family members can be said to be responsible, albeit unintentionally, for him having become a writer. First among them is his father, who, as a teacher, foresaw the significance of education and provided Phaithuun and his siblings with reading materials about education. Second, was Phaithuun's mother who is self-educated and has a love of reading and listening to all kinds of literature. In interview material she recalls having spent many late nights at her neighbour's house listening to *Phra Aphaimanii* ('The Story of Phra Aphaimanii'), a Thai classical tale composed by Sunthorn Phu, in poetic form and sung by her neighbour (Kanokphong and Wachira 1987:23).[6]

When Phaithuun grew up, his mother read that poetic tale together with other folktales to him. There is no doubt that her love of literature was gradually passed on to and influenced her son in developing a love of reading, especially of literature, from the early days of his childhood. This is confirmed by Phaithuun's behaviour with regard to reading and his taste in choosing books when he was able to read them by himself. He used to read fiction in his wardrobe to avoid having to help his siblings to do the housework. When he was in the primary school, he chose *Phra Aphaimanii*, to read in the library during his lunchtime (ibid.). He also read other Thai fictional works such as *Phuu chana sip thit* ผู้ชนะสิบทิศ, ('The Conqueror'), a story of the Burmese King Burengno'ng, written by Yaakho'p. When Phaithuun was in secondary school, he and

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[6] Sunthorn Phu (1786-1856) was a great poet in the reign of King Rama II (1809-1824). He was quite different from other poets who were great nobles and princes of the court because he was a man born from a deprived background, stricken with poverty and left without a home (Manich 2000:136-7).

his friends spent their time sharing and reading their fiction. This information shows that Phaithuun was addicted to fiction since he was young. With regard to the family role, when Phaithuun became a writer, his family gave him moral support, especially his mother, with whom he discussed writers and literature, including the short stories he himself wrote. By contrast, his father became a source of inspiration in writing, exemplified by the short story entitled *Maai thao* (ไม้เท้า, 'The Walking Stick') (ibid.:23-4).

Kanokphong Songsomphan, on the other hand, comes from an artistic family. He believes that his writing talent flows in his blood from previous generations and comes particularly from his father Wanit Songsomphan. According to his family biography (Editors 1996:82,79), his great grandfather on his mother's side was a former great Nora performer who dedicated his life to Nora performance. Kanokphong's father, on the other hand, was a teacher who also loves music and literature. His father learned the Nora dance and played music, which inspired him to set up a musical band and to perform in certain local festivals to earn some money. Kanokphong and his siblings therefore grew up with music and Nora performances, which had a great influence on him. Kanokphong uses the atmosphere of his family life as the setting in his short story entitled *Baan keut* (บ้านเกิด, 'Hometown') and his father is a character in this story (ibid.:82,79) discussed in Chapter Three.

Apart from music, Kanokphong's father's ambition was to be a writer. He therefore used to send his short stories to Si Burapha, a famous writer in the late 1940s, by using the pseudonym 'Pho' khaa' (พ่อค้า, a merchant) and 'Wana' (วณ), but failed to have them published in the magazine *Suphaapburut* (สุภาพบุรุษ, 'The Gentlemen') of which Si Burapha was editor.[7] Nevertheless, he kept on writing, mainly about the teachers' life and educational field for an educational journal (ibid.: 83).

As a teacher, Kanokphong's father saw education as the key for his children's future. He therefore encouraged them to read books by subscribing to children's magazines for them to improve their reading skills, such as comic books like *Baby chaiyapreuk* (เบบี้ชัยพฤกษ์) and *Dek kaawnaa* (เด็กก้าวหน้า, 'Advanced Children'). To serve

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[7] Si Burapha was the pseudonym of Kulaap Saaipradit. For further details see David Smyth (1988).

his interest in education, he subscribed to journals of education, for instance, *Witthayaasaan* (วิทยาสาร, 'Journal of Knowledge'), and a science journal, *Witthayaasaat naaruu* (วิทยาศาสตร์น่ารู้, 'Sciences Worth Knowing') which were also read by his children. Kanokphong remembers that when he was still at primary school he also read a long novel called *The Godfather* and a series of short stories *Nick Adams* by Ernest Hemingway in Thai translation, published in the magazines of his father's collections (ibid.:81-3). Kanokphong therefore believes that his father was key to implanting in him his reading habit and his love of literature. Possibly, when Kanokphong became a writer, his father encouraged him to carry on that career because he could fulfil his father's own dream to be a writer.

By contrast, Kanokphong's mother did not believe that a writing career could bring him financial security because, from her experience as the daughter of a Nora performer, her father's career did not earn enough money for the family without her mother's help. Kanokphong also mentions that Jen, his elder brother and also a writer and publisher, has also guided him to read the Thai canonical novels and short stories of social realism written by Si Burapha, and Lao Khamho'm (ibid.:83). Therefore Kanokphong's father and brother introduced him to the world of literature at an early stage.

For the northern Malaysian writers, S. Othman Kelantan shares some similarity with Phaithuun Thanyaa, in the sense that in both cases female members of their families brought them up to be writers. From an interview, S. Othman confirms that his love for reading and studying literature was cultivated by his beloved aunts who loved reading traditional Malay literature, both in poetry and prose—the 'syair' and the 'hikayat', respectively. From his memory, his aunts often spent their evenings and nights reading Malay stories to entertain their friends, nieces and nephews. His aunts had very beautiful voices and were very good at telling stories, and they therefore attracted audiences. Among their favourite stories were traditional Malay literature of *Syair Siti Zubaidah* ('Poem of Siti Zubaidah'), *Hikayat Dandan Setia* ('Story of Dandan Setia'), *Hikayat Bustaman* ('Story of Bustaman'), *Hikayat Nabi Bercukur* ('Story of the Shaving of the Prophet') and *Hikayat Jumjumah* ('Story of

King Skull').[8] They also told the children the Kelantan humorous tales *Mak Ne Pak Ne* ('Tales of Mother Ne and Father Ne') to entertain them.[9] Far more important than this function, this folktale has the implicit message to children to encourage them to love studying and be clever. It can be seen therefore, that S. Othman Kelantan was brought up in a literary family, and it can be concluded here that his aunts had familiarised him with the traditional Malay literatures of both oral and written traditions. As a result, those kinds of literatures became the source of inspiration for his writing. They might also have inspired him to change his study field from religious to secular so that he furthered his study in Malay literature instead of in the field of Islamic studies.

Azizi, on the other hand, shares similarities with Kanokphong, in that both believe that their creative talents might have derived from their fathers, who used to try their hands at writing fiction. Azizi reveals in his autobiography (forthcoming) that his writing career might have been inspired by his father, who was Islamic educated and interested in reading and writing literature. His father once composed a 'syair' telling of his sailing experience to Mecca and he also rewrote the *Hikayat Bayan Budiman* ('Story of Bayan Budiman') from memory, which was retold by the generation before him. Azizi notices that his father was the only man in the village who subscribed to newspapers such as the *Utusan Melayu* ('Malay News'), *Warta Negara* (National News) and the magazine *Qalam* ('Pen') to follow up the current affairs of the Malay society. Azizi' s father also read fiction, such as the historical Malay novels written by Professor Dr. Hamka, Middle Eastern stories in Indonesian

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[8] It is noteworthy that the traditional Malay literatures, syair and hikayats, mentioned above are very popular among the audiences of the Malay females because the stories mostly are romance. They are read or sung not only to entertain the audience, but also to give moral guidance to the Malay women, in particular. The *Hikayat Nabi Bercukur*, on the other hand, is an Islamic story about the life of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w). It is told or read mainly to the children to implant in them the faith of Islam. Further details about the Malay reading culture of literature read also Jamilah Haji Ahmad (ed.) 1989:ix-xii, and Zalila Sharif (ed.) 1988.

[9] This tale is widespread in the Malay communities of Kelantan and across the border in the three provinces of southern Thailand—Pattani, Yala, and Naraathiwaat. This tale is about the foolish husband, Pak Ne, who kills his baby because of his stupidity. For example, one day when his baby is crying and he sees the beating of the pulse on his head, he thinks that his baby might suffer from it. He then pierces his son head (anterior fontanelle), with a knife shape, hoping that it can relieve the pain of his baby and make him stop crying, but it kills his baby instead. When his wife asks him to invite the imams who have goatees for their baby's funeral, he invites some goats. For further stories see Praphon Reuangnarung 1984.

translation, such as *Cleopatra*, and Western works such as *Ibu Rukambul* ('Madam Rocambolle'), which were also read by Azizi when he was active in writing. Like S. Othman, Azizi was brought up in an Islamic religious family, although his father did not force him to read only textbooks to improve his reading skills and intellectual development. Instead he provided him and his siblings with reading material for children, such as the weekend newspaper *Utusan Kanak-Kanak* ('Children's News'). What inspired Azizi the most was a series of comic stories written by Salehuddin in the column of 'Kumbang' ('The Beetles') in which he tried his hand at drawing the cartoons and retold its stories (Azizi, forthcoming). Therefore Azizi's father was the first person who inspired him to take an interest in literature.

From the aforementioned family biographies, it can be assumed that the authors' love of reading and writing was initially inspired by their family members and was developed soon after, when they were exposed to formal education in literature and became involved in literary activities.

The role of education and career

Equivalent to social and family backgrounds, education and career have also helped the writers in question to improve their creative talent and their writing skills. All four are from rural peasant families, but have made great improvements in their social status through educational achievement and their subsequent careers as schoolteachers. Although Kanokphong did not complete his university education, he has enjoyed considerable success in his writing career and won the S.E.A Write Award in 1996. Education has exposed each writer to national, regional and international literatures which, to some extent, has had an influence on their writing and literary perspectives. This can be shown in detail by looking at each writer individually.

According to an interview conducted by Kanokphong and Wachira (1987:24), Phaithuun finished his primary and secondary education in the town of Bangkaew, Patthalung. In 1974, he received his diploma in teaching at Songkhla Teachers' College and went back to his hometown to become a schoolteacher.[10] While studying at this college, he was exposed to the classical novels of the Thai canon e.g. of M.J.

[10] Now known as Rajaphat Institute Songkhla

Akaat Damkerng, Si Burapha, and Manat Janyong; and he read the Western works of John Steinbeck, and Ernest Hemingway. His reading experience in Thai and Western literature encouraged him and his friends to form a literary group called 'Klum Prakaai phreuk' (กลุ่มประกายพรึก, 'The Morning Stars Group'). [11]

Two years later, Phaithuun furthered his education in Thai literature at Sri Nakharinwirot University, Songkhla Campus.[12] At this university the experience of reading novels and poetry that he had accumulated earlier, coupled with the university activities in literature he undertook there, encouraged him to write fiction. As a result, in 1977, his first short story, entitled *Khwaam taai kho'ng panyaachon* ('The Death of an Intellectual') was published in the periodical of Sri Nakharinwirot's Student Union, Songkhla Campus (ibid.:28).[13] After finishing his Bachelor's degree in Thai language and literature in 1979, Phaithuun returned to his old school to continue his career as a schoolteacher and began writing seriously. The result was his second short story, entitled *Do'kmaai thi thoe theu maa* (ดอกไม้ที่เธอถือมา, 'The Flower You Brought'), which won first prize in the teacher's magazine *Prachaabaan* (ประชาบาล, 'Local Education'). It was his first work to be considered by mainstream publishers in the national capital, Bangkok, and it inspired him to continue writing. In late 1982, his short story *Kheu leuat neua lae chiiwit* (คือเลือดเนื้อและชีวิต, 'It Is Blood, Flesh, and Life') was published in the magazine *Karat* ('Carat') and again won first prize in the short story competition of the Khruuthep Library Project (โครงการหอสมุดครูเทพ). This award was responsible for making his name better-known among Thai writers and literary critics.

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[11] They also formed a folksong band named 'Taa kham' (ตาคำ 'Grandpa Kham') which might have been inspired by a song named 'Taa kham' sung by the group Caravan (คาราวาน), a well-known and very influential folksong band in the 1970s. According to Caravan, Taa kham was a metaphor. It referred to the farmers of the Northeast who sold their rice-fields to businessmen to build factories. Being unaware of their future, most of the farmers spent their money on building big houses and became labourers working in the factories (Anon. *Tamnaan chiiwit Caravan* (ตำนานชีวิตคาราวาน 'The Caravan's Life') 1984:141). Phaithuun and his friends were also influenced by this music band, most of whose songs were 'songs for life', a kind of song whose lyrics reflect the hardship of the poor.

[12] Now known as Thaksin University

[13] This work was influenced by his reading of the Thai literary works of post-revolutionary writers such as the short stories entitled *Khwaam ngiap* (ความเงียบ, 'The Silence') and *Khon dam naam* (คนดำน้ำ, 'The Diver') written by Suchaat Sawatsii and Nikhom Raaiyawaa, respectively. Their works relied heavily on symbolism and paid attention to the failure of education which was a popular theme of the 1967-1973 period.

It is also to be noted that his career as a school teacher brought him close to village children, so inspiring him to write about them and the politics of rural school life, as exemplified by the short stories entitled *Thaang khlone* (ทางโคลน, 'The Muddy Road') and *Tua thaen* (ตัวแทน, 'The Representative').

In 1983, Phaithuun moved from his home region of southern Thailand to further his study in central plains, at Sri Nakharinwirot University, Phitsanulok campus.[14] He also married one of his classmates, Lawan Chuangchot, from the central province of Sukhothai.[15] In 1986 he was awarded a Master's degree in Thai literature and went back to work in his old school in Phatthalung. A few years later Phaithuun's application to work as a schoolteacher in Sukhothai was successful, and he moved to the central region for family purposes and had his second child, a son named Thienthai.

As a result of Phaithuun's reputation as a S.E.A.Write Award-winning author in 1986, and his knowledge of literature, he was offered a post as a lecturer in the Department of Thai and Oriental Languages at Mahaasaarakhaam University, in the northeast of Thailand where he and his family now live (ibid.:12-21). It is noteworthy that a combination of education, family and career factors have drawn Phaithuun away from his home region, allowing him instead to see and interact with Thai people of different regional cultures from that of his own. How has his life in a new region influenced his writing? In an interview, Phaithuun admits that although he has now spent many years in the northeast, he dare not write about northeasterners. He is not confident that he could write as well as the best-known northeastern authors Lao Khamho'm and Khamphuun Bunthawii, authors of the *Faa bo' kan* (ฟ้าบ่กั้น) and *Luuk*

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[14] It is worth mentioning here that while Phaithuun was studying his master's degree, he also composed poems. His pseudonym as a poet is 'Kamcham Cheuachaawnaa' (กำชำ เชื้อชาวนา) and 'Siikham Do'kkhae kaaw (ศรีคำ ดอกแคขาว). His poems, entitled *Jao raang noi no'n ning bon tieng tam* (เจ้าร่างน้อยนอนนิ่งบนเตียงต่ำ, 'A Small Beautiful Girl Lying Quietly on a Low Bed') was one of the fifteen best poems of 1983 held by the co-operation of *Thanon nangseu* (Book Road), a Thai literary magazine, and the 'Klum Wannakam Phinit' (กลุ่มวรรณกรรมพินิจ), Thai literary critics. In addition, his poem entitled *Meu thii waang plao* (มือที่ว่างเปล่า, 'Empty Hands'), published in the magazine *Baan mai ruu rooi* (บานไม่รู้โรย, 'Non-withered'), won the literary prize of the Thai P.E.N in 1985.

[15] His wife, on the other hand, had to go back to her school in Sukhothai where she lived with their daughter and waited for Phaithuun.

Isaan (ลูกอีสาน), respectively.[16] Nevertheless, it is a fact that, from his third anthology of short stories entitled *Tulaakhom* (ตุลาคม, 'October'), the new region where he is living has clearly inspired him to write about the events occurring outside his original home-region, as exemplified by the short stories in that anthology entitled *Phaendin kho'ng khao* (แผ่นดินของเขา, 'Their Land') and *Naew rop daan tawantok: hetkaan mai teun ten* (แนวรบด้านตะวันตก: เหตุการณ์ไม่ตื่นเต้น, *At The Western Battle Front and the So-So War)* translated by Tom Glass.

As an academic, Phaithuun has produced several articles on literary criticism for *Writer Magazine* (ไรเตอร์แม็กกาซีน), which were later published in book form under the title of *Praakotkaan haeng wannakam* (ปรากฏการณ์ทางวรรณกรรม, 'The Phenomenon of Literature', 1995). This book reflects his interest in politics and gender studies in Thai fiction, as well as in Lao literature.

Phaithuun has also written a textbook entitled *Waannakam wijaan* (วรรณกรรมวิจารณ์, 'Literary Criticism', 1996) for readers of literature in general and for university students in particular. It discusses the history of Western literary criticism and its theories, and the history of Thai literary criticism before and after the influence of Western literary criticism on Thai literature. It could be argued that education and career have exposed Phaithuun to Western works and literary theories as well as to other South East Asian literatures. Those literatures help him considerably in producing, improving and inspiring his writing.

In contrast to Phaithuun Thanyaa, Kanokphong first tried his hand in writing when he was studying in secondary school in Phattalung, producing his first short story, *Dut tawan an jert jaa* (ดุจตะวันอันเจิดจ้า, 'Like the Bright Sun'), which was published in the weekly news magazine *Matichon sut sapdaa* (มติชนสุดสัปดาห์). After finishing secondary education, Kanokphong appears to have been influenced by the educational and social values of his time in which studying business was thought to provide greater opportunity to the student in finding a job. He therefore went on to university

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[16] *Luuk Isaan* (ลูกอีสาน) was translated into English by Susan Fulop Kepner as *A Child of the Northeast* (1988) and *Faa bo' kan* (ฟ้าบ่กั้น) was translated by Damnern Garden as *The Politician and Other Stories* (1973).

and studied in the Faculty of Business Administration at Prince of Songkhla University, Haatyai Campus for three years. Only then did he discover his interests did not really lie in business studies and he therefore left in 1987, before completing his degree and in order to become a writer. His mother despaired at his decision since she believed that Kanokphong might not be able to produce good work, not having gained a degree (Editors 1996:79).

Afterwards, Kanokphong went to Nakho'n Si Thammarat province and stayed just outside the capital town for a short period of time before going to Bangkok to work in artwork and editing. There, he also composed many poems which appeared as an anthology entitled *Paa naam khaang* (ป่าน้ำค้าง, 'The Forest of Dew') published in 1988 by the Naakho'n publishing house.[17] It could be said that Kanokphong has gained much literary knowledge from his reading of both Thai and foreign literatures and from his writing practise in which he can be said to be self-educated.

Having a strong ambition to become an established writer, Kanokphong left his job in 1989 and went back to Nakho'n Si Thammarat province where he rented a small house in Phromkhiiri district outside the capital town in order to spend time writing. High mountain ranges, thick and bountiful forests, orchards and beautiful waterfalls lie behind his house, a natural environment which has made this village cloudy and rainy, and which Kanokphong has therefore named *Hupkhao fon proie phrai* (หุบเขาฝนโปรยไพร, 'The Valley of Sprinkling Rain'). This has become the title of his recent autobiographical work (Kanokphong 2001:22-6). Here Kanokphong has embarked on a serious programme of reading fiction, both of the Thai and Western traditions and focused his writing only on short stories. It could be argued that his life as one of the productive and leading writers of the south started here.

Kanokphong's decision to be a full-time writer has proved a rewarding one. The same year that he left his job, his short story *Saphaan khaat* (สะพานขาด, 'A Broken Bridge') won the literary prize of 'Cho' kaaraket' (ช่อการะเกด), the short story magazine run by Suchaat Sawatsii (Anon. 1996:72). That story was then translated into Japanese. This prize rewarded Kanokphong's creative talent and further inspired him

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[17] This work reflected a social phenomenon in his hometown during the time of communist suppression of which some villagers became the victims of the military operation and the dense forest and mountains which appeared in that anthology were the campsites of the Communist insurgents.

to keep writing short stories. In 1990, his *Loke bai lek kho'ng Salman* (โลกใบเล็กของซัลมาน, 'The Small World of Salman') won the 'Cho' kaaraket' prize again and was translated into English for the literary journal *Tenggara 38* (Sermsuk 1996:155-6). Even more important is the fact that he was fully born as a short story writer when his short stories were published in the form of anthologies. These include *Saphaan khaat* (สะพานขาด, 'A Broken Bridge') in 1991, and *Khon bai lieng diew* (คนใบเลี้ยงเดี่ยว, 'Individuality') in 1992, both of which were published by Samnakphim Nok sii leuang (สำนักพิมพ์นกสีเหลือง, Yellow Bird Publishing House).[18]

Kanokphong's third anthology, *Phaendin eun* (แผ่นดินอื่น, 'The Other Earth') was published in 1996 by Samnakphim Naakho'n and won the S.E.A. Write Award of that year, so earning him the reputation of a key modern South East Asian writer. His short story *Saphaan khaat* was translated into Malay, under the title of *Jambatan putus* and was included in a Thai/Malay anthology of short stories entitled *Suara Sutera-Plew phieng sieng mai* (พลิ้วเพียงเสียงไหม, 'Silk Voices').[19]

When comparing southern Thailand with northern Malaysia, a striking and important difference perhaps revolves around issues of religious education, i.e. both S. Othman Kelantan and Azizi Haji Abdullah received their early education in Islamic schools while Phaithuun Thanyaa and Kanokphong Songsomphan attended secular schools. According to Lim Hee Lang (1992:1-3,13), S. Othman started his education

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[18]This publisher was established by a group of writers to publish fiction written by new writers, especially regional writers. According to the review of the publisher, its name was inspired by the song 'Nok sii leuang' composed by Winai Ukrit and sung by the folksong band 'Caravan' to memorise the student martyrs of October 14,1973, who fought for democracy and were killed by the army (Anon. *Tamnan chiiwit Caravan,* 1984:113-5). Thus, the word *Nok Sii leuang* ('The Yellow Bird') became the metaphor for those students and, according to Wat Wanlyaangguun's short story entitled *Nok sii daeng* (''The Red Bird') it also referred to the group of students who went into the jungle after the event of the October 6,1976 for political exile (Wat 1982: 31-4). The icon of the publisher, a yellow bird lying in the gun of the tank, inspired by the book cover of Phanom Nanthaphreuk, *Yeun taan phaayu* (ยืนต้านพายุ, 'Against the Wind') implied the political struggle and in this case it might have been interpreted as the struggle of new writers to look for a publisher. The *Yellow Bird* also referred to a group of southern Thai writers which was later united with *Klum Naakho'n.*

[19] This anthology is a co-operation between Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and Prince of Songkhla University. All Thai short stories were translated into Malay and all Malay short stories, on the other hand, were translated into Thai. Its title also has a dual name printed both in Malay and Thai languages.

in two ways, informal and formal. His first experiences of informal education began in his house, learning about Islamic religion taught by his mother and his uncle, Syed Abdullah Syed Hassan. Since Kelantan is a centre of Malay religious schools and S. Othman's family members were educated in the religious tradition, he therefore might have been influenced by his family tradition and by the social values placed on Islamic education. S. Othman was then sent to the 'Pondok', a traditional Malay Islamic school. When he was nine years old, he said that he already knew about 'tasawuf' or mysticism and had other knowledge of Islam. Once he was able to read and write, he started reading Islamic textbooks such as *Musali, Minhayul Abidin, Fathul Qarib* and other textbooks related to Islam, such as the life of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers, Islamic politics and philosophy. As a result, his religious education imbued him with a habit of reading religious textbooks that is reflected in his writing (ibid.:5-9).

In addition to this the use of the word 'Kelantan' in his pseudonym was inspired by religious teachers and writers whose pen names connoted the birthplace of their origin, such as Abdul Samad Al-Palembangi (meaning Abdul Samad from Palembang), Syekh Daud Al-Patani (meaning Syekh Daud from Patani), and Syekh Abdul Samad Tuan Tabal Al-Kelantan (meaning Syekh Abdul Samad Tuan Tabal from Kelanatan) (Lim Hee Lang 1992:12). Thus S. Othman's pseudonym reflects his pride in his sense of region and in being Kelantanese.

In 1952, S. Othman finished Islamic school and became a schoolteacher in Kelantan.[20] It was during this time that he concentrated his attention on literature, became a writer and was active in literary circles. His first short story, entitled *Pembalasan* (Revenge), which told of crime in Kelantan, was published in the literary magazine *Tunas* ('The Seed') in 1954 and encouraged him to become a writer (Ahmad Kamal Abdullah 1993:210-1). In 1964, his short story *Persoalan* ('The Question') won the prize of the magazine *Mastika* ('The Pearl'). In 1972, his short story entitled *Hobi* ('Hobby') won the Hadiah Karya Sastera (The Prize of Literary Work) and a year later he won that prize again with three short stories entitled

[20]While working as a schoolteacher in his hometown, he took courses in a teaching programme called the TUOS (Trained Under Other Schemes) in 1954 and received a diploma in teaching in 1957. Then, he got the 'Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia' (Malaysian Certificate of Education) in 1964 and the 'Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia' (Higher School Certificate of Malaysia) in1976 as a result of his self-education (Lim Hee Lang 1992:5-9).

Pusaran (The Story of Pusaran), *Pertarungan* ('Competition') and *Takdir* ('Fate'), respectively; and again in 1975 with the short story *Penyeksaan* ('Suffering'). Since then his talent in writing has been outstanding and gained widespread public attention.

As a schoolteacher, S. Othman Kelantan's career inspired him to write about the problems of the village students whom he taught, and his works were full of local Kelantan colour. These were clearly exemplified by his short stories *Kehidupan Saya* ('My Life') and *Kepuasan* ('Satisfaction'). Besides, while he was a teacher there, his short stories were published in the capital's literary magazines such as *Dewan Masyarakat* and *Dewan Sastera* and were later published in anthologies of short stories. His first anthology of short stories *Cherpen-Cherpen S. Othman Kelantan* ('Short Stories of S. Othman Kelantan') was published in 1970 by Dian Publishing House in Kota Bharu, Kelantan; and his second anthology *Surat* ('Letters') was published in 1979 by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, in Kuala Lumpur. Most of the short stories in these two anthologies were written when he was in Kelantan.

Like Phaithuun Thanyaa, S. Othman left his region for the purposes of educational and career achievements. In 1974, he went to further his study at the Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang and received a Bachelor's degree and Master's degree in Malay literature in 1979 and 1982, respectively. While studying at the University, he worked at the Language Centre for two years where he was surrounded by linguists who made him very conscious and careful of Malay grammar in his writing (S. Othman 1986b:23). During his studies he continued writing short stories and produced two further anthologies of short stories which were published in the capital; one was *Ibu* ('Mother'), published in 1980 by Heinemann Educational Books(Asia); and the other *Perkahwinan Rama-Rama* ('The Wedding of the Butterflies'), published in 1984 by Teks Publishing. All short stories in these two anthologies were written in Kelantan and in Penang before he moved to Bangi, the city adjacent to the capital Kuala Lumpur. It is noteworthy that although most of his short stories discuss national problems such as the backwardness and poverty of the Malays, and the conflict between traditional and modern social values, the characters and settings are mainly local i.e. the region is still the main source of his inspiration. Yet despite this, it appears that his literary education in Western and Malay traditions is also part of his inspiration in writing, exemplified by the short stories *Suara Ombak* ('Wave Voices'), which allude to the Greek myth of Daedalus, and the *Pada Suatu Ruang* ('In One Space') which alludes to the traditional Malay literatures *Hikayat Seri*

Rama ('Ramayana') and *Sejarah Melayu* ('The Malay Annals') and the Malay folktale *Pak Pandir* ('Father Folly').

In 1983, S. Othman moved from Penang to work at the Institut Bahasa Kesusasteraan dan Kebudayan Melayu (IBKKM) (the Institute of Malay Language, Literature and Culture), Universiti Kebangsaan, Malaysia in Bangi (ibid.:23). Living in the centre, he had more chance to participate in literary activities and debates which could broaden his literary perception. One result was that his fifth anthology of short stories, entitled *Beberapa Pembetulan* ('Several Corrections'), published in 1990, focused on Malay problems in general, such as politics, economics, religion, environment and individualism. His writing talent was rewarded by the S.E.A Write Award in 1990.

As a literature lecturer, S. Othman Kelantan made use of his religious and literary educational backgrounds in writing related articles. For example, his book *Arah Pemikiran Sastera Malaysia* ('The Intellectual Trend of Malaysian Literature', 1987) reveals his perception of Islamic literature, a popular focus for Malay fiction in the 1970s-80s. Like Phaithuun Thanyaa, S. Othman is interested in literary criticism, reflected in his *Novel: Tanggapan dan Kritikan* ('Novel: Perception and Criticism', 1986), which reveals the processes of his writing, and provides examples of how Western literary theories might be adapted into the literary criticism of Malay novels. His interest in Malay literature in general and in oral tradition in particular have inspired him to write his PhD thesis on the topic of *Pemikiran Satira dalam Novel Melayu,* 'Satirical Thought in Malay Novels' (S. Othman:1997), completed at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in 1995. He is a full-time writer and part-time lecturer at Pujangga Management Institute.[21] In 2004, S. Othman is awarded by the Malaysian government as the latest Sasterawan Negara (Malaysian National Laureate).

Similarly, Azizi Haji Abdullah studied in the Malay Islamic religious school in Kedah. Azizi writes in his forthcoming autobiography that his Islamic education and teaching career have been significant influences in his formation as a writer. From the

[21]His thesis was published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and he makes an argument that satirical thoughts exist in Malay classical literatures both in oral and written forms and inspire the pre and post World war II Malay writers. He explains that satirical thought derived from the need for writers to criticise their society.

educational perspective, Azizi reveals that his interest in writing started when he was studying in the Madrasah Daeratul Maarif Al-Wataniah School where he had learned the art of debate and public speaking from his respected teacher Tuan Guru Haji Ahmad Badawi. School activities such as literary lectures, political debates, speeches and poetry readings also encouraged him to be a public speaker and critic. At this school he was active in giving speeches, debates, and writing critical essays related to Islam, especially Islamic politics. He was influenced by his Islamic education and also by his father, who supported PAS, the religious political party. As a result, Azizi gave electoral campaign speeches for PAS and wrote critical essays on politics for which he read his father's books as a source of references. Besides, the Arabic name became the source of inspiration for his pseudonym 'Ibnu Abdullah Al Haj', used for his critical essays.

While studying in this school, Azizi was also exposed to the world of Malay fiction. He started reading short stories written by Shahnon Ahmad, such as *Di Tengah Keluarga* ('Among the Family'), *Shiplis* ('Syphilis'), *Hikmat Bulan Sabit Haji Taha* ('The Crescent Moon Miracle of Haji Taha') and practised his writing skills by writing letters to his pen pals.

Having participated in school activities, Azizi not only had a chance to develop his writing skills, but, more importantly, realised that he wanted to be a writer. According to Azizi, the motivation came from two factors, one his need to criticise and protest against something that he did not agree with. In his own words: "Then, I just knew that, perhaps, these are my motivations to be a writer because deep inside my heart there are some feelings of struggle, dissatisfaction, a critical mind and a need to protest" (Azizi, forthcoming).

His other need was to prove the ability of a student from the Islamic school to his Malay society. It was understandable that the status and social fame of the traditional Malay religious school or 'pondok' were not as good as the English school. Azizi therefore wanted to use his writing to prove the intellectual credibility of the students from the pondok school. He reveals that: "My aim is only one. I need to prove that students from pondok/ Islamic schools are not unintelligent" (Azizi, forthcoming).

Since 1955, Azizi started reading his father's books and magazines seriously and began sending his writing to the newspaper *Warta Negara* ('National News'), which unfortunately refused to publish any of his work. However, this did not make

him give up writing. Finally, his first short story, 'Sisa' ('Remains'), was published in the newspaper *Warta Mingguan* ('Weekly News') in 1963 and his second, *Cuba Haji Salikin Berkhalwat* ('Haji Salikin Tries to Contemplate'), in the same newspaper in 1964. 'Sisa' was about an old soldier who owned a medal of bravery, but which, ironically, was not able to help him to have a good life in his old age. It is noteworthy that the story *Cuba Haji Salikin Berkhawat* created a public controversy because the main character was taken from a real person in Azizi's village, Mukim Bukit Meryam, and the teachers in his school felt embarrassing to bring a real person into fiction (Azizi, forthcoming).

It is worth noting here that, having studied in a Malay Islamic school which aimed at producing schoolteachers for rural children, Azizi was not exposed to Western education, literature and literary theories. Instead, it brought him very close to the Malay world and his Islamic education became his source of inspiration and writing identity. Nevertheless, Azizi believes that his ignorance of Western work forms part of his limitations in improving his writing:

> "For me, I feel that the world of writing is of my own and I am proud of and enjoy it. Unfortunately, I do not have a lot of knowledge, or much discipline, and I am also not good in English or Arabic. Those factors therefore make me a writer who cannot achieve at a high level" (Azizi, forthcoming).

It can be argued, however, that Azizi's lack of such knowledge does not limit his ability to improve his creative talent or to be a leading Malaysian writer. Evidence is provided by his literary works, which have won many literary prizes and earned favourable comments from other Malay writers. For example, his short stories *Keakuan* ('Egoism') and *Menuju Ke Takah Tiga* ('To the Third Level') won the admiration prize from the religious short story competition held by the Religious Affairs Department of the Prime Minister's Office in 1975. In 1979, 1980 and 1984 *Pelarian Yang Kedua* ('The Second Exile'), *Kecundang Seorang Petani* ('A Farmer's Agitation') and *Sengat Sembilang* ('Sembilang's Sting') won the honour prize of the short story competition from the Sayembara Cerpen Esso-GAPENA respectively. And in 1981, *Seladang* ('The Wild Bull') won third place in the same prize. Besides, in 1982/83, his short story *Tulang Pekasam Ikan Puyu* ('Pickled Perch's Bones') won the second place of the Hadiah Sastera Malaysia (Malaysian Literary Prize).

Shahnon Ahmad, Malaysian National Literary Laureate, comments that:

> "In my opinion Azizi Haji Abdullah is one of our better writers. His work has developed quickly and is worthy of respect. He has already come a long way, although many would also feel that Azizi is still capable of far more than he has so far achieved. He has touched the tree tops; he has the talent to reach the clouds" (Cited in Aveling 1992:xi-xiv). Therefore, Azizi's career as a writer has been one of the great achievements, evidenced by the S.E.A Write Award he won in 1988.

Apart from his education, his teaching career as an Islamic schoolteacher in Kedah brought him to the world of children and Islamic teaching has had a significant influence on his writing, exemplified by his short story entitled *Dhuha* ('The Story of Dhuha') and others compiled in his eight anthologies; *Latifah Rabaniah* ('Latifah Rabaniah'); *Rindu Bonda* ('Missing Mother'); *Keakuan* ('Egoism'); *Songsang* ('Upside Down'); *Pertiwi* ('Motherland'); *Mardudah* ('Mardudah'); *Istiqamah* ('Istiqamah') and *Bibit Cinta* ('Seeds of Love'). It is noteworthy that Azizi has spent his life teaching in his home region, Kedah. Most of his short stories therefore portray the local colour of Kedah rather than of the capital or urban life.

It can be concluded therefore that the formation of the four regional writers mentioned above is rooted in their social and family backgrounds. Their family members i.e. their parents and their close relatives, transmitted traditional literatures to them since they were young and gradually imbued in them an appreciation of the value and aesthetics of literature. The knowledge of life they have accumulated derives from their direct contact with the life of the villagers they experienced from childhood to adulthood. It has made them socially aware of village culture, which has then become a source of inspiration to them as authors. Education and career have also played an important role in the development of their writing, bringing these writers to the world of literature inside and outside their literary canons of national and regional literature.

Literary Associations

Literary associations are a distinctive social phenomenon in modern Thai and Malaysian literary production and consumption. They have an influence on shaping ideas and on the writing techniques of their members, stimulate their members' spirit

of literary competition to improve and produce good works and create a certain readership of their own. An important approach is taken by Herbert Phillips (1987), an anthropologist working on Thai literature, who analyses the nature of Thai literary groups in the centre (i.e. Bangkok). His approach can also be applied to the study of regional literary associations, not only in Thailand where his work is focused, but also in Malaysia.

According to Herbert Phillips, the rivalry among ideas, styles and themes among authors of different literary groups has a direct influence on the literary marketplace as he states that: "the competitive spirit of the literary marketplace stimulates considerable intellectual richness and the formation and fission of the literary 'phuak', the various colleagues, friends, teachers and disciples with whom most writers surround themselves and who serve as critics, guides and sources of intellectual, emotional and sometimes financial support" (1987:16). This situation creates writers who feel obliged to improve their writing skills by introducing some more interesting and challenging techniques and introducing new ideas into Thai literature. It can therefore be argued that Thai literary associations, critics, literary friends and even their literary rivals become sources for those writers to gain and exchange inspiration.

Phillips also points out that in the capital writers may initially meet informally as friends and only later make the decision to officially form a literary group. Each group which Phillips surveys in his work is small and its membership impermanent.[22] Thai writers, in Phillips' view, are "proud of their talent in creative writing and their pride of authorship" (ibid.:39-40). In Phillips' view, their sense of solidarity with, or obligation to, any specific or political movement was much less important. While he argues this point, it would be inaccurate to draw from it the conclusion that Thai writers have less sense of political or social consciousness and commitment to their groups' ideology than their pride in their own writing talent. In fact this is an integral element of their fiction.[23] He concludes that "for all the impact that any particular

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[22]According to Phillips, the writers that he refers to are firstly, those who are members of certain literary groups such as *Phrajan siaw*, *Num nao saaw suay*, and *Saai lom saeng daet*; secondly, those whose literary ideas were influenced by leading literary figures who might be their teaches or literary patrons such as M.L. Bunleua Thephayasuwan and M.R. Khukrit Pramot. For further details see Phillips (1987:40-3).

[23]See for example, Suvanna Kriengkraiphet and Smith, Larry (1992) and Anderson, Benedict (1985).

phuak has upon the Thai literary scene and upon the formulations and fortunes of its constituent members, it is only one of several sources of the literary identity of any writer" (ibid.:44).

Phillips' point of view is useful in the study of the formation of regional literary groups, the connection between writers, their literary groups and region, and their contribution both to the national literature and to the literature of their region. In this section attention will focus on the literary groups of the four regional writers in order to investigate their roles in their group and to what extent literary groups influence their works. The literary groups in question are *Klum Naakho'n* in southern Thailand, Angkatan Sasterawan Muda Pantai Timur (hereafter ASMUPATI) (i.e. the "Young Generation of East Coast Writers"), Persatuan Penulis Kelantan (hereafter PPK) (i.e. the "Association of Kelantan Writers"), Gabungan Sasterawan Sedar Kedah (hereafter GATRA) (or the "Association of the Enlightened Writers of Kedah") and Angkatan Sasterawan Nasional Kedah (hereafter ASASI) (i.e. the "Generation of Kedah National Writers").

The formation of regional literary associations

Phillips's viewpoint poses questions for the study of the formation of regional literary associations in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia in relation to what they have in common and to their differences. What inspires the regional writers of southern Thailand and northern Malaysia to form literary groups? What are the primary concerns and roles of their regional literary associations? Who are their members and what kind of relationships do they have with each other? What activities do their members perform to achieve their aims?

Sources of inspiration and factors in the formation

In the case of southern Thai writers, it is noteworthy that a seminar hosted by the Organisation for Literature (องค์กรวรรณกรรม) and organized by Yip Phanjan on October 29, 1982 at the musical arts centre of Bangkok Bank, inspired Thai writers

from the regions to form literary groups.[24] Although writers from southern Thailand had already formed *Klum Naakho'n* in 1981 at Nakho'n Si Thammarat, this seminar also encouraged its members to become more serious and productive.[25] According to Phaithuun Thanyaa, the seminar provided a first opportunity for writers from all over the country to get together and it encouraged them to continue writing. In Phaithuun's words regarding *Klum Naakho'n*: "Having attended a seminar in Bangkok hosted by the Organisation for Literature, we went back home and worked hard until it could be said that this was a leading group of regional writers and literary men of that period" (Kanokphong and Wachira 1987:31-2).

With regard to its name, the word *Klum Naakho'n* derives from the city of Nakho'n Si Thammarat where the writers first met. The city symbolises southern Thais' pride in this glorious historical centre, dating from the time of the maritime trading empire of Srivijaya which rose to power between the sixth and eighth centuries.[26] *Klum Naakho'n* drew an implicit comparison between the long history of the south and the mere two hundred years of the Rattanakosin dynasty in Bangkok (see Harrison, 1999:174).

The formation of *Klum Naakho'n* was motivated by three major factors. Firstly, its members were influenced by the social phenomenon of regionalism which

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[24]The *Muun River Literary Group* (MRLG) or the literary association of Northeastern writers which was formed on January 3, 1983 was inspired by this seminar. For further details see Martin Platt (2001:176).

[25]This group comprises the smaller literary groups such as *Klum Praphaakhaan* (The Lighthouse Group) of Songkhla led by Pramuan Maniirote and Jaruun Yuutho'ng (pseudonym 'Ruun Ranote'), *Klum Saan Saeng Tho'ng* (The Weaving of the Golden Light Group) of Phatthalung led by Jen Songsomphan and Kanokphong Songsomphan, *Klum Prakaai phreuk* (The Morning Star Group) also of Phatthalung led by Phaithuun Thanyaa and Yongyut Chuuwaen, *Chomrom Do'k maai* (The Flowers Group) of Nakho'n Si Thammarat, led by Rattanathaadaa Kaewphrom, O-phard So'djit and Phramahaa Jaturong Siijongkon, *Chomrom Nakklo'n Nakho'n Si Thammarat* (The Poetic Group of Nakho'n Si Thammaraat), *Klum Pheuan Rao* (Our Friends' Group) , *Klum Pheuan Wannakam* (The Literary Friends' Group) , and *Klum Wannakam Kleun Thaley Tai* (The Literary Group of the Southern Sea Wave) (Editors 'Nae nam klum: *'Klum Naakho'n, 'Ongko'n Wannakam.* 13 September 1982 pp.30-3). As a senior and respected writer in the group, Pramuan Maniirote has been elected to informally lead the group.

[26]The word *Naakho'n* is an old system of spelling and literarily means 'city'. In this context, it refers to Nakho'n Si Thammarat. In the old days, this province was known as the Kingdom of Dhamma or the Buddhist centre. According to Phaithuun Thanyaa, the word *Naakho'n* derives from a spoonerism of 'no'n khaa' (นอนคา), meaning 'doze off', to become 'นาคอน', 'naakho'n'). The word 'no'n khaa' (นอนคา) is used because Phaithuun and his members usually spent the night discussing literature until they became tired (and often drunk) and slept.

was widespread in the 1980s and made them aware of their regional culture and of local writers' capacity in writing. This is exemplified in personal interviews with Phaithuun, who alludes to the character of Thotsakan (Rawana) from the Thai classical literary work the *Ramakien,* who looks down on the warriors of Phra Raam (Seri Rama) as rural and inefficient. As Phaithuun recites:

มันเป็นบ้านนอกขอบชนบท
ไม่ปรากฏศักดากล้าหาญ
อันชาวลงกากรุงมาร
ล้วนแต่เชี่ยวชาญชำนาญรบ

"They are people from the marginal provinces
whose ability and bravery hasn't shown
We, people of Demons' Kingdom, Longkaa,
are skilled warriors"[27]

The capital versus the periphery as represented by Thotsakan, stimulated Phaithuun and *Klum Naakho'n* members to demonstrate the intellectual prowess of the south to the writers of the centre through their work. At that time they referred to themselves as *nakkhian baan no'k* (นักเขียนบ้านนอก) or 'writers from the region' as opposed to *nakkhian meuang luang* (นักเขียนเมืองหลวง), or 'writers from the capital'.[28] In an interview with Jaruun Yuutho'ng, he reveals the same attitude, that "in the history of Thai literature, no writers have emerged from the regions. Writers had to proclaim their writing talent in Bangkok".[29]

Secondly, in 1981 and 1982 Thai literature was dominated by and most active in the centre. Conversely, the literary atmosphere in the south was not as animated. *Klum Naakho'n* members therefore wanted to introduce and disseminate Thai literature in their home region and among the younger generation.

Finally, its members needed to find publishers and hoped to have a publisher of their own. Ruun Ranote, a member of *Klum Naakho'n* and himself a writer, reveals that "many unknown authors cannot find a publisher for their works. Instead they have to spend their own money to publish their own works and never hope to

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[27] See also Phaithuun Thanyaa, *No'k Neua Jintanakaan*, 1997:11.
[28] The word *baan no'k* (บ้านนอก) connotes the sense of being less civilised and economically backward compared with people in the centre. It is normally used by people or authorities from the central region based on the capital's standards.
[29] Personal interview with Jaruun Yuutho'ng (pseud. Ruun Ranote), 18 March 2001.

recuperate it".[30] The situation that these authors encountered was also a result of the literary atmosphere in 1981 and 1982, in which 'literature for life', which influenced most of the southern writers, lost popularity. Their works, especially those of new and unknown writers, were therefore rarely published in the literary magazines of the capital. Such a phenomenon encouraged a negative view towards editors and publishers from the centre. Moreover, the closure of *Loke nangseu* ('Book World'), the best literary magazine of the period in 1983, due to financial crisis lost writers an important forum for the dissemination of their work.

These three factors impelled southern writers to form a group, based on their belief that "solidarity could bring power and success" to solve their problems (Kanokphong and Wachira 1987:32). More significantly, all three factors engendered the notion that "Literature exists everywhere on this earth" (วรรณกรรมย่อมมีชีวิตอยู่ทุกแห่งหนของผืนแผ่นดินนี้), which became the slogan of *Klum Naakho'n* (Pramuan Maniirote in O-part (et al.) 1983:11). Pramuan explains its meaning:

> "At that time the movement of literary activities was very small, especially in the south, where writers were also very few. Either to publish work or for anything relating to books, one had to go to Bangkok. At that time, we insisted that writers produce their works in their region, including publishing and selling them. In that period it was not easy" (Editors 1995:76).

Pramuan's explanation reveals *Klum Naakho'n*'s sense of the politics of literature, i.e. that the *Naakho'n* writers did not want the Thai literary arena to be established in the capital and dominated by its writers.

The formation of northern Malay literary groups, on the other hand, shares some similarities with, and has only slight differences from, *Klum Naakho'n* of southern Thailand.

Firstly, the regional literary associations of Malaysia in general, and of the north in particular, were initially inspired by Malay nationalism and followed by regionalism, a result of the historico-politics of Malaysia. According to S. Othman Kelantan, the formation of literary associations throughout the Malay regions, especially on the East coast, was firstly inspired by the influential literary association

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[30] Personal interview with Jaruun Yuutho'ng, 18 March 2001.

"Persaudaraan Sahabat Pena Malaya" (PSPM, or the "Kinship of the Literary Friends of Malaya). This group was formed in 1934 in Penang and its members focused on issues of Malay nationalism including Malay language, literature and culture. As S. Othman explains:

> "PSPM spread widely throughout the Malay region. It gave encouragement and showed the need for national solidarity through the high culture of human beings i.e. language and literature. After that, this need for solidarity and association of language and literature became a source of inspiration to the formation of Writers' associations all over the country, especially on the East coast" (S. Othman 1992:137).

Here Malay nationalism appears to have inspired writers to organise literary groups.

In Kelantan, ASMUPATI was formed in 1955 and PPK of Kelantan and GATRA of Kedah after Malay Independence in 1966. The political purpose these groups shared was to fight for the sovereignty of Malay culture, literature and language as symbols of national identity. This was identified in the declaration of GATRA, which emphasised the ideology of 'Malay Power' and was firstly declared by Shahnon Ahmad as its leader.

> "GATRA will consist of writers who are really 'literary-minded' and feel that literature is not only a hobby for entertaining, as practiced by people in the old days, but is also the heart and spirit of the nation. Writers who produce works according to the interest of the time and for their own sake are GATRA's enemies because, according to GATRA's view, it is the time for writers to have a great soul to revolutionise the attitude of the "happy-go-lucky" in literature" (Rasyid 1981:283).

This message implied the politics of literature as a source of the formation of GATRA and was related to the writers' awareness of the value of literature as a source of knowledge and as one of the major symbols of national identity. GATRA's idea was therefore contrary to that of some writers, who produced literary pap, and revealed the aim of its members was to improve the quality of Malay literature.

Along with nationalism, regional pride appeared as a purpose of writers' associations, such as ASASI, which aimed "to resurrect folk tradition and regional culture, which are related to literature" (ibid.:372). In this context, a sense of regionalism became an aspect of Malay nationalism. However, it is also noticeable

that the regional attachment of writers can be seen through the names of their literary groups, which not only identify the geographical features of the regions, but also the places of their members. [31]

Secondly, the animated literary atmosphere stimulated writers to set up literary groups and proclaim their creative talent to literary friends outside their regions. This was clearly seen in the establishment of ASMUPATI in 1955, inspired by the literary associations and literary activities of the Asas 50 (the Generation of the Malaysian Writers of 50) in Singapore (A Wahab 1985:61).[32] ASMUPATI was also inspired by the column 'Sahabat Pena' ('Pen Friends') in the literary journal *Hiburan* ('Entertainment') based in Singapore and led by Jimmy Asmara. Apparently, most literary works found in the column were written by Kelantanian writers (ibid.:61). It can therefore be interpreted that the works of Kelantan writers in that journal had inspired the need to demonstrate their creative talent and compete with other writers outside their region. S. Othman Kelantan admits that the idea to proclaim their talent to those outside their region was a part of their inspiration.[33] When writers had lost this competitive spirit, ASMUPATI became notably weaker and disappeared (ibid.: 152).

Thirdly, as in Thailand, the formation of the northern Malay literary groups derived from the writers' struggle to find publishers. However, this common problem was faced by many new and unknown writers, both in the capital and the regions, worsened by the closure of certain leading literary journals such as *Mutiara* ('The Pearl') and *Hiburan* ('Entertainment'), which affected Kelantan writers (ibid.:67). Such a problem was also faced by Kedah writers when those such as Abdullah Abbas Nasution, Budiman Radzi, and Puzi Hadi sponsored the publication of their own

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[31]For example, the word 'Pantai Timur' (or the East Coast) of the Angkatan Sasterawan Muda Pantai Timur (ASMUPATI) characterises the geographical identity of Kelantan, Terrengganu, and Pahang which are located near the sea. In addition, the names of the following literary associations identify the original regions of writers. For example, PPK is from the word "Persatuan Penulis Kelantan" (or the "Association of Kelantan Writers"), GATRA is from the "Gabungan Sasterawan Sedar Kedah" (or the Association of the Enlightened Writers of Kedah), and ASASI is from the "Angkatan Sasterawan Nasional Kedah" (or the "Generation of Kedah Writers").

[32]According to A. Wahab Ali (1985:61), apart from Asas 50, there are the literary associations of the Angkatan Sasterawan Negeri Sembilan (The Generation Writers of Negeri Sembilan), Asas Utama Pulau Pinang (The Main Foundation of Penang) and Ikatan Persatuan Melayu Melaka (The Union of the Association of the Malay Malacca).

[33] Personal interview with S. Othman Kelantan, 20 March 2001.

works (Rasyid 1981:11). Hence one of the documented aims of GATRA, and later on of ASASI, was "to hold discussions among members in order to tie up with and improve the status of literature at every stage with certain groups; either with the government, private sector, publishers or others" (ibid.:372).

The aforementioned sources of inspiration and factors of writers' associations lead to the subsequent conclusions. Whether marked by dynamism or inertia, the literary environment can inspire writers to form groups. Although writers' sense of regionalism can be considered a common characteristic, in terms of literary movements it has brought some changes to the theme and contents of Thai and Malay literature. More importantly, literary movements associated with politics, such as 'literature for life' (*wannakam pheua chiiwit* or better known in Malaysia as *seni untuk masyarakat*) became a significant source of inspiration in the formation of regional literary associations in northern Malaysia and in southern Thailand. For Malaysia this came as a result of having been colonised, independence bringing the struggle to legitimise the Malay language, literature and culture as emblems of national identity. No less important an inspiration was the place for writers to disseminate their works both inside and beyond their own regions, which brought the need for writers to set up a publisher for their group purposes.

The questions of writers' concerns and roles of literary associations

Along with sources of inspiration and factors in the formation of the literary groups, the agenda of these groups were also to display similarities and differences in the concerns and roles of their members and their literary organisations, and how they fitted in to the mainstream national and regional literature of the two regions. For example, the agenda of *Klum Naakho'n* of southern Thailand was announced as the following:

1) To exchange ideas about literature, the news and movements of local culture, as well as the content, form, and trends of every literary genre.
2) To disseminate the local cultures (of the south) and literature more widely to the younger generation, both inside and outside the region.
3) To organise the activities of literature and cultural arts, which means to exchange various forms of literary attitudes and to disseminate ideas and information about literature and local culture more widely to the public.

4) To assert the significance and value of Thai culture, including original identities and the ones that have changed to suit modern Thai lifestyles. Both aim to serve sovereignty, democracy and other significant institutions, which are highly meaningful to a sense of being Thai.
5) To exchange ideas and news of the fight for democracy, rights, and freedom as well as the fight for a better life for the people in the form of literature and cultural arts (Editors 1982: 30-3).

From the agenda of *Klum Naakho'n*, it can be interpreted that the main interest of its group is the cultural wealth of their home region. Their local concern can be seen as part of their response to the movement of regionalism. This arose after October 6, 1976 when Thai historians began to pay attention to local rather than national history, based on the centre, as a source of the study of cultural identities and social integration of the whole nation.[34] In addition, *Klum Naakho'n* was formed in 1982, the year after the relaxation of the political struggles that ensued from the bloody coup of October 1976.

With reference to literature, regional culture became a source of inspiration for the group and its members. However, what is important to note here is that the above agenda also reflects the influence of the literary movement of 'literature for life' on *Klum Naakho'n* members as part of writers' commitment to their region and society.

In contrast to southern Thailand, the northern Malay literary associations in Kelantan and Kedah were firstly motivated by Malay nationalism as a result of the political struggle and social awareness of the Malays. Evidence is provided in the aims of Kelantan literary associations such as ASMUPATI and PPK and of Kedah ones such as GATRA and ASASI.

According to the study undertaken by Mohd. Affandi Hassan (1967), the aims of ASMUPATI were:

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[34] According to the Thai historian, Dhida Saraya (1982:60), the study of Thai history from the bottom up emerged as a response to two books on socialism written by Jit Phumisak. One is *Chom naa sakdina Thai* (โฉมหน้าศักดินาไทย, 'The Face of Thai Feudalism'), and the other *Khwaam pen maa kho'ng kham Sayaam Lao Kho'm lae laksana thaang sangkhom kho'ng cheu chon chaat* (ความเป็นมาของคำสยาม ลาว ขอม และลักษณะทางสังคมของชื่อชนชาติ, 'The root words of Siam, Lao, and Khmer and social characteristics of their ethnic names'). These books inspired many Thai academic scholars to return to the study of local history in contrast to the national history of the centre. Examples are Khajo'n Sukphaanit's *Thaanando'n Phrai* ('ฐานันดรไพร่', 'The Thai Proletariat') and Khukrit Pramoj's *Farang Sakdinaa* (Western Feudalism). The movement of historical study from the grass-roots aroused a sense of regionalism and influenced Thai literature and writers all over Thailand in the 1980s.

1) To encourage young Kelatan writers, especially to produce literary work of high value.
2) To disseminate and revive Malay literature and culture.

By contrast, the study undertaken by A.Wahab Ali (1985: 61) provides further detail, that:

> "This organisation represented an effort towards the unification of individual writers in the form of literary organisations. The aim was to create an awareness among its members to be more critical and to gather energy to be more effective in fighting for the sovereignty of the Malay language, literature and culture which derived from the spirit of nationalism".

When ASMUPATI became inactive, its purposes were transferred to PPK, as follows:

1) To unite literary associations from all over Kelantan.
2) To take care of the interests of the writers in general.
3) To improve the value of Malay literature by giving support to its members to write novels and poetry of high value.
4) To provide guidance to its members (ibid.:22).

In contrast to *Klum Naakho'n*, this reveals that the main concerns of Kelantan writers are not of regional but of national affairs. Writers felt the need to improve the quality of Malay literature and to produce younger writers to contribute works which would represent Malay identity and the nation.

GATRA, and later ASASI, also shared similar concerns, i.e.

1) To raise the quality or to improve the value of modern Malay literature.
2) To tighten the relationship between Malay writers and publishers.
3) To disseminate literary arts, which are useful to the public.
4) To oppose any elements which can destroy the value of modern Malay literature.
5) To absorb some high value of foreign elements to improve the value of modern Malay literature (Rasyid 198:365).

As with Kelantan literary associations, GATRA focused on the need to improve Malay literary quality. When GATRA united with 3PSK and became PENULIS, (which later changed its name to ASASI), the proposals of the two groups were combined as follows:

1) To unite all writers and literary men of Kedah in order to recover, disseminate and to lift up the national literature, which is based on Islam.
2) To hold discussions among its members in order to tie up with and improve the status of literature at every stage with certain groups; either with the government, private sector, publishers, or others.
3) To guide the students and the public in the Malay literary field (in both creation and appreciation) through courses, lectures, forums, discussions etc.
4) To co-operate with other literary associations, which have the same direction as this organisation, and which need to expand this field, including national culture.
5) To widen that field which is useful to the public by building some sections at a place which is suitable.
6) Some good foreign elements are acceptable to improve the national literature.
7) To disseminate public knowledge of the development and progress of the literature of this region by our own effort, through mass media and other suitable methods of communication.
8) To restore the folk traditions and regional culture which are related to literature.
9) To make an effort to improve the economic status of the association (A. Wahab 1985:61 and Rasyid 1981:365).

It is remarkable that the literary associations of northern Malaysia displayed a positive attitude towards foreign literature of high value as a source of improvement in their writing and in their national literature. GATRA seemed to be the first group to have placed Islam at the forefront of the development of modern Malay literature. Such an idea is also found in GATRA's declaration as a part of its group ideology and was announced by Shahnon Ahmad, its leader and founder of the group. As Rasyid (1981:295):

> GATRA would adhere firmly to the Islamic fundamentals both in 'immanent' and 'transcendental' substances. GATRA would make an effort to introduce the beliefs of Iqbal, Ibnu Sina, Al-Gazali, Sartre, Camus and other philosophers and mysticists in order to seek broader explanation for the mystery of life. As leader of GATRA, Shahnon explained that GATRA is not a popular association. GATRA will move in its own ways. GATRA is not an association which is noisy because, according to GATRA's view, the writing product, which is in an artistic form, is more significant than that in an oral form (Rasyid 1981:295).

GATRA's recognition of the significance of Islam as the source of Malay writing has been transferred to ASASI and practiced by its members up to the present.

Contrarily, while the northern Malay writers' associations prioritise Islam, *Klum Naakho'n* does not place Buddhism at the forefront. Such a difference is understandable in that Thailand has not experienced religious conflict in positioning Buddhism as a national religion, unlike in Malaysia. However, although religious commitment is not written down as a purpose of the group, it does not mean that the *Naakho'n* writers ignore the significance of religion as they do also produce fiction about religion, as discussed in Chapter Five.

Regarding the questions of the roles and functions of literary associations, some similarities and certain differences exist between *Klum Naakho'n* and the northern Malay writers' associations.

Firstly, their associations act as literary forums for writers to discuss, exchange and disseminate their ideas and knowledge among their members in particular and to the public in general.

Secondly, they stand as a quasi political unit, in which writers use their work to promote their 'Malayness' or 'Thainess' at both regional and national levels. In this regard, northern Malay writers play a more crucial role as the protector of their Malayness than southern Thai writers do of their Thainess. In addition, writers' response to regionalism in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia has a different aim. Such a way of thinking in Malaysia is understandable in terms of nation building i.e. that regionalism among the Malay writers was not in opposition to the national culture of the centre. This is because, as a new nation after independence, the cultural identity of Malaysia has been taken from the cultures of all the Malaysian states. Malay writers supported the government to post Malay culture as the national emblem above the cultural identities of those called 'immigrants' by the Malays i.e. Malaysian Indians and Chinese. Therefore it could be interpreted that Malay regionalism was in response to the stabilization of the identity of Malaysia. By contrast, the regional movement in Thailand in general and southern Thailand in particular was a reaction against the national culture dominated by Bangkok. *Klum Naakho'n* writers needed to disseminate the southern identity to the other regions, especially to the capital, to proclaim the uniqueness and wealth of their region as second to none.

Finally, literary associations provide a place for writers to gain moral support in their work and to organise literary activities.

Types of membership

In respect of the membership of literary associations, Phillips (1987:40) notes of the Thai writers in the centre that they were from various occupations and a large number worked together and knew each other closely, either as peers or in employer-employee and teacher-disciple relationships.

Applying Phillips' view to an examination of the type of members of the regional writers' groups of southern Thailand and northern Malaysia, this study shows that writers are engaged in numerous different professions and that many are schoolteachers (*The Encyclopaedia of Southern Thailand* vol.8 2542:3686-8, A Wahab 1985:62, and Rasyid 1981:1). What Phillips does not mention is the regional writers and the sense of kinship and brotherhood that exists among regional writers in their associations, a characteristic which lies at the roots of the formation of *Klum Naakho'n*.

> "Because our group is not in the form of an organisation, it is more likely to be like a group of friends. Once we meet regularly and become very close, we become members of a group. In the last few years our group relationship has developed into that of relatives. Apart from giving attention to literature, we also attend to one another's personal problems, such as family problems. Any kind of problem we bring to our discussion, give advice and offer mutual help. As a result, our members are not only writers but also involve our parents, siblings, or writers' wives and their children" (Pramuan Maniirote in Maelamjeiaknuu 1998:38).

Such a kind of relationship is exemplified by Kanokphong's early life in *Klum Naakho'n*, where he was treated and seen by his senior members as the younger brother of the group.[35]

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[35]Kanokphong Songsomphan, as a member of *Klum Naakho'n*, pays respect to his senior members such as Somjai Somkhit, That Thaadaa and Atthako'n Bamrung, as his friends and brothers. He explains the relationship among *Klum Naakho'n* writers by comparing *Klum Naakho'n* with a village in which those senior writers play the role of caretaker or head of the village. As Kanokphong says: "If *Klum Naakho'n* were a village, Somjai would be the head villager who takes care of and provides food and other facilities for his villagers. He would take care of every member, not only me" (Editors. 1996,87). Somjai Somkhit also mentions of Kanokphong that: "Kanokphong is humble, helpful and considerate. My family loves him like a brother and he is a considerate man. If it is not beyond his ability, he will not disturb anybody. When he was a young boy, he used to prepare coffee for us" (ibid.:87).

Northern Malay literary associations, on the other hand, have developed from a sense of professional companionship rather than of brotherhood. Shahnon Ahmad recalls the starting point of GATRA as follows:

> Its members are literary men who are really 'literary-minded' and its activities only focused on literary movements. GATRA had literary discussions at its members' houses from house to house and discussed its members' works which were brought to exchange ideas to improve the quality of their works. At the same time, writers gained encouragement and moral support to further write more seriously.[36]

Shahnon's memory of GATRA can be interpreted to show that GATRA's members were people who shared their interest in literature and were close companions.

It is noteworthy that the sense of companionship, brotherhood and seniority can be best understood in terms of the Thai and Malay social systems as being hierarchical societies in which the young should respect their elders or seniors, and conversely, that elders should help and support junior members. In both Thai and Malay cultures, the writers' sense of companionship and brotherhood is not unusual but its importance lies in the sense of mutual help among literary members which it instils. This is the reason why, after winning the S.E.A. Write Award in 1986, Phaithuun Thanyaa contributed his short stories to the Naakho'n publishing house, run by fellow *Naakho'n* member Jen Songsomphan, in order to support his friend's business.

> "I had my own community which was working on literature and I thought that if I had the chance, I would help them. As it happened, my friend in *Klum Naakho'n* was going to start a publishing company. The idea was that we would help provide a forum for writers who found it hard to find publishers for their works" (Kanokphong and Wachira 1987:35).

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[36]Interview with Shahnon Ahmad cited in Rasyid Abdullah, "Kegiatan dan perkembangan Kesusasteraan Melayu Moden di Kedah Selepas Perang Dunia Kedua Hingga Tahun 1980"(Activities and Modern Malay Literary Development in Kedah Since 1980), Seminar on 'Konvensyen Sejarah Negeri Kedah' held by Kerajaan Negeri Kedah Darulaman at Wisma Negeri, Alor Setar 28 November-1December 1981)

Literary associations, writers and their works

When a writer decides to become a member of any particular group, this tends to mean that s/he has shared ideas with other members. This means that the group's ideology and the literary friends of a group inevitably influence writers' works. The preceding study on the interests of *Klum Naakho'n*, and the northern Malay literary groups of Kelantan and Kedah, indicates a certain belief in 'art for the people' or social commitment. Their writers use literature as a tool to communicate with and to promote regional and national cultures. To attain this goal all groups produce their own literary journals to spread their ideas to the public, arrange literary tours and give guidance to young students and persons interested in writing. What is to be noted here is that the groups' aims and attitudes towards the functions of literature and writers play a significant role in shaping writers' ideas in the production of the literary works of their groups and of individuals. These characteristics are to be found in all writers' associations.

In the case of *Klum Nakho'n*, where writers aim to use their work to promote southern Thai culture and literature, *Naakho'n* writers use the folklore of the region as a source of inspiration to produce, whether writing as a group or as individuals.[37]

The influence of *Klum Naakho'n* on its members' literary works can best be represented by the three publications it has produced. The first was a poetic novel entitled *So'ng roi pii reu sin setsaa* (สองร้อยปีฤาสิ้นเสดสา, 'Two Hundred Years-And What Has It All Amounted To?') in commemoration of the establishment of two hundred years of Bangkok as the capital city under the Chakri Dynasty in 1982. Instead of giving support to the success of Bangkok as the capital, the content and tone of this novel questioned the significance of that achievement. For the writers of *Klum Naakho'n* that achievement seemed insignificant. Nevertheless, as Jaruun Yuutho'ng said, "we joined the celebrations, but without great enthusiasm (ร่วมฉลองแต่ไม่ชื่นชม) ".[38] This was because most Thai people were still suffering from poverty, and ordinary people whose ancestors took part in the nation-building project had been marginalised. *Klum Naakho'n* therefore found it difficult to participate in the achievements of a nation focused solely on the capital, Bangkok. In addition, its

[37]For further detail see the subsequent chapters.
[38] Personal interview with Jaruun Yuutho'ng, 18 March 2001.

writers introduced southern Thai poetic forms such as the 'phleng reua' (เพลงเรือ) and southern Thai dialect into this novel. Although it was unsuccessful on the book market or in gaining public attention, the work portrayed the radical thinking political and social concerns of *Klum Naakho'n* and their sense of local pride.

The other two works produced by *Klum Naakho'n* were the journals entitled 'Khleun thalay tai' (คลื่นทะเลใต้, 'The Wave of the Southern Sea') and 'Yeun kham faa' (ยืนค้ำฟ้า, 'Resistance'). Obviously, all titles of those journals highlighted the regional concern of the group and served the aims of *Klum Naakho'n*, as noted by Pramuan Maniirote: "To run activities which focus on culture—be it literature, songs, folk culture, or the political movement of the time—in co-operation with other organisations at the beginning of the formation of the group" (Editors 1995:76).

In Malaysia ASMUPATI similarly produced a literary journal entitled *Timur* ('The East') which existed for only one year (1960-61). This journal contained essays on literature and culture, poems and short stories written by its members, including S. Othman Kelantan (Mohd Affandi 1967:21).

When ASMUPATI was replaced by PPK, the group also produced the journal of their group entitled *Pendukung* ('The Supporter') as well as other co-writers anthologies. The group published only three issues of the journal *Pendukung* and then had to stop because of financial problems (Abdullah 1985:31,41).

Similarly, GATRA produced a trimonthly journal entitled *GATRA* and, like *Pendukung,* only two volumes were published. Its other two works were the poetry anthologies *Kebangkitan* ('The Awakening') (published on May, 1969) and *Rebel* (published after May 13, 1969).[39] Both focused on the concept of 'Malay Power' and contained elements of Malay nationalism. These two journals aimed to make the Malays aware of their economic backwardness, as opposed to the other Malaysian ethnic groups such as the Chinese and Indians. They gained public attention throughout the year of 1969 (Rasyid 1981:295). GATRA's journals clearly reflected the political and social awareness of its members. It can be argued that GATRA had an obligation to the political and literary movement.

[39] The May 13, 1969 marked the incident of racial conflict between the Malay and Chinese.

It can be concluded here that the journals produced in the names of writers' associations, either of *Klum Naakho'n* or of GATRA, not only demonstrate the aims, interests, and attitudes of the organization and its members, but also confirm the existence of their associations and regionalism.

In addition to producing communal works, literary groups also influence their members to produce individual works by acting as a source of inspiration and exchange of ideas. This is apparent in the works of the four chosen writers of this study: both Phaithuun's and Kanokphong's anthologies of short stories *Ko' ko'ng saai* ('Building a Sand Castle') and *Phaendin eun* ('The Other Earth') respectively, reveal the regional concerns of their group. As a member of *Klum Naakho'n*, Phaithuun accepted that his early writing was influenced by his literary group, but changed when he left his hometown for northeast Thailand (Kanokphong and Wachira 1987:37).

Kanokphong himself also accepted that he was influenced by his senior, Pramuan Maniirote, whom he respects as his literary teacher. Pramuan helped Kanokphong in criticising his works and exchanging ideas (Editors. 1996:108). The S.E.A. Write award winning poet from northeast Thailand, Phaiwarin Khaaw-ngaam notes that:

> "Kanokphong was born into circumstances that could foster his ideas. He was lucky to have the *Klum Naakho'n* writers as his supervisors, as well as his friends in the 'Klum nok sii leuang' (กลุ่มนกสีเหลือง). He was willing to listen to whatever his friends said in criticism of his works to improve himself and his writing" (Poramat 1996:126).

Jaruun Yuutho'ng, a senior member of *Klum Naakho'n*, puts it more cynically when he argues that, "Kanokphong became an established writer so fast that he was like a factory chicken that was fed by instant food".[40] Contrarily, in Poramat's (1996:126) view, "because of Kanokphong's sensitivity as an artist, though he listened to other people, he might not follow their ideas. He had his own gift in writing". Jen Songsomphan, Kanokphong's own brother, reflects a similar view, arguing that:

> "his brother did not only have an idea of literature and then write it up, but that he was growing up in a thinking group (*Klum Naakho'n*). Jen himself did not,

[40] Personal interview with Jaruun Yuutho'ng, 18 January 2001.

however, have an influence on his brother's work. Kanokphong had his own ideas. He loved to think and dream and do things from his own ideas" (ibid.:129).

As with *Klum Naakho'n*, northern Malay literary groups also influenced their members' ideas in writing. S. Othman Kelantan played a significant role in the formation of the Kelantan literary associations ASMUPATI and PPK as a member and especially as an organiser and leader of the latter. In PPK, S. Othman was one of the committee boards from 1967 to 1977 and was selected to lead the group from 1975 until his resignation in 1977. Although PPK has joined with Gabungan Penulis Nasional Malaysia (GAPENA, The Association of Malay National Writers), S. Othman still maintains his membership, and at the same time, is a member of Persatuan Penulis Nasional (PENA) or the Association of Malay National Writers (A. Wahab 1985: 61-2). It is notable, however, that S. Othman might be influenced by his group only in terms of the purpose of writing—i.e. to promote Malay literature, language and culture—but that he may not be influenced by his literary friends. S. Othman reveals that in the early stages of his writing career, he gained much essential guidance through self-education via leading journals such as *Mutiara, Hiburan* and others. He was a literary figure for young Kelantan writers to ask for literary guidance and advice (Mohd Affandi 1967:72). It can therefore be argued that S. Othman might be a source of inspiration to his members and younger writers after him. In addition, S. Othman was considered a Malay writer who introduced new themes into modern Malay literature, such as the conflict between traditional and modern values and religious decadence, thus distinguishing his work from that of ASAS 50, whose writers focused on social awareness (A Wahab 1988:162-3).

By contrast with S. Othman Kelantan, Azizi was a member of the GATRA (now ASASI, which is also joined with GAPENA). In personal interview he acknowledges that in the early stages of his writing career he was influenced by the group ideology of 'Malay Power', and also by his senior and respected member Shahnon Ahmad. It is true that Azizi wrote many short stories to support the ideology of his literary group, as well as to support the government, especially on the issue of nation building i.e. to establish Malay language, literature and culture as national symbols. Many of his works aim to cultivate social awareness in the mind of the Malay people. In addition, Azizi is one of the early writers who produced Malay short

stories on the theme of Islam. With regard to Shahnon's influence on his writing style, Azizi says that he was inspired by *jiwa kedaerahan* or the spirit of regionalism introduced by Shahnon's works, especially the use of Kedah dialect. [41]

What should be taken into consideration in relation to the influence of literary groups on their members is their existence today. It is a fact that writers' permanent jobs and their marital status take them away from writing and publishing houses' interests also affect their existence. For example, ASMUPATI disappeared from the literary scene because its members who were schoolteachers were productive in academic writing rather than in fiction to gain promotion. Many of its leading members were transferred to work in remote places outside and inside Kelantan. Kelantan publishers preferred commercial books to literature. Writers lacked the competitive spirit and an effort to learn about the technique of writing, and many of them were married and took more responsibility for their families rather than concentrate on literature (A. Wahab 1985:61-2). When PPK was formed as a replacement of ASMUPATI, this organization was active during the first decade and became weaker later on as a result of the attachment to certain leaders and the emergence of several groups formed by the new writers of Kelantan, such as Persatuan Penulis-Penulis dan Peminat Sastera Pasir Putih (PUSPA), or the "Association of Writers and Literary Fans of Pasir Putih" (Abdullah 1985:33).

Klum Naakho'n also faces the same problem as ASMUPATI and PPK in that some members have moved out from their region and their careers and marital status have prevented them from being active in writing or focusing on writing seriously. Evidence provided by the case of *Klum Naakho'n* where, although its members have been able to keep their literary group and literary ties, literary production in-group has disappeared (Kanokphong and Wachira 1987:33).

A further factor of equal importance is that of the disappearance of rural and urban discrimination among its members. The feeling of anger towards the people from the capital, who tend to classify those from outside the capital as *khon baan no'k* or country folk, is insignificant for some writers as a motivation to write. This comes as a result of the increased age and maturity of the members, and their responsibilities for their careers, and families. Radical views of being on the periphery in relation to the centre has weakened as times have changed and the region has undergone

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[41]Personal interview with the author, 20 March 2001.

economic development. The gap between the centre and the periphery has been narrowed down by the rural development of infrastructure like the construction of roads, and the supply electricity and water to many villages. Information technology or mass media communication like satellite television and telephone now link rural areas to the city and bring the periphery closer to the centre. The whole country now shares a similar identity in terms of consumer culture, such as 'Mobile telephone culture' (in Phaithuun Thanyaa's words *watthanatham meu theu*).

As a result, the idea of writing is no longer so strongly attached to or dominated by the notion of the group. Each writer has developed and looked for his own way and his own identity. Evidence is provided by the work of Phaithuun Thanyaa, such as in his collection *Tulaakhom* (October), which highlights individuality and the problems of the nation as a whole rather than those of the region of the south. This differs greatly from his early work such as *Ko' ko'ng saai* ('Building a Sand Castle') which referred wholly to the south.

By contrast, Kanokphong Songsomphan's short stories in *Phaendin eun* mainly concern the social problems of the south, problems that had been presented by other southern writers, but which in Kanokphong's case reveal his own distinctive identity and style of presentation, such as magical realism.

Today the role and function of literary associations might be concluded in Azizi's words, "The purpose of the association is to demonstrate the writing ability of an individual group. Today it shows the ability of an individual writer not of the association anymore. The association only shows activities, not writing quality".[42]

Azizi therefore implies that the formation of the literary association is now stimulated by the competitive spirit of writing among writers of different regions. Each organisation has its own talent and identity. Nowadays, the associations function as gathering places for writers and have a diminishing influence on their members.

[42] Personal interview with Azizi Haji Abdullah, 12 April 2001.

Intellectual Genealogies

Further to discussing the impact of literary associations, Herbert Phillips points to intellectual genealogies as a significant source of Thai literary identity. Phillips believes that intellectual genealogy has a greater influence on Thai writers, and stays with them forever in the sense that it has shaped the feature of Thai literature and writers' attitude towards their writing career. He argues that:

> "There is one other source of literary identity that must be mentioned, and that is the sense that almost all Thai writers have of their own intellectual genealogy--their relationships to specific literary figures who they feel have stimulated, taught, or inspired them or in whose footsteps they feel they are following. In our judgement, these links have the most lasting impact, on the writing of most authors and on their views of their own literary positions" (Phillips 1987:48).

Here intellectual genealogies refer to 'ideal writers' or literary models of writers who give inspiration, literary knowledge and training in becoming writers. Phillips' point of view therefore gives useful guidance to the investigation of the identity of regional writers in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia and raises the following questions. Who are their ideal writers? In what ways do those literary figures inspire them to become writers and what influences do those people have on their writing and how regional writers see themselves?

Generally, the selected regional writers in this study have their own literary models which inevitably impact on their writing and their attitude towards their career as writers.

To begin with Phaithuun Thanyaa, his first literary model was an author of shadow puppet plays. Phaithuun was attracted by the art of storytelling of a puppeteer or 'naai nang talung'. He recalls that:

> "When I was a young boy, I loved to see 'nang talung' (shadow play) as much as to listen to my mother's tales. Although my mother's tales were very joyful, they were less interesting than the stories of the 'nang talung'. This was because there were characters that appeared on the white screen. There were the humorous dialogues of the troupe's leading comedians to make audiences laugh. There were demons, devas, heroines, heroes, wicked and the good characters, whereas my mother's tales were only oral ones. There was

not any gesture acting. However, both of the two narrative styles made me interested in telling stories since that time (Phaithuun 1996:12).[43]

From his memories it can be concluded that Phaithuun's inspiration to be a writer initially derived from the puppeteer of the indigenous shadow play. The puppeteer was his childhood hero and had great influence on his writing in the sense that Phaithuun narrates his stories in chronological order, like the puppeteer.

Phaithuun's other intellectual heroes also involves Western and Thai senior writers. From Phaithuun's essay, he reveals that his ambition to be a writer derived from his imitation of the writing style, and was adopted from the works, of several writers in whom he was interested. Phaithuun describes how his writing interest was stimulated by his reading of prose and poetry. Though Phaithuun Thanyaa does not specify which particular writer he would like to imitate (Phaithuun 1997:104). However, he does say that:

> "This might be called 'the theory of imitation'. Are there any writers who never imitated other writers' works? I believe that every writer imitates the works of his ideal writers. Before I can write any works, I remember that I was fond of the writing style of many writers. When I read Hemingway's works, I wished I could write like him. When I read Phibuunsak Lakho'nphon's works, I also immediately wished I were Phibuunsak. After that, I continued observing those writers' works and their writing style and elements in their works" (ibid.:105).

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[43]Phaithuun explains further that: "Whenever there was a shadow puppet performance for me to see, my brother and I were so excited that we forget to have dinner. When night had fallen, we went to the show carrying a piece of mat, lying down on it in front of the stage. It was unbelievable that we were able to stay overnight in the dew watching the performance from the early night until the next morning came. When we came back home and slept, and the show had finished, we felt that the sound of its music and the beautiful tone of the narrative poetry sung by the puppeteer still echoed in our ears. Some of his words and sentences still remained in our memories as if they were recorded, like "we are aakhantuka yaam khamkeun" (we are night guests)". Phaithuun emphasises his childhood ambition that, "In my childhood, I loved to see *nang talung* and wanted to be a puppeteer. Thinking about it, it was very funny and was impossible. What I could do at that time was that my brother and I built a small hut (to be a stage for their play) and asked for a worn out monk's cloth (or *jiiwo'n*) from a monk living in a temple near my house to use as a screen. We made the puppets from our used drawing paper. We played and took turn to be a puppeteer and audience, like the children. I was a puppeteer while my brother was the chorus. He was good because he was able to produce the oral music correctly. We played until we got bored (Phaithuun 1996:12,16-7).

It seems likely that Phaithuun's interest in those writers' works might be interpreted as his literary genealogies who inspired him and more or less influenced his writing style.

By contrast with Phaithuun Thanyaa, Kanokphong Songsomphan's intellectual genealogies were Erskine Caldwell, Suchaat Sawatsii, Lao Khaamho'm, Sathaapho'n Siisajjang and Pramuan Maniirote. Those writers gave him various kinds of inspiration. According to Kanokphong, the most influential Western writer for him was Erskine Caldwell. His autobiography in Thai translation entitled *Thanon nakkhien* (ถนนนักเขียน, 'The Road for a Writer') represented a real-life model of a writer for Kanokphong. Erskine's life as a writer impressed him so much that he nearly left his home and his secondary school to become a writer. With regard to this book, he argues that:

> "...reading this book makes me uncomfortable and ambitious to be a writer. At that time that I was studying in Prathom five (in primary school) and I had already written some works and therefore the need to be a writer had already been instilled in my mind. At the time I thought that any youngster who wished to be a writer and had a chance to read this book might become crazy, especially after reading the part where Caldwell writes about the first time he left the city and went to live in the forest. He wrote his work from morning until evening. He had to cope with several difficulties in becoming a writer. At this point his book gives us the strength to dream and to expand upon our dreams. The intention of a small human being in the life of a writer had shown the potentiality of man. Using Hemingway's words, Caldwell had proved that human beings were not born to be defeated. It was an ideal that I am very impressed with. As a result, it inspired me to become a writer" (Editors 1996:76-7).

Besides Caldwell's autobiography, Chaat Ko'bjitti (1954-), a senior Thai writer, has also become Kanokphong's career model. Kanokphong admires Chaat's discipline and commitment to his work arguing him to be his way of working, "a good model as a person who is serious and well-prepared" (ibid.:95). With reference to intellectual genealogies as a source of inspiration and literary guidance, Kanokphong was also grateful to senior Thai writers such as Sathaapho'n Siisajjang, Suchaat Sawatsii, and Lao Khaamho'm who gave him the strength and inspired in him ideas, themes and writing style.

> "I usually went to Sathaapho'n's house to eat while I was studying at Prince of Songkhla University, Haatyai. Pramuan said that Sathapho'n was like the

> Khunkhao Luang.[44] I myself would like to say in the same. I got some ideas which were influenced by Phanom Nanthaphreuk (Sathaapho'n's pseudonym). In terms of literary trends, Sathaapho'n was an early writer in my mind, as were uncle Khamsing and Suchaat (ibid.: 109)....Chatcharin Chaiwat and Seksan Prasertkun are also my literary teachers (ibid.:109,88).

However, it seems likely that the most significant ideal writer in Kanokphong's view is Pramuan Maniirote whom he respects as a literary brother and teacher. Pramuan gives him ideas about writing and Kanokphong expresses his feeling towards Pramuan, as follows:

> "Of course I respect Pramuan Maniirote as my teacher...I have been very close to Pramuan right from the beginning and up to now. It can be said that for almost ten years we have been not separated from each other. We have known each other's ideas and thinking processes. Pramuan is a slow thinker. He immerses himself in a certain idea or issue for 4-5 years. Spending time thinking like this for 'many years', he has been able to produce only one short story. However, thinking carefully and in every respect before producing any work is an important thing which I appreciate and respect in him. I also think that it should be taken as a model" (Editors 1995:79).

Unlike Phaithuun Thanyaa, Azizi Haji Abdullah's autobiography reveals that his childhood literary models were comic writers. Among them were Abu Bakar Al Sidek, Raja Hamzah, comic writers of the newspaper *Utusan Kanak-Kanak* ('Children's Newspaper') and Salehudin, a comic writer of the series 'Kumbang'('Beetles'). Azizi would have liked to see his name appear in the newspapers like those writers, but at that time he did not know how to make it happen because he was so young. In his own words: "At the beginning I didn't know what I wrote for, except a desire to see my name in the newspaper like Abu Bakar Al Sidek, whose name appeared in the newspaper *Utusan Kanak-kanak* in the 1950s" (Azizi forthcoming).

As Azizi matured, his literary models changed from comic writers to the most famous Malay writers such as Shahnon Ahmad, Abdullah Hussein and A. Samad Said. At this time his childhood ambition was as follows: "The purpose of writing was still unclear, except that I needed to become like Shahnon Ahmad, A.Samad Said, Abdullah Hussein and other famous writers" (Azizi 1999:98).

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[44] A large mountain in Nakho'n Si Thammarat (ขุนเขาหลวง).

From his recognition, it implies that Azizi's wish to become a famous writer had been inspired by those writers who are also his literary models. Among the three aforementioned authors, Shahnon Ahmad became the most influential writer for him, and one whom he respects as his literary teacher. Azizi's relationship with Shanon was understandable as Shahnon was not only his former teacher, who taught him creative writing at Universiti Sains Malaysia, but also someone who has usually given him strength, literary guidance and comments on his works as his teacher. Significantly, Shahnon also encouraged Azizi to become a novelist:

> "In fact I am not interested in writing a novel because it takes time to finish. Apart from the difficulty of building a long plot, I have a problem in controlling several characters. But, when I occasionally met with Dato' Shanon Ahmad whom I respect as my teacher, he usually said "You wouldn't write only short stories, would you? Write a novel as well." Finally, I have produced twenty-seven novels up to now" (Azizi 1999:98).[45]

As mentioned above, Azizi also absorbed Shahnon's writing style and ideas in the sense of using the Kedah region and dialect as his source of writing. Like Kanokphong Songsomphan, Azizi also had a career model whose name was Zain Arif. Zain was Azizi's former drama teacher, a drama scriptwriter for radio and also a short story writer. He inspired Azizi's interest in writing fictional drama scripts and to become a script drama writer as well as a short story writer for radio broadcasts 15 minutes long when Azizi took his course in drama in 1963. As Azizi notes, "I got a lot of inspiration when every night after our course I saw Zain Arif with his old typewriter sitting in the corner of a room typing his drama script for radio broadcast" (Azizi's autobiography, forthcoming).

Apart from Malay writers, Azizi was also inspired by the Indonesian Hamka, in the sense of language, though not in content or themes. Azizi sometimes copied Hamka's words and sentences into his fictional works (Azizi 1999:97).

As with Azizi, S. Othman Kelantan was also impressed by Hamka's writing and his point of view about Islamic philosophy, which they both enjoyed reading.

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[45]It is noteworthy in this regard that Jihaty also encouraged Azizi to become a novelist. In Jihaty's word: "Azizi, you must write something which is meaningful. You must write a very thick work") (Azizi's autobiography, forthcoming).

They liked his style of telling a story in letter form and were influenced by his works. S. Othman recalled from memory that:

> "Actually, from the very beginning my favourite author was Bapak Hamka and now I have no more because Hamka is dead. The Islamic perception which he brought to and absorbed into his works made me very happy to follow his stories since before I had not started writing yet. I accept that my works, which were written in letter form were influenced by Bapak Hamka (Ahmad Kamal 1993:231).

It is also worth mentioning here that, while S. Othman said that he did not have any other literary models, he also mentioned the names of Asas 50's writers such as Usman Awang and Keris Mas, whose works attracted him. In addition, those writers might have inspired him more or less to become an established writer like today.

> "In fact, my improvement (in writing) was a long process and took a very long time. My idea at that time was that I had seen many writers of ASAS '50, such as Usman Awang and Keris Mas. I concentrated on their works which I thought were very interesting. That was my deep interest in their works and I had met with those literary men also. Clearly, I might not have thought that I wished to become a good, well-known, and even established writer, but it seemed likely that when I became a writer and produced some works, then such a result would lead to a degree of what I had been dreaming of (ibid.:211).

Apart from Malay writers, Western novelists such as Hemingway were also ideal writers and a source of inspiration to S. Othman, as he explains:

> "For Western writers, a novelist whom I appreciate is Hemingway. This is because his narrative style does not stray far from a single space. For example, if anyone says that my short story entitled *Angin Timur Laut* ('The Monsoon') was influenced by *The old Man and the Sea,* I will not refuse it" (ibid.:231).

In summary, it can be seen that the four writers in question have their childhood literary models, models whom Phillips (1987:49) refers to as 'childhood heroes'. Such 'childhood heroes' might be either an author of the oral tradition or of the modern one whose talents in telling a story, either on screen or on paper, have impressed them so much that they would like to follow in their footsteps. Such role models form initial sources of inspiration and stimulation to become writers. As the

four writers matured and were exposed to the literary world, they encounter many more writers as teachers or literary guides, through personal contact in teacher-disciple relationships, as literary friends, or as readers who have read those writers' works. Writers' literary models became the sources of inspiration for their fictional works, for their writing improvement and for their creative achievements as writers.

Conclusion

The three main elements—autobiography, literary associations and intellectual genealogies—discussed above demonstrate the significant fact that autobiography is an essential consideration in the textual analysis of Thai and Malay short stories since the selected authors produce their works from their experiences and surrounding environment. Their family members are the ones who introduce authors to the imaginative world and imbue them with a love of literature. This is followed by their literary education, which helps them to develop and sharpen their creative talent.

In addition to autobiography, the literary associations the authors belong to and the intellectual genealogies with whom they associate themselves are the other important elements of the Thai and Malaysian literary culture. It is a fact that although the literary associations are the forums for writers to exchange their ideas and improve their writing, this means that the writers themselves have their own creative talent to improve their writing as well. Equally important is the fact that the presence of regional literary groups in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia not only affirms the existence of a regional identity but also the authors' sensibilities to their home regions and their need to be recognised by society and the nation at large. Regarding the issue of literary models, both the southern Thai and northern Malaysian writers have their own ideals, who are local, national and international. They are the authors' source of inspiration in their writing.

The different natures of the southern Thai and northern Malaysian authors and their literary associations is the result of the religious education, the source of motivations for writers to form their literary groups and the form of membership.

As seen in this chapter, Malaysian authors, S. Othman Kelantan and Azizi Haji Abdullah, both formally studied in the Islamic schools, which have encouraged them to be more aware of their religion and produce works on religious issues. For

example, Azizi produced works on Islamic issues and many of them won the religious literary prize. Consequently, religious work has become a part of Azizi' literary identity. By contrast, Thai authors; Phaithuun Thanyaa and Kanokphong Songsomphan, attended secular schools and tend to produce works on social issues rather than on Buddhism. They are known as writers of social-realism not religious one.

Regarding the motif of literary information, the southern Thai literary association, *Klum Naakho'n*, was motivated by the social movement of regionalism, whereas the northern Malaysian literary associations, the PKK and ASASI, by Malay nationalism. Regionalism was a part of Malay nationalism. These contrast motivations resulted from the different political situation of the two countries of that time. For example, the southern Thai writers wanted to demonstrate their literary capability to the capital writers and wished their local cultures to be seen by the Bangkokians as values as of the capital. On the other hand, the northern Malaysian literary associations, supported the Malay government to fight for the sovereignty of the Malay language as the official language, not English as preferred by the minority English educated Malay elites, ethnic Chinese and Indians. However, both the southern Thai and northern Malaysian literary associations share the struggle for finding publishers to disseminate their works. They saw the forming of their literary groups as a means of solving their problem.

With regard to the type of membership, the *Klum Naakho'n*'s relationship among its members is strongly based on the sense of brotherhood and companionship, while the northern Malaysian groups on professional companionship. This conclusion can be drawn from the fact that the literary associations in Thailand in general, and in southern Thailand in particular, are not officially formed as in Malaysia.

Chapter Three

History and Politics

Introduction

This chapter has three aims; firstly, to analyse short stories on historical and political themes in order to examine how the selected authors make use of history as a source of inspiration and what they aim to achieve. The focus will be on short stories on the history of the Japanese invasion and communist expansion in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia. Secondly, since Malaysia was a former British colony, this chapter aims to study how the Malay authors present images of the British coloniser and the colonised Malays. By contrast, because Thailand has never been formally colonised by the West, the issue of the coloniser and the colonised will be discussed in terms of internal colonisation in which the government authorities represent the coloniser and the subjects are the colonised. This aims to examine how the selected Thai authors present the images of their government authorities and the subjects' attitudes towards them. Finally, this study aims to exhibit the authors' concerns regarding current political issues, as revealed in their works.

The Literary Expression of National and Local Histories

One of the significant characteristics found in South East Asian literature is the use of historical facts in fiction. Although history and literature are different fields and use different approaches in writing, focusing on factual data, the latter on imaginary material, history has frequently been used by South East Asian authors as a source for their writing. Therefore, certain historical events are recorded in a fictitious way, such literature being known in the West as 'historical literature'.

As Roger Webster (1990:109) explains,

> "There are many different kinds of historical writing, or writing which comes to be thought of as historical in some way or other...But most historical discourse does lay claim to a sense of 'pastness', to a past time which has

existed and is independent of the language used to describe it; the past is usually thought of as reflected through the language rather than constructed by it. In this respect, historical writing is very much involved with ascertaining facts, motives and explanations, and establishing forms of historical 'truth'. Such writing is centred on the past and its components, and we might well apply the 'kernel' metaphor to the way it works and is read".

In the Thai and Malay literary canons, there exists a large group of literary works collectively known as 'historical literature' (วรรณกรรมประวัติศาสตร์, 'sastera sejarah'), which uses history as its main theme. Manas Chitakasem (1997) and Tham Seong Chee (1981) reveal that both traditional Thai and Malay historical literatures share some common characteristics. Firstly, they are the literature of the courts; secondly, their authors' main aim in writing is to extol the virtue of the ruler (and patron); thirdly, the story often narrates the heroic deeds of kings and warriors; and finally, the works instil loyalty and emphasise the duties and responsibilities of the subjects to the aristocracy.[1] In addition, Manas (1997:131) argues that Thai historical literature is regarded by conservative literary experts as an essential form of knowledge and a part of the national literary heritage. This is because some historical writings contain accurate historical facts, which cannot be found in royal/national chronicles. More importantly, historical literature can be seen as a political weapon and the legitimation of a ruler and the administrators of his kingdom. In Thailand, the history from the top down is known as the *Phongsawadan history* or the history of dynasty.[2] In Malaysia, on the other hand, a well-known source for the history of the Malay Archipelago is *Sejarah Melayu* (The Malay Annals), which is now considered historical literature. Noticeably, unlike the Thai traditional historiography, the Malay traditional historiography not only extols kings, but also criticises them, such as Sultan Mahmud in the *Sejarah Melayu* who was described as an unjust king.[3]

In modern literature, although history may still inspire authors as source material, their purpose in writing tends to be to criticise the past misdeeds of rulers, rather than to praise them. Traditional historical writings are sometimes reinterpreted by literary critics and are even rewritten by modern writers. This new focus of writing is the result of the authors' response to new Western approaches to historical study,

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[1] For full details see Manas 1997:131-160; and Tham Seong Chee 1981:253-286.
[2] See Charnwit 1979 In Reid and Marr (eds.):156-170.
[3] See Liaw Yock Fang 1975.

so-called 'new history' and the rise of regionalism.[4] New historians pay attention to the history of commoners on the assumption that 'everything has a history', the sources no longer being limited to official perspectives of national chronicles and official records, but instead examining the oral and written sources of ordinary people. Therefore, literature too becomes a source of historical study.

It is to be noted that in contemporary Thai literature, writing on ordinary people in rural areas was popularised by writers such as Lao Khamho'm from the 1960s and later influenced regional writers. It is noteworthy that, in 1982, the year the government celebrated the Bicentennial of Bangkok, there were two significant phenomena which stimulated Thai authors' concern over the life of ordinary people and of their local cultures. The first was the production of two poetical works, i.e. *Caru'k RS 200* (The Memory of Two Hundred Years Bangkok Era), composed by Naowarat Phongphaibun, a National Artist of Thailand; and *Sepha phrai* (The Song of the Commoner), by a writer, poet and historian Sujit Wongthet.[5] The second was the literary seminar organised by Ongkorn Wannakam (the Organisation for Literature) in 1982.[6]

In Malaysia, Ismail Hussein, a renowned champion of Malay literature and a Malay cultural activist, claims that modern Malay literature is a literature of the people (*sastera untuk masyarakat*). Ismail considers that those who truly and seriously write about ordinary people are the writers of the 1960s, such as Kasim Ahmad, Shahnon Ahmad and S. Othman Kelantan. Shahnon's novel *Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan* (No Harvest But a Thorn) and S. Othman's *Angin Timur Laut* (The

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[4]According to Thongchai Winichakul, the interest in the 'new history' or 'local history' in Thailand firstly derived from the impact of the student uprising against the military dictatorship in October 1973 and this field became popular in the 1980s. This remarkable event inspired local intellectuals throughout the country to pay attention to local and regional identities. They produced transliterations and writing on local literature which led to the rise of regionalism. Secondly, Jit Phuumisak's work on Thai history from a Marxist perspective, *Chom naa sakdinaa Thai* (The Face of Thai Feudalism), inspired many scholars to examine a history of the common people, of the masses, and from below. Finally, local history became institutionalized, making it a subject in the educational curriculum, and folk museums were built in every part of Thailand (Thongchai 1995:110). For further details of the 'new history' see also Burke (ed.), 2001:1-6.

[5] See Manas 1997:155.

[6] See Chapter Three.

Monsoon) represent the life of the farmers and fishermen of the whole country, respectively.[7]

Both contemporary Thai and Malay authors produce works about the life of ordinary people and the history of their region and nation in response to the rise of regionalism.

The subsequent section of this chapter will therefore examine the four authors' attitudes towards the study of history in their countries, the reflection of national and local histories in wartime and the relationship between the "coloniser" and the "colonised" in their short stories. One of the purposes of this section is to examine the relationship between the local and the centre, as presented by regional authors.

The Japanese Invasion

On 8 December 1941 Japanese troops demanded free passage through Thailand to invade the British territories of Malaya and Burma, a request granted by the Phibun government.[8] Historical studies of the Japanese invasion of Thailand and Malaysia by Thamsook Numnonda (1977) and Paul Kratoska (1998) suggest that oral history is a significant source for modern historical study. Thus, the subsequent section will examine the short stories by S. Othman Kelantan and Phaithuun Thanyaa dealing with the Japanese invasion as part of their local history, namely *Pahlawan Buntung* ('A One-Legged Hero') by S. Othman Kelatan and *Luuk chaai khon Chawaa* ('The Son of a Javanese') by Phaithuun Thanyaa. The aim is to examine how local history on the Japanese invasion is retold by the authors, what perception local people have towards the Japanese and what impact the Japanese invasion had upon the villagers' lives.

'A One-Legged Hero' is the tale of Pak Husain, a man regarded by the villagers of Pulau Pak Amat in Kelantan, as a local hero. Khalid, the narrator, talks with Pak Husain in Kota Bharu, the capital town of Kelantan, during the celebration of Malaysian Independence. During the Japanese occupation, Pak Husain became the

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[7] *Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan* was translated by Adibah Amin as *No Harvest but a Thorn*, published by Oxford University Press (Kuala Lumpur, 1972).

[8] Malaya refers to Malaysia before independence from the British.

village hero for helping the villagers to escape from Japanese soldiers by boat. He was abused by the Japanese by having to bury hundreds of dead soldiers, an experience that long haunted him.

> "The story of how Pak Husain was forced to bury the dead throughout the day spread by word of mouth from Dal village to other villages. It spread from villagers from Tebing Tinggi, Dasar, Kemumin, Pancur, Pulau Tukang Dolah and Teluk Kitang. And the people there are not grateful for what he had done, unlike us, the villagers of Pulau Pak Amat" (S. Othman 1979:127).

The above excerpt reveals that most villagers are ignorant of their own local hero. Therefore, the author can be argued to have written this story to provoke his reader to be more concerned about their local history and to appreciate the heroic deeds of their fellow villagers. Here S. Othman extols the heroic deeds of an ordinary person who sacrificed his life for the good of his community. Here, heroism does not simply apply to the actions of rulers, as in traditional literature, for every man can be a hero, no matter who he is or from what class he comes. Moreover, it is not necessary for the hero to broadcast his deeds to the public as in the case of Pak Husain, who has never asked for praise from his community.

At the close of 'A One-Legged Hero', when the Japanese are defeated, Pak Husain saves his villagers from pirates, but has his leg destroyed by a landmine. His misfortune reflects a central theme of the story, that war is cruel and results from the battles for political power in which ordinary people become the victims.

S. Othman's text further portrays people's fear of war and of Japanese troops, as part of Kelantan history.

> "Oh, God! Mak Esah's house was burnt. Burnt to the ground. This was the first victim of Pak Amat village. Mak Esah and her child have gone, together with their house...Jarah, Pak Ngah's daughter, was hit by a stray bullet in her shoulder, piercing her back. She did not die. However, her fate filled us with the tears. She fainted" (S. Othman 1979:122-3).

S. Othman's dislike of war is apparent in this text, as is his condemnation of the brutality of Japanese troops towards the Malay people and his land.

It is in a similar vein that Phaithuun Thanyaa records local historical events during the Japanese invasion of southern Thailand in 'The Son of a Javanese', a tale in which he aims to give ordinary people a voice on the impact of war on the lives of

the Javanese brought to southern Thailand as prisoners of war. Wa Sen arrives in southern Thailand as a prisoner of war, is helped by local Thais, marries a Thai-Muslim woman, Wa Ah and and has a son, Yafaad. Through the life of Wa Sen, the history of southern Thailand during the Japanese occupation is retold as an oral/aural history by the villagers and the narrator's mother. It reflects the attitude of southern Thais towards Japanese troops, as wicked and heartless and, by contrast, presents southern Thais as merciful because they cannot bear to see the Javanese prisoners tortured by Japanese soldiers. Compared to the Japanese, the Thai are said to have treated the Javanese better. In fact, it is said in the story that the Javanese were regarded by the Thais as their pet animals.

In Phaithuun's story, Su Loh falls in love with Wa Ah, but she chooses Wa Sen as her husband despite the fact that he is neither good looking nor wealthy. Since then Su Loh sees Wa Sen as his enemy. When Yafaad, Wa Sen's son, falls in love with Fatimah, Su Loh's daughter, Su Loh decides to marry Fatimah off to a man from another village. As a result, Fatimah commits suicide. Tragic love is used here as a theme to entertain the reader, whereas a more important theme lies in the telling of history by emphasising orality/aurality.

> "We used to love hearing all these stories. But it was always other people who related the tales of Wa Sen and the Javanese; never once did we hear them from the lips of Wa Sen himself. People said that Wa Sen, like all Javanese, remembered nothing of his past. The village elders explained that before the Javanese were brought to Thailand, the Japanese gave them some kind of injection which caused them total amnesia, so that they even forgot who they were, where they came from, and where they had lived before. The Japanese must have wanted them to forget that they were even human beings so that they would be easier to control and would work hard for the terrible Samurai army.
>
> I don't know if all this was really true, but it was what we believed at the time. We even believed the things that Paa Da, the old lady who sold coconut pudding[9] in the village, used to tell us, that the Japanese would not allow the Javanese prisoners to eat, and gave them so little food that they were nothing but skin and bone. Those who couldn't stand the pangs of hunger would even go so far as to eat leaves as a substitute for rice. Paa Da said that

[9] Rachel Harrison translated 'coconut pudding' from local Thai name *Khanom khrok,* which are made from a mixture of coconut milk and rice flour, and are baked over charcoal in a round iron tray containing ten or so individual mortar (khrok) of approximately five centimetres in diameter (Harrison 1999:145).

she had even seen some of the Javanese eating *sapruk*[10] leaves, despite their disgusting smell" (quoted in Harrison 1999:144).[11]

The reader learns of Wa Sen's fate and the impact of war on the villagers through tales told by the narrator's mother and villagers, such as Aunty Da. Although Harrison (1999) only sees Aunty Da as symbolic of continuity for the village/local history—passed on by word of mouth (ibid.:179), the narrator's mother and other villagers, can also be included in this tradition.

Both Phaithuun and S. Othman had no direct experience of the Japanese war and the local histories documented in their works are therefore based on oral histories that were told to them by fellow villagers or family members. The authors use different literary devices in telling the stories. 'The Son of a Javanese' is related by a narrator based on hearing the story from the villagers and from his own mother; whereas 'A One-Legged Hero' comes from the narrator's memory and experience in the Japanese war.

> "All of our properties had to be left behind. My mother could only take her jewelry. But Pak Ngah Isa and his neigbours near the river were able to carry with them as much rice as they could. I really understood that our refuge was caused by war. Yes, it is war. Although, I did not understand much what war meant, I could feel its result. All of us knew that this war was the immediate result of the attack by the Japanese on the British army. Pulau Pak Amat, which had a bunker that we had been proud of, became the first site for Japanese army. (I knew about this when I attended a school in the capital). Our neighbour was calculating the dates in front of me. That morning was 8th December 1941" (S. Othman 1979:123).

S. Othman uses fiction to document the arrival of the Japanese army on Kelantan soil on 8 December 1941—a significant event in the history of Kelantan. By contrast, Phaithuun chooses to present the sufferings of Javanese prisoners of war in Thailand in order to emphasise and expose the brutality of the Japanese. He makes no mention of the sufferings in direct relation to Thai villagers provoked by the Japanese presence, despite historical evidence that it did occur (see Thamsook 1977).

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[10]The *sapruk* is a ubiquitous plant in southern Thailand with highly malodorous, tough, leathery which is not normally considered edible (ibid.:145).

[11]The reference of the short story *Luuk chaai khon Chawaa* for this discussion is based on an English translation by Harrison (1999).

Despite this, both 'A One-Legged Hero' and 'The Son of a Javanese' do provide knowledge on local history, both telling it from the 'grass-roots'. It can further be noted that neither Azizi Haji Abdullah nor Kanokphong Songsomphan have written short stories on the Japanese War, but rather on the Cold War.

The Spread of Communism

The Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) and the Communist Party of Malaysia (CPM) were both founded in 1930 and suffered a series of retaliations by the forces of Thai and Malay governments. The ultimate goal of the party was to seize state power and to transform Thai and Malay societies into communist states. Although the CPT's members comprised people from various ethnic groups, they were considered Thais, in contrast to which, most of the CPM's members were ethnic Chinese and their party regarded by Malays as ethnically Chinese.

The slaughter of pro-democracy supporters on October 6, 1976 in Thailand forced many leading intellectuals into the jungles to join the CPT in the fight against the government. Recognising its failure in using military force to destroy the CPT, the Thai government under General Prem Tinansulanonda turned to political negotiations. In 1981, General Prem offered amnesty to the rebels. Because of disagreement within the CPT itself, many leading members of the CPT surrendered and accepted the amnesty, to rejoin mainstream Thai society.[12]

Although independence was declared in Malaya in 1957, the political struggle of the CPM did not completely end in 1960. Its troops moved to northern Malaysia and were based in the jungles along the Thai-Malaysian border, namely in Kelantan, Perak and Kedah on the Malaysian side, and in Betong, Sadao and Waeng on the Thai side. The CPM in these areas were believed to be supporters of the Malay Separatists in southern Thailand and caused many political problems in the region. With the co-operation of Thailand and Malaysia, the CPM disarmed in 1989 and this year saw the end of communism in both countries.[13]

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[12]For further details see Anon, (undated), The Road to Victory: Documents from the Communist Party of Thailand, Chicago; Anon, (undated), *Ook jaak paa maa suu meuang* (Return from the Jungle to the City); Kitti 1995; and Kanok 1982.

[13] For further details see Kitti 1995.

There is evidence that the expansion of communism in Thailand resulted from people's hatred of the dictatorial, corrupt government supported by the United States, and the wide spread of poverty, mainly in the countryside, turning many people to support the communist insurgents. As a result, the government ran many programes, such as mobile medical treatment and food contribution to the villagers in the remote areas, to win their hearts and minds (See Kanok 1982). By contrast, the spread of communism in Malaysia occurred because the Malaysians wanted independence from the Japanese occupation and from British colonisation. Unlike the Thais, after the Second World War, the Malays did not support the CPM because of issues of racial difference. Nevertheless, some Thais and Malays refused to support communism because communist ideology was against their religious beliefs.

The subsequent section therefore examines issues related to communism as raised by the Thai and Malay authors in question. The short stories referred to are *Saphaan khaat* ('The Broken Bridge') and *Baan keut* ('Hometown') by Kanokphong Songsomphan; *Ubaat* ('Curse') by Phaithuun Thanyaa; and *Yakjud and Makjud* ('The Deceivers 'Yakjud' and 'Makjud') by Azizi Haji Abdullah.

Both Kanokphong Songsomphan and Phaithuun Thanyaa use the historical angle of the presence of communism in southern Thailand (mainly in their birthplace of Phatthalung) as the source of their writing. Kanokphong presents this period in his two works, 'The Broken Bridge' and 'Hometown'.

In 'The Broken Bridge' Kanokphong highlights the lack of brotherhood and morality in war. The fight between communist and government troops, which he describes, is played out between two brothers of different political ideologies—the narrator, a soldier in the Thai military, and his younger brother Noi, a communist. Although both are good people, they are compelled to fight each other in their duty as soldiers. This makes the narrator realise that a real war is far different from the battle games of his childhood: "we have real guns, real bullets and real death. We have all these things to give to each other. We have these things to give to our friends and nobody crawls towards us to touch us when we fall!" (Kanokphong 1996:43).

The narrator recalls how a monk criticised his brother for joining the communists. Implicitly, the author uses the monk as a representative of religion which the Thais and their government have to protect from being destroyed by communist ideology. The monks' criticism reflects the widespread Thai attitude towards communists, as bad and misguided, and the contrasting view of the government

soldiers as good. Thus, his attitude implies the rights of the government to abolish communist supporters to protect religion.

However, the narrator disagrees with the monk's perception, arguing that: "his brother is also a soldier, but one of another army" (ibid.:46). Through this narrative, Kanokphong therefore puts forward the view that communist fighters can also be considered patriots whose political ideology is different from that of the government and that many Thais do not understand the conflict of political ideologies at stake.

What is important in this story is the use of conflict between the two central characters, which helps to highlight the theme of war—the conflict between morality and duty. At war, the narrator recognises the truth that there is no place for morality, a key theme of the text, as illustrated through reference to the 'broken bridge'. In the course of military action, the narrator takes responsibility as a driver of an armoured vehicle to attack the communist campsites in the Banthat Mountains in Phatthalung. On the way he encounters a 'broken bridge', bombed by the communists. Should he instead drive straight through the rice-field and destroy the crops? While deciding, he sees a monk heading straight for the bridge. When he is about to drive into the field, the owner, an old woman, appears in front of his vehicle, and begs him not to proceed. While the old woman reminds the narrator of the hardships of farming, the monk represents morality and a reminder of the Lord Buddha's respect for crops. Monks are also prohibited from travelling during the growing season for fear they would step on young rice plants. This is presented through the monologue of the narrator: "Does the army have a right over religion?" (ibid.:44). The narrator is forced to ask himself: "Are the rice crops less important than the triumph of the army and the country?" (ibid.).

> "At this moment, I feel that all the pressure of this earth is upon me. We are going to beat the enemies of the country. But does that mean we have to do it by treading on the lives of our citizens?...In front—between the golden field and me, there are hundreds of thousands of old women. Damn! For a second, I see those old women turning into the enemy troops we are going to meet" (ibid.:55-6).

Through this monologue, Kanokphong implicitly questions the actions of the government operations against the communist party and their implications for Thailand's rice farmers. He raises the possibility that such actions implanted hatred in the minds of the people. Here we have the key meaning, one which Jen Songsomphan

interprets as a reference to the broken relations between the government and its subjects (Kanokphong 1996:11).[14] As a result, the improper treatment of local people by local counterinsurgency officials helped communist recruitment.

A similar situation that pushed villagers to join the communist troops in Phatthalung is recorded in Kanokphong's *Baan keut* ('Hometown').

'Hometown' revolves around the sexual transgression of its narrator, a psychologically disturbed young man who confesses to having made pregnant a teenage girl, in the care of his parents. The abortion she is subsequently forced to have makes her seriously ill and mentally deranged. Through the literary technique of the stream of consciousness, Kanokphong links this situation to the theme of the abuse of power by the government on villagers and suspected communist supporters. As in 'The Broken Bridge', he therefore exposes the darkside of local government authorities in southern Thailand. In this story Kanokphong discusses the incidents that happened in Phatthalung during the communist insurgency and the government counterinsurgency, mainly in 1971 and 1972 when the Red Drum Operation was secretly run by the local government authorities.[15] In the text, the narrator reveals that the happiness of his family and of other villagers disappeared with the coming of communist troops and the low-paid voluntary soldiers on the government side. Many villagers, including the narrator's father and brother disappeared from the village to join the communists as a result of their infiltration policy in promoting their doctrine. The communists present themselves to the villagers as protectors and fighters for the poor workers and farmers with the promise to bring justice and social reforms.

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[14] Furthermore, the image of hundred of thousand of old farmers represent the helpless of the villagers in protecting their properties against destruction.

[15] The Red Drum Operation was the suppression operation initiated in Phatthalung Province in 1966—the year following the launching of the CPT's armed struggle—and was intensified in 1971 and 1972. These brutal killing were never officially reported to the central government, namely CSOC (the Communist Suppression Operations Command, 1969), so that evidence would not be documented which could later be used against the officials involved...An estimated 3,000 communist suspects were reportedly killed in Phatthalung in the Red Drums. The suspects were struck from behind and fell into a 200-litre red oil drum and their bodies then incinerated in the drum. Two other methods of killing suspects were also frequently used. In one, the communist suspects were put in a sack and thrown from a flying helicopter. The second method was to throw the suspects off a hilltop (Kanok 1982:117,119).

However, although many farmers consequently join the communist party, not all do so voluntarily.[16]

In 'Hometown', the narrator's father and brother do not really want to get involved in communist activities but do so because of death threats from the recruitment party. As a result, Kanokphong reveals the fear brought to the village by both communist and government armies and the brutal killing between them:

> "The corpse got stuck there. It was bloated. The tide tore its flesh to pieces. We saw—the water flowing through from the hole behind the neck to its eye socket. Nobody dared to get near or even stand below the river (Kanokphong 1996:74)...
>
> I came back home and saw the dead body floating in the canal again. This time, it was behind our house. That body got stuck at the *'khem'* bushes where we used to place our fishing net.[17] At first I thought that a fish had bitten its ear, but somebody said that it was done by the poorly-paid soldiers...While we were watching the dead body, someone came to tell us that at the sub-district office, the hired soldiers beheaded a man in the jungle and would exhibit that man's head on the street....That head was dirty and it was difficult to see whether it was a human head or a sculpture. However, I noticed that no one had closed his eyes. That was not something scary. It was an ugliness that no one wanted to remember, but I did" (ibid.:103-4).

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[16]According to the Council of National Defense's document, *samut pok khaaw prachaahon khuan ruu* (The White Cover Book that People Should Know) (1976:51), the communist infiltration policy is called 'chonnabot lo'm muang' or the rural was used to surround the towns. This means that the communists build their stronghold in the rural area for their political activities and siege the town later. The communist infiltrators must be people who are welcomed by the village leader. At first, they will not promote the communist ideology to the villagers but make friends with them and collect their opinions of what they need and then use these opinions as weapons to persuade the villagers to go against the government (cited in Sunipa Grainara 1999:50. Notably, in 'Hometown' Kanokphong presents the infiltration policy through the character Chaichana or 'Naa Chai', a communist infiltrator, who comes into the village with an army musical band and plays the songs which are in fact anti-communist. How then, does he promote communism? The text reveals that Naa Chai pretends to be drunk so he is left in the village and stays with the narrator's family. He takes a chance to promote communism among the villagers including the narrator's father and brother through the song of socialist leaning known as the 'song for life' or 'pleng pheua chiiwit' (เพลงเพื่อชีวิต) he sang: "Don't look down on the farmers as slaves. They take their rice-fields to be their shelters. Their life is never happy. They live under the heat of the deadly burning sun and lead buffaloes to plough the land" (Kanokphong 1996:69).

[17] *Khem* is a mass of reeds.

Kanokphong reveals in an interview with the Thai literary magazine, *Khwan reuan*, that he had actually witnessed the above scene (Editors 1996:129-30). Thus, in this short story Kanokphong exposes a historical fact to his readers which has never existed in the school or the university curriculum on the subject of Thai politics and history, because of its 'ugliness that nobody wanted to remember' (Kanokphong 1996:104). In fact, the government wants to conceal and does not want to remind the younger generation of the atrocities committed by government authorities against its own subjects.

By linking the atrocities described above, committed on behalf of the government, to his own sexual misdemeanour, the narrator acknowledges that everyone is capable of making a mistake. However, through the narrator, Kanokphong warns about the need for carefulness, so that such "ugliness and brutality" will not be repeated.

> "We cannot delete the past out from our mind at all. Priiyaa, a few children might make mistakes like me and live in misery to this day. However, I believe there are still many children who grew up in war like me and the cruelty of the past is alive in their minds. Perhaps, some be able to forget it. However, forgetting the event is only one way, when the event had already happened. More importantly, it is a very difficult way to solve the problem. The best way, is not to let such a mistake happen again. Priiyaa, as we are the people of today, the thing that we should worry most is about people of tomorrow. Do not let them accept an outcome that they have not done. Priiyaa...but—as I said...some things happen unintentionally. When I say this is like I am telling you that we must take every step in our life carefully, it isn't that right?. However, if it makes the world beautiful, it will be proper and necessary for us to be careful. But...Priiyaa—I am saying this as a man who made a mistake. My words might be unconvincing...(ibid.:100).

The key message relayed in 'Hometown' is therefore that the mistake by the narrator in his treatment of Priiyaa replicates that of the government towards suspected communist sympathisers; killed without trial or investigation. In the text, this is demonstrated by the death of the narrator's uncle, 'Naa Eiat'. He was requested by the narrator's mother to defuse a hand grenade found on the roof of the narator's house. Instead of throwing away the unarmed hand grenade, he hid it in his pocket. Unfortunately, while he walked in the street, he came across the police checkpoint. Realising of how dangerous it would be to become carrying ammunition during a time of war, he ran away from the police. The police then shot him dead (ibid.:94). This

can be explained since Naa Eiat ran away from the police without any good reason, it was reasonable for the police to think that he might be a suspect communist. However, what the author wants to present to his readers is the carelessness of the government agency in handling the use of power and winning the hearts and minds of the villagers during the war.

An analysis of Kanokphong's works concerning communism reveals the author's condemnation and villagers' viewpoints on the government authorities for the abuse of power against the innocent people and communist suspects. Obviously, Kanokphong does not show that the villagers perceive the communists as the villagers' enemies, whose main aim is to undermine the national icons—Buddhism, nation and monarchy—as propagandised by the government. Although Kanokphong raises a distinctive issue to reveal the government's mistake in the suppression of suspected communists, it cannot be concluded that he himself is a communist sympathiser. In fact, Kanokphong intends to show the frustration of the villagers and himself towards the brutality of the government agencies in killing those people. Clearly, Kanokphong writes short stories on the issues of communism in his home region as part of local history, to pass on his knowledge to the younger generation who may not have learned this history in their classrooms. But he clearly also makes a general point about authority and rightness.

A concern with the local history as well as the people's perception of government operations to suppress the communists, is also found in Phaithuun Thanyaa's short stories, most notably *Ubaat* ('Curse').

In 'Curse' the victim, Ai Kherm, works in a rubber plantation in a communist-controlled mountain. Accussed of being a communist sympathiser, he is beaten by volunteer government soldiers, is seriously injured and becomes mad. Ai Kherm's misfortune proves the abuse of power committed by the volunteer soldiers. Since the communist troops live in the jungles and use villagers as their source of intelligence and as food suppliers, it is difficult for the government to eradicate them. The government therefore cuts their supplies by forbidding the villagers to work in communist-controlled areas. To some extent, the villagers became the victims of government policy, because they can not make their living. It is clear from Phaithuun's use of language in the text (a play on the word "big" or "yai" (ใหญ่) as reference to the overuse of power by government soldiers), that the government

troops represent the villagers' enemies. They therefore deserve to be condemned as *ubaat* or 'cursed', as in the title of the story.

Since communism was also a serious political threat to Malaysia, it inspired the Malay writers—Azizi Haji Abdullah and S. Othman Kelantan—to produce works on the issue of communism and democracy. Like the Thai authors, they see war as a source of destruction in which innocent people become victims. The difference is, however, that, in their view, the war between the government and communists originated from the greed of world leaders and the need for certain politicians to dominate politics in the region. These notions are explored in works by Azizi, namely *Yakjud dan Makjud* ('The Deceivers, Yakjud and Makjud') and S. Othman Kelantan i.e. *Perjuangan* ('The Fight').

In 'The Deceivers, Yakjud and Makjud', the story focuses on communism, Western imperialism and capitalism.[18] According to Islamic eschatology, Yakjud, Makjud and Dajal are Deceivers.[19] Azizi uses them to express his view that both communism and Western imperialism are evils. Azizi's notion is discussed through the dialogues of Haji Rijal and his wife, Hajah Mahani. One day, Haji Rijal reads news about the US war against Vietnam and Korea, which he then discusses with his wife, whom he thinks is less clever than him. He compares the leading communist countries—Russia and China—with the deceivers Yakjud and Makjud, and the capitalists and imperialists—the US and the United Kingdom—with Dajal. Haji Rijal explains to his wife that communists do not believe in religion and love to destroy people's properties and faith. Their ideology is dangerous and has been brought into Malaysia from outside. Since the world has been dominated by two distinct political creeds—communism and Western capitalism/imperialism—the cold war has evolved as a test of their relative strengths (Azizi 1978:81).

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[18] *Yakjud dan Makjud* is extended from Azizi's earlier work entitled Dajal Bermata Satu ('The One Eyed') in which the author compares the America and the British governments to the Deceiver who support the Jewish Israel to kill the Palestinians and to colonise their land. The Arab world, on the other hand, is weak and lack of unity. They therefore fail to help the Palestinian.

[19] According to the Encyclopaedia of Islam, Yakjud and Makjud refer to the Deceivers, Gog and Magog. The names Gog and Magog are interpreted symbolically by Arab commentator as meaning 'flaming fire' and 'surging water,' that is violence, destruction, and agitation (Glasse 1989:107).

The point being made here concerns the expansion of communism and capitalism into South East Asia and the authors' attitude towards them. In the story, it is obvious that Azizi opposes communism and capitalism, as provided by the use of the metaphors—Yakjud, Makjud and Dajal. The reason for this opposition is because communism rejects religion and Azizi considers imperialists to be greedy. Nevertheless, the tone of the story suggests that Azizi is more anti-communist than he is anti capitalist, as revealed through Haji Rijal:

> "They eat human beings like they eat leaves; it does not mean that they eat human flesh or bones, but it means that they consume the human soul until their faith is destroyed, until their good intentions are in tatters...I have told you that eating human flesh does not mean eating the flesh and bones or drinking the blood, but eating the human soul and eating away at human beliefs. These people are evil. Didn't God say, that they love to do bad things, love to destroy, destroy the morale of human beings?...They are not only against religion, but they also do not believe in the existence of God. Their lives are dependent on materialism, therefore, they are prepared to eat anything" (ibid.:79-80).

The image of communists as demons or Satan, who are against God and seduce human being to the wrong path, emphasises the author's and people's view of seeing communists as the destroyers of the people's faith. Distinctively, the communists's rejection of religion disadvantages them in their attempt to win the hearts and minds of the Malay Muslims. Obviously, this work supports the government policy of anti-communism and warns villagers not to be misguided by communists, as presented through the simplistic writing style and through the country bumpkins—Haji Rijal and Hajah Mahani.

Regarding the simplistic writing, although the author does not identify to the reader who the communists and capitalists are, this answer can easily be found from the geographical information provided: "Those Yakjud and Makjud are human beings, do you know that? They are two nations, which are big like the 'melata ant'. They live, according to historians, in the north of the Asian continent" (ibid.:79).

The question is who will believe the warning of the danger of communism from country bumpkins. According to the Malay (and Thai) literary tradition, the clowns or *'watak jenaka'* could be either foolish or cunning. Occasionally, the traditional Malay author uses them not only to create the humourous atmosphere of the tales, but also to criticise the rulers, politicians and social affairs of his time. This

artistic technique, believed by the authors and audience, helps the author from putting himself at risk. Azizi also follows this literary tradition. He uses the country bumpkins who speak in the Malay dialect of Kedah, such as the word *'tau'* *'mau'*, *'beritau'* instead of the standard Malay 'tahu', 'mahu' and 'beritahu', meaning 'to know', 'to want' and 'to inform', respectively, to entertain its readers and present his political view. Noticeably, although his characters are country bumpkins, they are religious educated, as implied by their titles *'Haji'* and *'Hajah'*. This suggests that they are not fools. Hence, Azizi passes his negative attitude towards communism onto his readers through Haji Rijal's comments and his religious aspect is reasonable. Haji Rijal's criticism of communism reflects Azizi's own commitment to his religion, politics and his role as commentator on the outside world.

In contrast, S. Othman's 'The Fight' deals with the problem of communism on the border between northern Malaysia and southern Thailand. The location of war asserts the existence of the Malaysian Communist bases in that area and marks it as a war zone.

'The Fight' set on the frontier between Kelantan and Narathiwat. In this story the main character, Hamid, is a soldier of the Malay Separatist Movement which aims to liberate the Malays in southern Thailand from the Thai rule. Hamid sacrifices his life and family to join the Malay Liberation Army, living in the jungle for fifteen years. His experiences in fighting and observing the activities of the CPM and the attitude of the Malays in southern Thailand make him realise certain truths: for example, he begins to question whether the CPM, whose members are ethnic Chinese, would help the Malay separatist troops to liberate the Malays in southern Thailand without anything in return. Significantly, he recognises that most Malays in southern Thailand do not want to liberate themselves from the Thai government. Hamid therefore chooses to leave and return home. Unfortunately, however, when he arrives, he sees his wife with another man and leaves home again.

'The Fight' is an important story because it reflects the racial ties that exist between the Malays in Malaysia and those in southern Thailand, as illustrated by the charater of Hamid:

> "He does not accept what is called independence for the Malay land. No, Malay independence must include the four provinces of southern Thailand.

> When the movement for the liberation of Patani, PAPERI, and the activities of the National Liberation Army was introduced to him by one of his pious friends, in line with his contempt for an independence which is 'half ripe', he immersed himself straight away in the armed struggle" (S. Othman 1980:100).

The above passage reveals the author's attitude as well as that of the Malays in Malaysia in general towards the position of the Malays in southern Thailand, notably that the latter have been colonised by the Thais. The text implies that it is the Malay Separatists who are the patriots and although the troops are supported by the CPM, they are still Muslims and not communists who reject religion. In addition, it strengthens the Thai government's belief that that the CPM supports the Malay Separatist Army against the Thai government authorities in the south.

No less important is the author's attitude towards the CPM, which is clearly one of opposition deriving, unlike that of Azizi, from his racial prejudice towards the ethnic Chinese rather than from the standpoint of religion. Clearly, S. Othman sees the Malays who join the CPM as misguided and mistaken in joining what he considers to be a foreign power which wants to colonise Malaysia. This attitude is revealed in the reminiscences of the protagonist:

> "He can see the make-up of the tenth Regiment of the " National Liberation Army" which consists of foreigners. They fight to the end in order to bring independence to a country, which has no connection with them at all. Do they want to bring independence to a country which is not their own? This idea has long been growing and flaming in his head. What those other people actually want is also to colonise" (ibid.:101).

The 'foreign troops' referred to here are the Chinese soldiers who are seen by the Malays as 'others'. It is worth mentioning here that this story was inspired by the author's experience in working with government authorities along the Kelantan and Narathiwat border in bringing the communists to surrender to the government. It therefore confirms that the CPM had turned the Thai and Malaysian border into a war zone. In addition, it asserts that the Malays in Kelantan have supported the Malay Separatist Movement in southern Thailand and therefore disrupted the relationship between the two countries since the Thai government sees Kelantan as a 'sanctuary' for the Malay separatists of southern Thailand.

The analysis of short stories on the issue of communism reveals some similarities and differences in the concerns of Thai and Malay authors. In terms of political issues, the Thai and Malay governments are both anti-communist, seeing them as a threat to their religion and society. From a religious standpoint, the communists are regarded by both governments and by the people who are pro-government, as misguided and dangerous. In addition, texts dealing with communism are evidence that it was one of the most serious problems in the region.

Differences lie, however, in the fact that the Malay authors—Azizi Haji Abdullah and S. Othman Kelantan—support their government in the suppression of communists because, firstly, communism rejects religion and secondly, most of the communist members are ethnic Chinese whom the Malays identify as foreigners. The Malays therefore perceive the communist party as the foreign power that wants to colonise their land. By contrast, firstly the Thai authors—Phaithuun Thanyaa and Kanokphong Songsomphan—attack the merciless acts and the misuse of power of the government soldiers and other officials in killing innocent people during government operations to suppress the communists. In their works, government soldiers are portrayed as the people's enemy or as villains who abuse innocent villagers. The misuse of power by the government authorities reflects the failure of the government to abolish the communists and stop people from becoming communist sympathisers.

Secondly, Phaithuun Thanyaa and Kanokphong Songsomphan do not highlight the communist rejection of religion as their main point to oppose the communists. Thirdly, nor do they see the communists as foreigners, but as fellow countrymen. Nevertheless, the Thai authors are not communist supporters because they disagree with their sabotage of public property. What concerns them most are the injustices of political conflict and war between the government and the communist party, which render innocent people victims.

The Coloniser and the Colonised

The model of the power relations between the coloniser and colonised can be compared in Thai literature to one between the governor and the governed or the oppressor and the oppressed. The governors in this study are the government authorities and the governed are the ordinary people. The purpose of this section is to explore how Thai and Malay authors react to the conduct of their rulers. The short

stories under discussion are: *Kaan maa yeuan kho'ng ratthabaan* ('The Visit of the Government') by Phaithuun Thanyaa; *Manager Baru* ('The New Manager') by Azizi Haji Abdullah; and *Keputusan* ('Decision') by S. Othman Kelantan.

Phaithuun's work 'The Visit of the Government', published in 1994, three years after the killing of pro-democrats in May 1992, reflects his concern of Thai politics. He criticises the exploitation of power and position for the private gain of militants in Thai politics. A distinctive feature of this story is notable in the author's skilled word play, creating double meanings in the text. While drinking beer in a bar, the narrator 'I' and other customers are joined by a soldier, referred to as 'the government'. He greets all the customers with the words 'sawatdii prachahon' (สวัสดีประชาชน), literally meaning 'hello people', and ' kho' hai thukkhon yuu nai khwaam sangop' (ขอให้ทุกคนอยู่ในความสงบ), literally meaning 'everybody please be calm'. These words indicate and remind readers of coups d'état, which happen regularly in Thailand, the last in 1991. They also reflect the power relations between the governor and governed, in the sense that the government expects from the people obedience and discipline. Here 'the government' is used as a metaphor, referring to the soldiers in general and the military government in particular. This phrase is usually used in their announcement to the public after a coup, inferring that the coup is carried for the benefit of the people.

Having greeted the customers, the soldier somewhat surprisingly orders a glass of milk instead of alcohol, which amazes the other customers. Rich in nutrition, the milk can be interpreted as a symbol of wealth, making the government or military force grow strong. Among the customers one a middle-aged man (the owner of a barbershop) and a white-haired old man who observe and criticise the soldier's every move. Their comments on his speech and acts connote the inefficiency and self-interest of the government. For example, when the soldier is sitting and turning his chair around, the narrator says: "The government is playing with the chair" ("รัฐบาลกำลังเล่นเก้าอี้") (Phaithuun 1996:66). The 'chair' here symbolises the post of the government and implies that politics is a game. Instead of paying attention to the welfare of its people, the government is concerned with power and position. Therefore when the soldier falls off the chair, he says: "Please be calm...People love to laugh at

the government...The government falling off a chair is not a thing to be laughed at. It has fallen off the chair before" (ibid.:67).

This statement reflects the political situation of Thailand and the public's attitude towards their government, that they rarely trust or respect it. They see a change of power as a normal event and the government as an irresponsible clique which acts as a bully. The middle-aged man's opinion that 'the government molests the people' angers the soldier, but before the soldier can hurt him, the old man hits the soldier on the face and then runs away. Gunshot is then heard and the subsequent damage to the pub as a result of the soldier's violence emphasises the misdeed and misuse of power and position by the Thai military. The story also condemns the fact that soldiers are allowed to carry guns in public places and can use them to threaten people, instead of giving them protection. The soldier and the gun are used in this text to connote the coming to power of the militants in Thai politics by the use of military force in toppling the previous government, a regular occurrence in Thai politics, at least until early 1990s. It also conveys the meaning that once the military has become the government, it is not easy to remove it because of backing up of the army. Because of his power, the soldier therefore can verbally abuse the bar owner's wife by saying that "Your milk is delicious" ('นมของเธออร่อยดีนี่น้องสาว') (ibid.:68), clearly referring to her breasts, as in Thai the word 'nom' ('นม') is a noun for both milk and breast. In this incident the bar owner is unable to stop the soldier from humiliating his wife because of a power imbalance, suggested by the gun, and, as an ordinary man, he has to remain quiet.[20]

Unsurprisingly, given the power of the military, at the close of the story, the bar owner asks for compensation for the damage to his property from the narrator instead of the soldier, providing a clear picture of how ordinary people become the victims of any kind of destruction caused by the military government. The bar owner also represents the self-interested businessman who always benefits from whichever government is in power. Whenever the government changes, such businessmen simply make new alliances with the new holders of power.

It is noteworthy that this short story was published in the immediate aftermath of the attack on pro-democrats by the military government led by the Army General

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[20]For further details of the Thai military involving in politics see Pasuk (1993:29-30).

Sujindaa Khraaprayuun in May 1992, an incident which led to the death and disappearance of hundreds of civilians. Therefore, 'The Visit of the Government' can be viewed as Phaithuun's comment on the abuse of power by the military government against its subjects.

Phaithuun's short story as discussed above, reveals that the relationship between the ruler and the ruled in Thai society can be viewed from within the context of internal colonialism in which local government and his agents play the role of dictators, who oppress their own people. The relationship between the ruler and the ruled is a negative one.

With reference to power relations and in contrast to Thai short stories, as an erstwhile British colony, works of Malay authors provide more complex images of the coloniser and the colonised in the context of both colonialism and post-colonialism. Discussed here are *Manager Baru* ('The New Manager') by Azizi Haji Abdullah, and *Keputusan* ('Decision') by S. Othman Kelantan.

'The New Manager' promotes Malay nationalism during the British period and a return to Malay roots in the search for a stronger sense of Malay identity. The story is set on a rubber estate, where rubber tappers are waiting for their new manager, Peter Paul. Arriving at the estate and being 'Tuan Besar' or big boss, Peter Paul prohibits all workers from growing vegetables and raising domestic animals for two reasons. One is his concern of the hygiene of the estate, and the other the workers' contribution to their work. He "wants his workers to live by tapping alone as other activities will make the workers neglect the work of the estate" (Azizi 1985:47). Peter Paul therefore is one of the colonials who works in the British colony and does not have any consideration for the workers. He can be seen as a Western capitalist who imports the system of capitalism and working culture of the West into the colony with the idea that the profits of the business should be considered first. All workers must work hard and be productive in order to be worthy of their salary. Peter Paul's

conduct as a master over the local people and his given title 'Tuan Besar' or big boss reveal that the coloniser is superior to the colonised. [21]

For fear of losing their jobs, all workers obey Peter Paul's order, except Malawi, who hates seeing the workers pay respect to Peter Paul and sees as a sterile, ugly pig.[22] He wonders whether the workers obey Peter Paul because "he is Peter Paul, a manager, the big boss or because Peter Paul is white?" (Azizi 1985:48). Malawi's suspicion implies that colonial officials or employees living and working in the colony, no matter who they are, have higher positions than the colonised. Whereas the workers demonstrate the image of the colonised as humble and obedient—considered as a weakness, whhich benefits the coloniser. As a Malay nationalist, Malawi prohibits his son, Mat Lanang, to work for Peter Paul as a caddy and a translator because he feels it unfair to his country and his native language that the colonialist, Peter Paul, does not learn their language while living in the country. As Malawi says to his son "Next time you must speak Malay. Don't ever speak the White language to him. Ignore it! I want him to respect our language. Actually, he who comes from England and wants to stay here has to learn our language! (ibid.:50).

As an act of rebellion act against colonialist, Malawi insists on raising domestic animals, angering Peter Paul: "Why is it that you Malays are so stubborn? This is not your father's property! This is an estate. You don't try to be smart. You...you Malay bastards...you....get out...!" (ibid.:52). Peter Paul's outburst is a great insults to the Malays, who he regards as stupid. In contrast, Malays in general, and the author in particular, perceive that the colonialists enjoy their position as masters too much and are arrogant.

Condemned by Peter Paul, Malawi attacks him angrily: "Manager! This is a Malay who has learnt to be aggressive! And the Malays must behave aggressively...Although it is true that this estate belongs to you, colonial, this land belongs to my ancestors. You...pig" (ibid.:52-3). As soon as he finishes, he hits his manager's face. Beyond his expectation, his manager apologises to him and offers his respect in return: "I apologise. Good! I respect you" (ibid.:53). Thus, Paul's apology to Malawi reveals his spirit of sportmanship and respect for the Malays' dignity. He

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[21] According to Memmi (1990:76-8), every European colonial living in a colony and having privileges is described as "the small colonizer"—a supporter of colonialists and an obstinate defender of colonial privileges.

[22] Like the word *anjing* or dog, *babi* or pig is a derogative word for Malays.

has learnt to be friends with his workers as well as understand them. This makes Malawi "sorry for what he has done" (ibid.). Malawi's repentance should not be seen as a weakness of the colonised but as the behaviour of a normal, good Malay.

Noticeably, this story was published in 1971 but was set in the colonial period. Therefore, it reflects the political situation in Malaysia when the Malays' struggle for legitimizing the sovereignty of Malay language and culture as the symbols of Malaysia during and after colonisation. Azizi highlights this event and arouses a sense of Malay nationalism through Malawi.

As with Azizi, S. Othman Kelantan sees the colonials as the enemies of post-independent Malaysia. His short story, 'Decision', begins with a minister, Baharum, who is worried about the transfer of Tuan Hess, from the Ministry of Development, to his office. He believes that Tuan Hess, a former colonial, who has converted to Islam, has played a role behind the corruption of Malay officials and businessmen in many of the government projects.

> "Yes, normally the former colonial officials here are cunning. They are all diplomatic. However, cunning or not, this issue must be put forward"...Although it is true that Hess's heart is Islam and he is married here, his heart is still that of a (British) colonial officer (therefore he is a hypocrite). People, whose hearts are like that of Hess, are many here and scattered all over this place. Exist everywhere. And Hess is trying to disguise himself by sacrificing other people" (S. Othman 1984:21,23-4).

In social reality, most Malays perceive the Whites and former colonials as unreliable. However, in the story the author admits that the local bureaucrats are also hypocritical.

It is worth noting that although Baharum is the main character, it is Baharum's close friend, Bahadur, who reminds him of the hypocrisy of the former colonials, and who protects the Malays' privileged rights. Bahadur makes Baharum see the perpetuation of colonialism in the form of neo-colonialism, in the sense that the colonials have dominated the former colony's economy: "You must understand. Must understand. The perpetuation of colonialism is still continued by former colonial officers like Tuan Hess; and also by the officials who behave like colonials. They must perpetuate their colonisation in the form of dominating the economy of the colony" (ibid.:6). This extract shows that Malaysian economic slowdown after

independence is caused by some hypocritical Malay bureaucrats and politicians who are the successors of colonialisation. As Bahadur warns Baharum: "Our enemies are the government officials, who do not perform their duties properly. They are officials, who are part colonialist, the remains of colonisation, which still exist after independence" (ibid.:6). Eventually, Bahadur's criticism of the hypocrisy of the former colonial officers influences Baharum:

> "What about some officials who are semi-colonialists, who work routinely? Earning monthly salary? Working as officials? The officials like Hess are many. They are in every ministry. They are in every office. They are in every state. They work cleverly. They appear to work with sincerity. They, yes, they, they work behind the screen quietly to take the wealth from people like Foo Seng Kow and Arumugam. They secretly change the name of their property into the name of their children, wives or family. And these people are very diligent. Work well. Obedient and loyal. Loyal like Hess. When Ramli bin Jimat was sent to jail, he was praised. Damned!....And there are still many colonial officials who live in a group like leeches in the rice-field. They work as a matter of routine and extend their houses year after year. Accumulate more lands year by year. Accumulate more shares year after year. Travel by car for free. Have allowances. Speak on behalf of the people. After that, spend crazily in exclusive places" (ibid.:19-20,24).

Apart from the former colonial, the corrupt, lazy politicians and unscrupulous bureaucrats, S. Othman also attacks the ethnic Chinese and Indian businessmen, who bribe government officials. They are seen as enemies of Malaysia, in general and of the author, in particular.

What has to be emphasised here is that the issue of the coloniser and the colonised highlights the significant difference between the works of Thai and Malay authors. Nationalism, colonialism and the situation during post-colonialism in Malaysian history inspire Malay authors to produce works that express their negative attitudes towards the former colonial and corrupt, Malay politicians. More interestingly, Malay authors use their works to promote Malay nationalism and criticise the social injustices between the coloniser British and the colonised Malay found in their society. Furthermore, Malay authors use literature to promote some political policies, such as the promotion of Malay as the national language to maintain the identity of Malaysia as the country of Malays. In contrast, nationalism, which is activated as a result of Western colonialism, does not appear in the works of

Phaithuun Thanyaa and Kanokphong Songsomphan. This can be understood in terms of Thailand never having been colonised and, even under the threat of colonisation, having successfully maintained its national language. These facts therefore do not inspire Thai authors to write about nationalism. However, the similarity between the Thai and Malay authors lies in their concerns regarding social injustice and the conflict between the ruler and the ruled. In short, their works on this issue can be considered as the people's voices for social reform and justice from their government. Moreover, both Thai and Malay authors use their works to express their attitudes towards political systems which disadvantage the people, as discussed below.

Literary Criticism of Political Systems

One of the main concerns of the Thai and Malay authors is the struggle for democracy. The short stories related to this are *Phaendin kho'ng khao* ('Their Land') by Phaithuun Thanyaa, *Putera Si Luncai* ('The Si Luncai's Son'), and *Putera Sang Siput* ('The Snail's Son') by S. Othman Kelantan and *Tan Sri Tuah* ('Tan Sri Tuah') by Azizi Haji Abdullah.

Phaithuun's short story, 'Their Land', presents the issues of poverty and lawlessness in a *So* village.[23] The story is told in the form of the narrator's reminiscence. He and his five students—Bang-on, Dechaa, Piak, Jangko'p and Ratchanii—form a team and name it the 'democracy campaigners' (กลุ่มผู้รณรงค์และเผยแพร่ประชาธิปไตย). They go to the *So* village, located in a remote valley in the northeast of Thailand, to promote the ideology of democracy to the villagers. By that, they hoped they could reduce vote-buying for the upcoming election by local politicians and their supporters. They intend to make the villagers aware that vote-buying is immoral and irresponsible. Corrupt politicians must be condemned. They also deplore the military government abusing power to kill people who love democracy and want to see an improvement in Thai politics, where all Thai citizens participate. They see it as their duty and responsibility to the nation.

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[23] *So* are Mon-Khmer speaking. They are an ethnic minority in northeast Thailand.

At the *So* village, the narrator's group meets a schoolteacher, Khruu Jaran Bunphranaam, inspired by Khruu Piya, a leading character in a film *Khruu Baanno'k*, to work as a schoolteacher for village students.[24] Having worked in the So village for many years and experienced various forms of violence, Khruu Jaran loses enthusiasm and hopes to work for village children. He discovers that "real life and life in the film are different" (Phaithuun 1996:83) and he realises that he is unlucky to have chosen to work in a So village. By contrast, Dechaa, a student who is obsessed by the massacre of May, 1992, thinks that Khruu Jaran is luckier than those who died in that incident, because he has a choice, whereas those victims did not.[25]

The conflict between Khruu Jaran and the students increases when Khruu Jaran responds to the matter of death by saying, "It was very normal...some people died without any good cause" (ibid.:84). He says this because he thinks that it is the truth. Whereas Dechaa and Piak think that he is ungrateful to the massacre who fought for democracy for the good of society. For example, Piak asks Khruu Jaran: "What did you say?...foolish things? Although the military troops were walking straight to shoot people, who had only bare hands, do you still think that they are foolish? You have been living here for too long...." (ibid.). This extract is Phaithuun's

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[24] This film originated from a novel of the same titled written by Khammaan Khonkhai. The main character, Khruu Piya, sacrifices his life to work as a schoolteacher for poor rural children. He becomes an icon and represents the ideology of teachers, who work for rural children.

[25] The May 1992 event is better known as *Phreuksaphaa Thamin* or *Black May*. In February 1991 the coalition government of Prime Minister Chaatchaai Chunhawan was overthrown by a military coup on allegations of rampant corruption within the government. The coup leaders set up an emergency governing body, the National Peace-Keeping Council. In March 1992, a general election was held and no acceptable candidate for the premiership could be put forward. In April 1992 General Sujindaa Kraprayuun, a member of the coup, was appointed by the coalition parties to become Prime Minister. Sujindaa not only broke his earlier promise that he would not become Prime Minister but also was an unelected Prime Minister. As a result, Sujindaa's appointment was met with widespread popular outrage and was generally decried as undemocratic. Hungerstrike protests centred around former parliamentarian Chalat Worachat and Major-General Jamlo'ng Siimeuang, a Phalang Dhamma leader, asking for Sujindaa's resignation. On 17 May 1992 there was a major confrontation between protesters, police units and army troops. A number of protesters were shot and killed. However, the protests continued and the armed forces forcefully dispersed the protesters. Finally, the conflict between the two groups was brought to an end on 20 May by King Bhumibol's intervention. According to Peter Jackson (1993:5), Many Thais feel that May 1992 event was similar to the massacres of October 1973 and October 1976 in which no result in stronger action being taken against those who ordered the killing. This infers that such a tragedy may occur again.

condemnation of the misuse of power by the military government during the killing of unarmed demonstrators in May 1992.

With regard to the issues of politics and poverty, the story reveals that the villagers are more concerned about their poverty than with national politics. "Do you know? Here, pistols are easy to get, just like bamboo shoots in the jungle and everyone here is good at shooting. Don't talk about common pistols, A-gar, M.16, or RPG. However, that is their (So) business. As for me...I am only good at holding chalk" (ibid.:81). This statement suggests that in a lawlessness community, the teacher is powerless. Finding that two villagers fought to the death over wild mushrooms, the narrator and his students then understand why Khruu Jaran does not care about death and killing.

At the end of the story, the narrator's group gives up their ambition to campaign for democracy and anti-vote buying. They realise that if the government does not solve the problem of poverty, informing the villagers about democracy seems useless: "The big election finished a long time ago. The cycle of our politics is the same as ever. I have not seen good things appearing even once. But, every time I recall the event that I had experienced at the valley in that mountain, I feel sadder" (ibid.:79). This quotation suggests that the poverty and lawlessness of people in So village make the narrator realise the urgent need to improve the standard of living of the poor. It is more urgent than the need to educate them in politics and democracy. Phaithuun presents a complex society and a narrow, simple viewpoint of democracy. In the text, only through education and parliament Thai politics can be improved. He is unhappy with the poverty of the people and is pessimistic about Thai politics, especially about the vote-buying.

As with Phaithuun Thanyaa, the Malay authors—S. Othman Kelantan and Azizi Haji Abdullah—are concerned about political problems. However, they differ in that while Phaithuun emphasises the issue of vote-buying and the abuse of power by the military government over the pro-democrats, Azizi and S. Othman pay attention to the weakness of government loyalists, whose loyalty sometime encourages the system of dictatorship. They express their opinion by giving new interpretations of their classical and folk literatures and then transform their new interpretations into short story form. They are *Putera Si Luncai* ('The Si Luncai's Son') and *Putera Sang Siput*

('The Snail's Son') by S. Othman Kelantan and *Tan Sri Tuah* ('Tan Sri Tuah') by Azizi Haji Abdullah.

S. Othman's views on politics and government policies are found in his short story, 'Si Luncai's Son', an elaboration of a well-known Malay folktale of Si Lunca.[26] The purpose of the story is to support the government policies; firstly democracy; secondly, the objection against sending students to study abroad; thirdly, the prohibition on gambling; and fourthly, to establish an Islamic state. These ideas are presented through conversations between the main characters, the queen, Tuan Puteri Nila Kendi and her son, Putera Si Luncai. In the text, the queen is happy with the intelligence of her son, who is twenty-three-years old, and has graduated from a local university. In the beginning, she wants to send her son to study abroad, but he refuses, explaining: "Forgive me, mother. Education in our local universities is far better than abroad. Moreover, it is cheaper. I do not want to waste our government's money" (S. Othman 1996:14).

Finally, her son has proved that local universities are able to provide good education and can save money for the government. Having been influenced by modern education in political sciences, humanities and Islamic studies, the prince wants to change the political system of his country, from absolute monarchy to democracy. He therefore convinces his mother to see the advantage of democracy.

> "The constitutional democracy will determine the status of mother as the Queen forever. The administrative power will be returned to the subjects. Mother will not get involved in the governing, except as a symbol of unity and

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[26] Si Luncai is a poor, pot-bellied seller of firewood. He is put in a sack to be drowned for lese-majeste. On the way to the river-mouth, he uses his wit to escape from the soldiers. Firstly, he lulls the soldiers to repeat his song. When the soldiers get careless, he jumps into the river and swims to the shore. Later he is recaptured. Afterwards, the soldiers hear a deer and Si Luncai tells them that it is the deer he trapped. The soldiers go ashore and leave Si Luncai behind. Si Luncai escapes again. He comes across a Tamil trader and tells him that he is punished by king Isin because he refuses to marry his daughter, princess Lela Kendi. He tells the trader if he wants to marry the princess he should take his place. The trader agrees with his idea and Si Luncai takes all the trader's goods with him. As a result, the trade is killed by the soldiers. Si Luncai returns to the palace and pretends to have returned from heaven. He tells the king that he met the king's parents in heaven. He induces the king to go to a cave, pretending to be a path to the heaven. The king is killed and Si Luncai returns to the palace. He deceives the courtiers that the king appointed him to rule the kingdom. He marries the princess who later kills him as an act of revenge for her father (See Winstedt 1969:15, Winstedt and Sturrock 1914:85-6, and S. Othman. 1992: 50-1).

> loyalty. Therefore, mother will not get involved like grandfather...The division of power between the king and the subjects will always ensure that the king gets protection from his subjects" (ibid.:17).

Why does the queen easily accept her son's idea of democracy? To answer this question, her son explains that he will be a candidate in the coming general election. He is confident that he will become the next Prime Minister and can protect the queen and the monarchial system. Linking the political context with present-day Malaysia, the prince can be interpreted as a representative of Malay politicians, who will protect the institution of monarchy, as the symbol of Malaysia, and the Malay country from the Indian and Chinese ethnic groups. In the text, the prince also explains to his mother that when she dies, he will be elected by the parliament to be King because, in Parliament, he is the powerful Prime Minister.

It is notable that since the prince has also taken courses in Islamic studies, he persuades his mother to forbid their people from gambling. Having been influenced by her beloved son, the queen declares that:

> "all types of gambling, including cockfighting, will be illegal in the whole country of Indera Pati. I will make the country of Indera Pati a country which practises the basis of rules, covering both subjects and noblemen. Gambling causes quarrels, which never end. Gambling brings trouble to society. Gambling brings trouble to families. Gambling continues the idea of deception, which circulates in the blood and soul. I forbid all kinds of gambling. Prime Minister, please declare laws which will punish those who go against my orders" (ibid.:18-9).

Clearly, the author would like to see Malaysia as an Islamic state in parallel with the declaration of Islam as the national religion. He is displeased with present-day Malaysia, which still cannot be called an Islamic state because there still exist many activities which are unIslamic.

At the end of the story, the Queen also accepts the transformation of the political system. She declares Indera Pati a democratic country, where people will have the right to elect their own representatives to govern the country. The queen herself is willing to rule under the constitutional law. After her declaration, the people of Indera Pati are joyful.

Since the story was published in 1996 and rather than seeing the king as a symbol of Malaysia, the queen in this story is a metaphor for Malaysia as a whole. The prince symbolises the present generation of Malaysia, that should be versatile in

various fields and protect the privileges of Malays. In addition, the prince, in S. Othman's view, must be a Malay, who will run the country and protect Malay rights from ethnic Chinese and Indians.

S. Othman's political concerns are also revealed in his short story, 'The Snail's Son', highlighting his creativity in using symbols and satirical tones to attack corrupt politicians in general, and the former Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, in particular. How can the readers know that he is referring to Tun Dr. Mahathir? In this aspect, S. Othman provides readers many hints, which are related to the biography of the Prime Minister. They include the race of his father, who is Indian in origin; his hometown, Kedah; his education in medical sciences; his wife Datin Sri Dr. Siti Hasma, which the text calls Siti Norhamah; his book on his 2020 vision of Malaysia; the government construction projects involving skyscrapers, and the political conflict between the Prime Minister and his former Deputy Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, during the economic crisis of 1998.

What is interesting here is S. Othman's courage in satirising the Prime Minister in the form of allegory, in imitation of Aesop's fables. S. Othman opens his story with the family background of the Prime Minister, his education, his rise to political power, and his family business. In the text, the Prime Minister is a snail, who is called by the author 'Putera Sang Siput' or 'the snail's son'. He graduates in medical sciences from Pulau Sekangkang Anjing (the Dog's step Island), which symbolises Singapore.[27] His father is a snail who comes from India to work in rubber plantations in the East and then settles in Kedah.

The narrator tells that at the start of his political career, the Prime Minister is very popular among Malaysians because of his intelligence, but then gradually loses popularity during the economic crisis, because of his injustice to the Malays. He spends their money to sustain his son's business. He arrests his former Deputy Prime Minister on the allegation of homosexuality. In the eyes of the public, the government's monetary policy in solving the economic crisis is still unclear. The allegation against the former Deputy Prime Minister is unjustified. The author therefore uses allegorical techniques of comparing the Prime Minister to an animal,

[27] The 'anjing' or dog is a derogatory word in Malay. It might infer S. Othman's hatred towards that country which once belonged to Malaysia and now consisting the majority of ethnic Chinese.

the snail, and his opposition, to an eagle, to convey the meaning that physical strength is second to intelligence. This is emphasised by the narrator:

> "This is what the tale said. Because he is a descendant of the human snail, a kind of animal, his action is animal-like. The difference from the eagle, the tiger and the crocodile is that his action is more careful, slower, secretive and unseen....A human eagle cannot see the true colour of a human snail. Because of that, the eagle is defeated...the snail knows the eagle; that is why he wins" (ibid.:21,18).

At the end of the story, the narrator summarises that politics is like a bus which consists of the driver, the conductor and the passengers. If it was a political bus, its driver is compared to a political leader who controls the direction. Its conductor is the corrupt politician, who collects the fare from the passengers without giving them tickets. If the passengers go against him, he will feed them until they are full and eventually fall asleep. Since the driver and the conductor are human snails, the snail family and his supporters, therefore, become richer and richer. In short, the Prime Minister is clever and cunning. He knows how to divide profits among his supporters. For the author, the Prime Minister is a corrupt politician. His Indian blood is attacked and perceived as a factor that makes him an opportunist, self-centred and unfaithful to Malaysian citizens. This is due to his personal prejudice towards the Indians in general and the Prime Minister in particular. Critically, S. Othman's prejudice fails him to acknowledge some of the good works of the Prime Minister to the country. This is due to his personal prejudice.

What needs to be mentioned here, also, is the use of story-telling technique in satirising the Prime Minister. The text reveals that S. Othman uses sources from public criticisms on the situation of Malaysian politics and their leaders. Evidence is provided through the use of formulaic phrases at the beginning of paragraphs, which are found in story-telling techniques. Such phrases are, for example, *Demikianlah kata dongeng itu* (that is what people said, *Kata orang* (people said) and *Menurut suatu dongeng* (and according to a tale). More clear are the phrases at the end of the story, i.e., *demikianlah dongeng itu berakhir* (that is the end of the tale). Despite the formulaic words, there exists the use of setting in which the author names Malaysia as *'Daerah Sekebun Barat'* (the province of a western garden), and Singapore as *'Pulau Sekangkang Anjing'* (the Dog's Step Island). Both the formulaic words and the name of places reveal the influence of literary tradition on the author.

As with S. Othman Kelantan, Azizi's short story, 'Tan Sri Tuah', also focuses on the theme of politics and aims to satirise government supporters. However, the difference here is that Azizi uses the classical text, *Hikayat Hang Tuah,* instead of Malay folktales as a source of writing.[28]

The story of *Tan Sri Tuah* presents Azizi's creativity in mocking government supporters by transforming the original text of *Hikayat Hang Tuah* to fit modern situations. Such elements of transformation can be traced through the use of setting, the characteristics of the characters, and their social and political titles. For example, Hang Tuah in Azizi's text is given the title of the modern *'Tan Sri'* instead of the traditional *'Laksamana'*.

The story opens at the international airport where government politicians, including Tun Pikrama and Tun Kasturi, are gathering to welcome Tan Sri Tuah from London. These politicians hope that Tan Sri Tuah will be able to kill Jebat who is considered by the government as a rebel because he is gaining more supporters among the poor Malays.

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[28] *Hikayat Hang Tuah* is a famous classical Malay text. It narrates this story of the traditional Malay hero Hang Tuah. He was famous for his heroic deeds, loyalty to his king and the state of Malacca, during the golden age of the Malay kingdom before it fell to a Western power. He was a warrior and a diplomat who could speak many foreign languages among them Javanese, Siamese and Chinese. In addition, he had magical power or *ilmu*, which was regarded by the Malays at that time as an important knowledge of warriors. Tuah's loyalty to his king and state took the form of selfless service throughout his life. When he was to be executed by his king for alleged adultery with one of the palace girls, he has no anger against the king or shows any sense of injustice for the crime being committed against him. In contrast to Hang Tuah, Jebat was regarded by the Malay audience in the old day as a rebel and traitor to the king and threat to the state. Jebat's rebellion against his king has become controversial since the fifties. Kassim Ahmad, a Malay scholar, poet and socialist, points out the Jebat's good qualities of being modern Malay hero. For example, he chose to be himself to stand against a king and a state of affairs that he thought were unjust. This perception has been well received by some Malay writers including S. Othman Kelantan and Azizi Haji Abdullah. Mohammad Haji Salleh (1991), points out that the shift of the Malay literary hero from the loyal Hang Tuah to the rebel Hang Jebat illustrates the changed social and philosophical values of the Malays. Jebat has been made to be a Modern Malay hero because, firstly, he has the qualities of modern day Malays, i.e, his love of justice and concern of individual rights. Secondly, Western education, thought, and materialism have influenced some contemporary Malay writers, literary academics and critics. Thirdly, urbanisation and industrialisation create a new way of life. Finally, interracial competition, political and economic jealousies have done their share in urging the Malay to abandon his traditional value in order to 'impose' (memperbaiki), his condition or cope with his dilemma (for further details see Mohammad 1991: 113-144, 145-166 and Abu Hassan 1975). Moreover, according to Kratz (1993), *Hikayat Hang Tuah* is a sharp, political criticism of the subject, i.e. the author, towards the unjust king.

> "It is really strange. Jebat's action is gaining support from the subjects. Many customs and traditions are not practised. Jebat is responsible. In fact, Jebat, who is considered a traitor, seems to be given blessings by the subjects...Jebat, who dominates the company, shares, and commodities, imports and exports, and starts to establish the corporate empire, often contributes his income to the poor. Giving help to small traders and subsidies to businessmen, becomes his practise. There are no more poor people. There are no more beggars in the cities" (Azizi 1993:38).

This extract shows that Jebat is a representative of Malay businessmen who are generous, just, and full of care for his fellow men. He makes the effort to protect the rights of the Malays and wants to distribute the national income to the poor. He is a hero to the poor Malays. However, it can be said that Jebat is an ideal Malay hero, politician and businessman.

The story further shows that Tan Sri Tuah finally arrives at the airport in Western clothes, wearing black sunglasses and carrying a small suitcase like the one in James Bond movies. He has just received a Ph.D. in the Laws of Obedience and Loyalty (Undang-Undang Taat Setia). After that, he is taken to stay at an exclusive bungalow located on top of a hill, where he is given a massage by three beautiful women to keep his body fit because in London he lacked exercise and "he only played golf, polo and went to the casino" (ibid.:39). That night, Tan Sri Tuah also finds that watching Malay TV programme is boring compared to Western movies.

A few days later, he goes to Jebat's office wearing his Western clothes and carrying a pistol. What is funny here is that Tan Sri Tuah has to wait for the warrant to kill Jebat from the court of justice and he has to show his identity card to the security guard before entering Jebat's office. In contrast to Tan Sri Tuah, Jebat still wears traditional Malay clothes, which makes Tan Sri Tuah look down on him as old-fashioned: "Jebat, you seem to be out of date. Dagger and lance today are not considered as weapons, are they? They are considered as decoratives, aren't they? (ibid.:42). Therefore, Jebat represents the new, modern Malay, who maintains and respects his Malay identity and cultures and, at the same time, modernises himself to improve his life. Through his conservative dressing and interest in business, instead of war and weapons, Azizi suggests that to be modern does not mean that Malays have to abolish their traditions. Conversely, Tan Sri Tuah represents the westernised Malays and politicians who are pro-West and perceive the West as a symbol of modernisation. Moreover, through the narrator's perception of Tan Sri Tuah's

supporters who are "hypocritical businessmen and brokers, who cheat on people" (ibid.:41), Azizi also satirises Malay politicians, who earn profits from being on the government's side.

At his office, Jebat becomes doubtful when he sees Tan Sri Tuah wearing Western clothes and coming to kill him on Sunday which should be on a Friday, a religious day for Muslims, so that he can die a matyr. Jebat cannot believe that his friend wants to kill him. So, as he walks towards Tan Sri Tuah, who shoots him because of a misunderstanding that Jebat is going to kill him. At the end, Jebat is sent to hospital. Nobody knows whether he is dead or alive. This myth is parallel to the original text in the sense that Jebat becomes a Malay mythical hero and his death is used to emphasise the idea that he is killed because of his trust in his friend. Through this the author condemns government loyalists who ignore the suffering and poverty of the Malays. He reflects the notion that there is no true loyalty among politicians or government supporters without certain benefits in return.

Conclusion

From this chapter it can be summarised that the Thai and Malay authors share some similarities in making use of national and local history and politics as sources for their writings. Their short stories on historical and political themes display their commitment to their national and local histories and to politics. Several short stories on such themes derive from the authors' own experiences and are retold intentionally to document and preserve the events for subsequent readers. Their works can also contribute to the development of local history in order to create social solidarity both at local and national levels. They enable readers to link the past with the present and understand local history and politics, which can lead to social integration. The authors, on the other hand, can be considered as secretaries of history because their works provide insights into the political struggle of the ordinary people and of the region. More significantly, their works can be treated as sources of data on the history of people's voices to the government or vice versa. Evidence of the short stories as government's speaker to the people is provided by S. Othman's involvement with government's programme against communism and Azizi's works against communism on the grounds of religious ideology and racially hatred towards the ethnic Chinese.

It is to be noted, however, that the authors write short stories from the perspective of ordinary people, or more clearly from the authors' perspectives themselves, as opposed to the national history from the centre, as a response to and influence from the new perspective of historical study, i.e., the 'new history'. Such writings are viewed as the writings of the plight for social justice and reform from people.

The authors display their knowledge of local history by describing significant events in local history and national histories, such as colonialism, the Japanese occupation, the threat of communism and current situations, through the impact of such events upon the misfortunes of the characters and through the presentations of local settings and local people in order to add to the local colour of the region and to highlight the themes of the stories. The historical and political pasts retold by these authors, for specific purposes, are more candid, in a bid to ensure that history does indeed teach something to its readers.

In dealing with the use of traditional oral forms and classical written texts in short stories, Malay authors appear to make use of their oral forms and classical written texts as sources of inspiration to form the background of the stories. This is used to criticise their present-day political situation, to satirise and to give moral lessons to certain corrupt and dictatorial politicians. In addition, their new interpretations of oral tales and classical written texts can be interpreted as the authors' opposition to traditional interpretations in order to remind and emphasise the mistaken and unworthy actions of the past and to give voice to their subjects through literary works. In contrast, the two Thai authors do not use their oral tales to link or highlight national and local history and politics into their works, but instead, use the real situation that happened in the past to produce their works. In addition, it is obvious for Thai writers to use characters of ordinary people to attack directly, satirise and criticise the abuse of power by government agencies on the people rather than the allegorical techniques. Actually, the difference in technique does not reflect the political situation in Malaysia and Thailand but rather suggests that Thai writers—Phaithuun Thanyaa and Kanokphong—tend to follow Western writing style more than their literary tradition.

It is notable that works on political criticism reflect the freedom of Thai and Malaysian writers to criticise their governments overtly. However, the Thai authors do not discuss the institution of Thai monarchy, which is highly respected by the

Thais, where the constitutional law has protected the monarchy from public criticism. Like many other Thai authors, whether Phaithuun and Kanokphong want to criticise the monarchy, I believe that they do not dare to comment on or criticise the monarchial institution, even through allegorical tales as Malay authors do. Since they are afraid of being accused of lese majesty, they have to exercise self-censorship. Importantly, both the Thai and Malay authors reveal the true political situation in their countries where there is no real democracy.

Chapter Four

The Literary Reflection of Religions and Local Beliefs

Introduction

This chapter highlights how Thai and Malay writers reflect religious and local beliefs in their short stories. For what reasons do they produce works on religions and local beliefs? This study is carried out on the assumption that their works assist the reader in gaining an insight into the nation in general and region in particular, and the attitudes of Thai and Malay authors towards the beliefs and religious practises of their people.

The Literary Expression of Religion: Buddhism and Islam in the Short Stories

Religion and literature have a significant and close relationship with each other. As Vladimir Braginsky (2000) notes, religion is a core factor in the formation of South East Asia as a region and in the creation of literatures, especially traditional literatures which focus on religious themes. For Braginsky, South East Asia as a literary region is formed around the religious canons of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, and Confucianism and Taoism. He explains that:

> "For, in that the religious canons represented extensive codes or anthologies of the ancient writings, they constituted an authoritative paradigm for the subsequent literature. At the same time, intensive hermeneutic study of the canon, alongside the other consequences, gave rise to a zonal literary self-awareness, to a complex of ideas about the functions of literature, principles and methods of its creation and consumption, etc" (ibid.1).

It can be surmised that religion has been a main source of inspiration for South East Asian authors and has shaped the characteristics of its literature. It is also to be noted that in the case of Thailand and Malaysia, religion has been an important factor in differentiating between the identities of the two nations and of their national literatures. The official religion of Thailand is Buddhism whereas Malaysia is Islam.

Consequently, Buddhist and Islamic elements are found in Thai and Malay literatures, respectively. Therefore, the overall purpose of this section is to examine the short stories with regard to religious issues produced by selected authors as their response to religious movement and people's practises of religions within their societies. This study focuses on two aspects. One is the criticism of the religious men and religious institutions; the other is the criticism of the decline of religious beliefs and the morality of the people.

Criticism of religious persons and religious institutions[1]

The exemplified short stories in relation to this topic are *Pheuan bun* ('Friend of Merit') by Phaithuun Thanyaa, *Sami Napuh* ('A Monk Named Napuh') and *Hajjul Fatwa Mardudah* ('The Story of Hajjul Fatwa Mardudah') both by Azizi Haji Abdullah, and *Ustaz* ('Teacher') by S. Othman Kelantan.

Buddhist monks and their Buddhist responsibilities

In Thai short stories, criticism of religious men and religious institutions refers to Buddhist monks and their responsibilities as Buddhists. The most noted short story in the selection to examine the role and function of Buddhist monks in Thai society is 'Friend of Merit' by Phaithuun Thanyaa.

'Friend of Merit' focuses on the misbehaviour of a Buddhist monk known as Phra Ajaan (lit. 'great teacher'). He practises superstition and is obsessed by materialism. His misconduct is revealed from the viewpoint of his friend, Luang Pho', who has become Phra Ajaan's 'friend of merit', (as in the title of the story), when

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[1] The term 'religious persons' in this chapter means persons who either are actively and full-time involved in religious activities or, who actively observe the tenets of their religion. In Buddhism they are monks and nuns, or lay persons who practise and keep the eight precept. Significantly, in the eyes of lay people monks and nuns, the clergy, represent Buddhism. Buddhism as a body consists of the Buddhist clergy and temples, which are under the administration of the Department of Religious Affairs.

In Malaysian Muslim society, religious persons are imams, 'pendawah' (Muslim missionaries) and Muslims who actively observe the rules of Islam. Islam as a body consists of mosques and imams and the faithful. They are under the administration of the Department of Islamic Affairs.

Phra Ajaan begs him to stop drinking and gambling and become a monk instead. Luang Pho' then sees how Phra Ajaan's behaviour deviates from Buddhist principles.[2]

One day, while Luang Pho' is feeding his chickens, the driver of a car asks him directions to the house of Phra Ajaan. He and the two women in his car fail to pay Luang Pho' due respect and they drive off so fast that they run over two of the baby chickens. Luang Pho' condemns the driver for 'having eyes yet being blind' ('มีตาเหมือนตาบอด') and he knows they visit Phra Ajaan for superstitious services, such as charms and lucky lottery numbers, for which they will offer some precious gift in return. In contrast most people who come to visit Luang Pho' give only simple things, such as tobacco, areca nuts and betel leaves. He thinks of their encouragement for him to practise superstitious so that he too can have modern accommodation like Phra Ajaan, but he chooses to ignore their advice. He continues to sweep the falling leaves in front of the temple compound and feed his chickens, comparing the greed and lust of people with rubbish, which needs to be cleaned away. He sweeps all the leaves in front of the temple except in front of Phra Ajaan's house because Phra Ajaan is afraid that the noise will disturb his concentration and his visitors. One night, Luang Pho' returns from a funeral to find that Phra Ajaan has been burgled and is lying dead in front of a huge statue of the Lord Buddha. His impression is that the face of the Lord Buddha looks sad.

Clearly, Phaithuun Thanyaa uses superstitious beliefs to highlight and criticise the decline of faith in Buddhism among contemporary Buddhist Thais in general and the misconduct of present-day monks in particular. The text reveals that the author opposes superstitious practises among Buddhist monks because it will pollute the purity of the religion, encourage people to continue believing in superstitions and it is an act of irresponsibility by the monks. He attacks such monks as devils in the guise of monks, who exploit local people's superstitions to raise their reputation and gain material goods, which is against the principles of Buddhism.

In the context of present-day Thai Buddhism, Phaithuun views the younger generation as lacking sufficient knowledge of Buddhism and morality. This attitude is revealed through the characteristics of the visitors in the car. They do not greet and pay respect to Luang Pho', they come to the temple to ask for superstitious elements

[2] The term 'Luang Pho'' literally means 'great father', implying a senior status in the temple.

and the driver does not care about the dead chickens. They are the patrons of the bad monks by offering them material goods. Conversely, material goods have seduced the monks to be materialists and to turn away from their Buddhist duties. Thus, Luang Pho' criticises the visitors as blind (Phaithuun 1996:66). These people are the rich and the poor who are the victims of the greedy monks. This is portrayed through the imagination of Luang Pho' when they visit Phra Ajaan.

> "At this time, the people who came in that car, perhaps, have sat down in front of 'Phra Ajaan', the owner of the big building. They may ask for the lucky lottery numbers, holy water, or cloth inscribed with magical formulas for love charms from him. Definitely, those people will bring some gifts for him as well, the good and expensive things, which Luang Pho' would have never been offered by anybody before. For Luang Pho', if there are some offerings, those things are only the areca nuts, betel leaves and tobacco. Most people who give him things are villagers who come to ask him for the chickens" (ibid.:67).

The above quotation has a sarcastic tone and criticises both Phra Ajaan and Buddhist followers. Firstly, the author satirises the visitors who come to consult Phra Ajaan for mainly superstitious purposes, which are against Buddhist teachings, instead of asking him for moral guidance or Buddhist knowledge. Secondly, the author criticises the villagers, who offer some tobacco to Luang Pho' in exchange for chickens, as being greedy. Finally, the title 'Phra Ajaan', literally meaning 'great teacher', in this context is used to satirise Phra Ajaan and the villagers. The former is ridiculed because, as a monk, he is supposed to be a great teacher because of his Buddhist intellect, not his superstitious expertise. The latter are ridiculed because instead of paying respect to a good monk, they pay respect to a superstitious expert who is in the disguise of a monk. Therefore, the use of the title 'Phra Ajaan' here is ironic and reflects the ignorance of Buddhist Thais in the sense that such a title should be used for a good monk not a bad one, as represented by Phra Ajaan.

Besides this, Phaithuun also criticises the status of Buddhism and monks in today's society. The text reveals that monks who perform superstition gain respect from the public and live in luxury. In contrast, modest monks are ignored by society. This is because some people are dominated by their self-interest and ignore Buddhism. They pay respect to monks who can give them some profit and in return, reward the monks with material goods. This criticism is presented through the different lifestyles of Luang Pho' and Phra Ajaan. For instance, as a well-behaved

monk, Luang Pho' lives in a shabby house and nobody cares about him. In contrast, Phra Ajaan lives in a modern building equipped with new furniture and a television. He is respected by many people. Such different lifestyles can be juxtaposed with the position of Buddhism and superstition, in the sense that faith in Buddhism is weakening, whereas superstition is gaining in popularity.

No less interesting is the contradiction between the modern accommodation of the rich monk and the shabby houses of the villagers. The author sees the contra-distinction between the two as a sign of backwardness in the Buddhist practises of the Thais. It is an ugly phenomenon which is seen through the viewpoint of Luang Pho' as such:

> "The houses of the villagers, who are the patrons of the temple, are in a bad condition like the animals' stall. Comparing those houses with the big building in this temple, it should hurt the eyes of the watchers. Between the giver and receiver, however, the receiver is in the higher and more exclusive place than the giver, like the sky and the earth" (ibid.:68).

Critically, in a society which is dominated by materialism, such a fact seems to be acceptable and at the same time unavoidable. As stated by Phra Ajaan: "The villagers are willing. They donate (material goods) so we have to receive them. Anyway, they belong to the temple. Today everyone says that our temple is more developed than other temples around this area. Luang Pho' should be happy to see such things" (ibid.:72). Indeed, from the perspective of Luang Pho', it is a sign of the decadence within the Buddhist faith that people develop their material needs but not their minds and faith.[3]

The author gives moral support to good monks who are devoted to Buddhism and intend to fulfil their duty as the torch of intelligence and moral educators of the people. This is expressed through the action and thoughts of Luang Pho'.

> "The wind blows the yellow leaves down. Falling down on the ground become thick layers. The leaves fall down heavily because it is the season of changing

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[3]It is interesting to know why Thai-Buddhists villagers love to build big and beautiful temples. According to Phra Woraraajmunii, a highly respected monk, in the old days the Buddhist Thais built temples to make merit for themselves and for public services. This was because temples used to be schools for their children and a forum for public activities. Nowadays, although the temples are not used for public education, the traditional social value of building temples for religious merit still exists because people of today do not know the real meaning of building temples. In addition, they believe that such kinds of merit-making will enable them to go to heaven when they die (Phra Woraraajmunii 1984:84-7).

> the tree leaves. The yard of the temple, which was clear, is now full of dry leaves. The leaves fall every day and Luang Pho' sweeps them out every day as well. Since there are many trees and only one sweeper, the leaves cannot be finished completely. Nevertheless, Luang Pho' never stop doing this routine even for a day" (ibid.:68).

In this excerpt, the waste leaves are a metaphor for the nonsensical beliefs, which make the temple, the symbol of Buddhism, dirty. In other words, the temple is becoming a sanctuary for superstitious practitioners instead of a centre for the dissemination of the Buddhist Dhamma. However, the author understands that it is a hard task for good monks to bring people to see the light of truth since there are so many superstitious distractions today. He further suggests that getting rid of these superstitions and of bad monks is the duty of every good monk in order to protect the purity of Buddhism. Therefore, Luang Pho' has to continue sweeping the leaves.

Luang Pho' is also the author's medium for criticising the Sangha and provoking religious consciousness among readers in general and monks in particular. As revealed in Luang Pho's memory of the teaching of his former monk teacher:

> "The minds of humankind resemble the yard. Greed, which makes the heart sad, can be compared with rubbish, which has fallen down in the yard. If we do not try to sweep it out, it will fill our hearts with the rubbish of lust. This is because we have a broom in our hands. Dhamma is a magic broom. Therefore, always sweep the rubbish in our hearts yard and in front of the temple yard out. Thus, having been a monk is not in vain....The rubbish in the temple yard is not hard to be swept out, but the rubbish inside human's hearts is difficult to eradicate completely. More badly, people who have the brooms in their hands do not use them, but accumulate it in their hearts every day instead. Therefore, how can we hope to sweep out the rubbish in the hearts of the villagers? Luang Pho' feels terribly sad when he thinks about this fact" (ibid.:69).

Greed in this text means materialism, which people desire to fulfil their physical needs. Phaithuun also attacks the monks' defection from performing their traditional roles as teachers and intellectual leaders of the villagers. The above excerpt also emphasises the theme of the story, i.e, that Buddhism is being destroyed in the hands of greedy and materialistic monks.

With regard to writing style, it is clear that Phaithuun is strongly influenced by the Thai literary traditions of repetition and didacticism. Here, through the words and thoughts of Luang Pho', the didactic element is convincing and well suited to a story about religious issues. The black and white stereotype between Phra Ajaan and Luang

Pho', though a typical technique, leads the reader straight to the author's aim of attacking the misconduct of some bad monks. The death of Phra Ajaan provides a moral lesson and places Buddhism in a higher position than superstition. The death scene also implies the deterioration of Buddhism at the hands of bad monks. Therefore, Phra Ajaan's death functions as a symbol of punishment for his misguided teachings to Buddhist believers and of his personal materialism. He therefore destines to be killed according to the Buddhist saying that 'good deeds bring good results and bad deeds bring bad results' (ทำดีได้ดี ทำชั่วได้ชั่ว). This Buddhist saying also echoes in the selected Malay short stories.

Pendakwah and their Religious Activities

It is a duty for Muslims to disseminate Islamic teachings, especially for clergymen and Imams. The Islamic revivalism of Malaysia in the 1970s inspired many young men to participate in religious activities. Malay authors, including Azizi Haji Abdullah and S. Othman Kelantan, also responded to this movement by producing works on the issue of Islamic activities, such as *Sami Napuh* ('A Monk Named Napuh') by Azizi Haji Abdullah and *Ustaz* ('Teacher') by S. Othman Kelantan.

'A Monk Named Napuh' is the story of two siblings, Siti Aini and Sami Napuh, whose parents were killed in a car accident and who were adopted by different families, Siti Aini by Muslims and Sami Napuh by a Buddhist monk. The story begins with Siti Aini's search, along with two men—a car driver and an Islamic jurist, Tuan Kadi—for Sami Napuh at a temple. One reason for this search is to ask Sami Napuh to be Siti Aini's guardian ('wali'), who can give her permission to marry Sudin, as required by Islam; and the other is to persuade him to convert to Islam. Sadly, they fail to convince Sami Napuh to adopt Islam. Sami Napuh informs them that he is not interested in Islam, he disagrees that Islam is the only religion of truth and believes that his sister can marry a man without his permission. He also satirises the Department of Islamic Affairs by questioning Tuan Kadi as to why he is now concerned about his religion despite the fact that in the past he and his sister had been ignored by the Islamic authorities. He suggests Tuan Kadi and the driver stop converting other people because their work looks like that of beggars begging others

to become Muslims. He reveals his notion towards the work of Islamic missionaries as people who are good at theories, but not at practise. They follow the stream of the Islamic movement for only a certain period. All his visitors are very disappointed by his comments and they leave the temple.

Critically, this story exposes the irresponsibility and inefficiency of the Islamic officials in dealing with the problems of the orphans. Such irresponsibility causes many Muslim orphans to be adopted by non-Muslim families and become infidels. Thus, converting these children to Islam when they become adults seems impossible. The text also satirises the foolish strategies used by Islamic missionaries to convert non-Muslims; as conveyed through Sami Napuh's criticism of Tuan Kadi's notion of religion and his approach in disseminating Islam: "Saying that Islam is true and other religions are wrong to attract other people to observe Islam, such teaching method is suitable only for students in class two" (Azizi 1978:102). For Azizi, to persuade non-Muslims to observe Islam without presenting them with the philosophical truth is unwise. Artistically, Azizi creates Tuan Kadi to represent the unwise Islamic missionaries. In contrast, Sami Napuh represents the devout clergymen of other religions. His attack on Tuan Kadi's condemnation of other religions accentuates the stupidity of some Islamic missionaries. This story reveals that Azizi understands the wider world and sees that it is a difficult task convincing people to desert their religion. As a Muslim he does not oppose the Islamic missionaries but implicitly calls for them to improve their strategy in disseminating Islam to non-Muslims.

It is worth mentioning that in a personal interview with Azizi, he acknowledges that his story about the Buddhist monk is inspired by his observations on the daily lives of Thai Buddhist monks living in temples along the border between Kedah and Songkhla. He admires them because they are willing to desert their secular world and sacrifice their whole lives to Buddhism. Hence Azizi uses Sami Napuh here as a model for the Islamic missionaries to devote their lives to Islam. They should possess in-depth knowledge of Islam before going to disseminate the faith. More importantly, they should not condemn other people's religions.

On a similar theme and purpose is the short story *Ustaz* ('Teacher') by S. Othman Kelantan. Instead of attacking the hypocrisy of Muslim missionaries like

Azizi Haji Abdullah, S. Othman demonstrates a positive image of Muslim missionaries through the character of an Islamic teacher called Ustaz.

'Teacher' is set in Kelantan and is a love story between Ustaz Saifuddin and his beautiful student Siti Nuriza. Ustaz accepts an offer from Datuk Jalal Akhbar to give Islamic lessons and teach the al-Quran to his children. Among the children is Siti Nuriza, a young teenager who has absorbed the western lifestyle. Ustaz Saifuddin succeeds in bringing Siti Nuriza to the path of Islam but is seduced by her femininity; he falls in love with her. However, he chooses to break off their relationship because he is poor and his position of being her teacher does not allow him to carry on their relationship as lovers, as his reputation and dignity would be destroyed. He decides to stop giving lessons to his students and leaves Kelantan to further his studies in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi. Finally, he feels relief and happy with his decision.

The key theme of this story is revealed in the following quotation: "The present-day young generations are weak with regard to religion. Their parents are too busy to spare time for their children" (S. Othman 1984:120). On the other hand, the author notes that teenagers are easily influenced by the western lifestyle, as represented by Siti Nuriza.

The most distinctive feature of this text is its allusion to the Islamic romance of the Prophet Yusuf and the beautiful woman Zulaikha in which the prophet succeeds in freeing himself from her seduction.[4] This allusion is expressed in Ustaz

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[4]According to *Dictionary of Islam* (Hughes 1896:176-7), the name Zulaikha is more correctly Zalikha. She was also called Ra'il. She was the wife of Potiphar. The Prophet Yusuf is also known by Christians as Joseph. He was the son of Jacob, and, according to the al Qur-an, an inspired prophet. The story of Yusuf and Zulaikha is the theme of love and is one of the most popular love songs in the East. It was turned into Persian verse by Nuru'ddin 'Abdul'r-Rahman ibn Ahmad, A.H. 898. And Shaikh Hamdu'llah ibn Shamsi'd-din Muhammad (H.H. 909), rendered it into Turki verse. Hence the Prophet Yusuf or Joseph has become the Adonis of the East (ibid.:250-254).

On the Malay Peninsula, the prophetic narratives or Qisas- al-Anbiya (Tales of the Prophets) were known to the Malays before the seventeenth century through the medium of the al Qur-an, the Hadith, and the Tafsir (exegesis). Traditionally, the "Malay" prophetic narratives portray prophets of the highest virtue. Although Allah subjected them to difficult trials, they never turned from Him, including the Prophet Yusuf who was thrown into a well by his jealous brothers and sold to some traders as a slave in Egypt. His master's wife, Zulaikha, attempted to seduce him, but he resisted. In revenge, she accused the Prophet Yusuf of molesting her and he was sent to prison. In reward for his patience and devotion, Allah made him a nobleman in Egypt and reunited him with his father and relatives (see Ismail 1983:85,88).

Saifuddin's soliloquy: "Oh God! He tries to keep his mind strong. He wishes he gained a blessing from God that he should possess the faith of the Prophet Yusuf in encountering the temptation at Zulaikha" (ibid.:109). Thus, Ustaz Saifuddin's rejection of his love for his student is likened to the triumph of the Prophet Yusuf over emotional love and his triumph of responsibility over lust. To some extent, this allusion reveals that the power of a woman's femininity can weaken the faith and good intentions of man. On the other hand, it highlights and praises the responsibility of Ustaz Saifuddin in performing his duty as an Islamic missionary. He is a good model for other Muslim missionaries.

The Imam and his Islamic Responsibility

Like religious teachers, Imams have a direct commitment to guide Muslims and provide them with the correct knowledge and practises of Islam. In a Muslim community, they are highly respected for their religious knowledge and duties. If they fail to perform their duties or behave badly, they are condemned. Like many Muslims, Malay authors also attack such kind of Imams. The short stories that reference these matters are *Di Pinggir Kampung Barzakh* ('At the Margin of Barzakh Village') and *Hajjul Fatwa Mardudah* (The Story of Haji Fatwa Mardudah') by Azizi Haji Abdullah.

'At the Margin of Barzakh Village' is set in a tomb where Pak Malim, a poor former caretaker of a mosque and graveyard, meets Orang Gemuk, a former corrupt politician.[5] They talk about their respective funerals and careers. Pak Malim reveals that his funeral was simple and was attended by a small group of villagers who held a service for his death. Yet he was happy because of their sincerity. He now has a comfortable life in the tomb as a result of his good deeds in the living world. Unlike

[5] According to *Islamic Dictionary*, Barzakh is a partition (mani') between the living and the Day of Judgement, namely, the grave in which they will remain until the Day of Resurrection. The word is employed by Muhammadan writers in at least two sense, some using it for the place of the dead, the grave, and others for the state of departed souls between death and judgement. The condition of believers in the grave is held to be one of undisturbed rest, but that of unbelievers one of torment; for Muhammad is related to have said, " there are appointed for the grave of the unbeliever ninety-nine serpents to bite him until the Day of Resurrection". The word seems generally to be used in the sense of Hades, for every person who dies is said to enter al-Barzakh (Hughes 1896:38-9).

Orang Gemuk (lit. 'fat man'), whose coffin looks old and is suffering from the hot weather. His large, expensive funeral consisted of a lot of prayers from large numbers of Imams and a huge donation by his wife. This did not secure a happy life for him in the tomb since he was a corrupt politician. Worse than this, all Imams were insincere in praying at his death. In the tomb, both Pak Malim and Orang Gemuk recognise the truth that money and donations cannot redeem one's sins and only one's good deeds and faith in religion can ensure this.

Distinctively, this story is a didactic and satirical tale. It aims to criticise corrupt and hypocritical politicians as well as greedy and irresponsible religious men. Representing bad politicians, Orang Gemuk is portrayed as bald and fat. His fat body symbolises his greed and corruption and his 'bald head' his ugly and disgusting behaviour. Similarly, religious men are negatively portrayed as being greedy, distrustful and discriminating. Azizi uses Orang Gemuk's funeral and his corrupt behaviour to mock the religious men who prefer to give their prayers to the sinful but rich people rather than to the poor but morally high. As the narrator states: "I cannot believe that among the religious scholars there also exists discrimination in praying for the dead. I think that if we cannot afford it, we shall return to the fundamental rule, that is, only one man is enough to pray for the dead because it is the *fardu kifayah*" (Azizi 1984:109).[6] This excerpt reveals the author's knowledge of Islam and his religious commitment to correct the improper religious practises of the Imams in his community. He also reminds the Muslim reader to think of the most crucial thing in praying at his death, that is, the individual inner intention. As Pak Malim complains:

> "This is the mistake. Most of us measure something from its face value rather than the real intention. I myself am amused why there are discrimination in the prayers for the dead? There are differences in the fee paid and differences from the standard (of prayer) that was performed. 'Doesn't the *fardu kifayah* sufficiently prohibit paid prayers? The behaviour of these religious people is also something else...why did they not come up with a fatwa on this matter? Why not say that these should not be any discrimination in terms of payment in prayers for the dead" (ibid.:110).

Clearly, Azizi uses religion as a tool for social control, especially to control the behaviour of the corrupt politician. He warns Muslims to be virtuous and distance themselves from any bad deeds so that they will have peaceful lives in the tomb and

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[6] The *fardu kifayah is* a collective duty in Muslim law.

the hereafter. Azizi also criticises the deceit of the religious men and the attitudes of people in general who love to make judgements on others based on their appearance rather than their hearts.

Azizi's satire on the Imam and his didactic style are more obvious in his short story, *Hajjul Fatawa Mardudah* ('The story of Hajjul Fatawa Mardudah'). The narrative tells of an Imam named Tuan Syaikh Sahibul Afdalullah who falls asleep and dreams that he is the religious leader of the country of the King Sang Petara Bumi Shah Ibni-Ibni. He is also blessed with a new name, Hajjul Fatawa Mardudah. He is busy trying on his new gown and reciting a long prayer to be read for the royal wedding of the King's daughter. His aim is to please the king and to show off his religious knowledge. He thinks that many imams are jealous of his position which brings him material goods and the reward of travelling abroad. While thinking, he hears the explosion of a firework and sees it bloom into banknotes. He is amazed to see people willing to burn the money. After that he is taken to the palace in a luxurious car. Sadly, at the wedding, it is raining heavily and he has to shorten his prayer. During his opening prayers, he feels guilty for reading the prayers of a state's ceremony which occasionally contain unIslamic activities, such as dancing and drinking. As soon as he finishes his prayer, he runs to the field and kneels down to ask God for forgiveness. He realises that he cannot neglect his duty as the religious leader of the country by praying for the sinful activities of his king any longer. Suddenly, his wife wakes him up and, because of his daydreaming, he changes his mind not to go for the interview to become the religious leader of the state.

The most interesting literary technique that appears in this story are the elements of oral literature, such as repetition, parallelism and the conventional description of the scene and characters, which can be traced in the following quotation.

> "To wait until ten thirty at night would mean there are more four hours to kill and Hajjul Fatawa Mardudah cannot wait to rush to the stage and shout from the loud speakers, asking all important guests and common people; those who came crawling, aided with a walking stick, by boat or complimentary bus, by bicycle and car, to raise their hands high, put theirs fingers together so that their prayers will not fall through. And he just cannot wait to ask everyone to unanimously say; Amin! Amin! Amin!" (Azizi 1987:22).

In the above passage, the use of repetition and conventional descriptions of the arrival of the subjects at the royal celebration, with phrases such as '*come crawling*'

or *'aided with a walking sticks'*, are widespread in most Malay oral tales and written texts. Azizi skilfully combines this traditional style with modern elements such as cars, buses and bicycles, to create an atmosphere of fun to entertain the reader. Besides, the name of the king—Sang Petara Bumi Syah Ibni-Ibni—echoes the king's name in Malay folktales. Hiding behind such a traditional name, the author feels comfortable in attacking and criticising the monarchical institution in which the king does nothing for the good of the country, only wastes people's money on royal ceremonies. Evidence is provided by the fireworks which burst and bloom into banknotes and are then burnt up (ibid.:24). This strategy protects the author from putting himself in trouble.

Equally important is Azizi's criticism of the top religious leader of the country or the 'Imam negara', whose services are mainly for the monarch rather than the people. He is seen as the King's puppet whose materialistic bent prevents him from following his religious teachings. Azizi's criticism is conveyed through Hajjul Fatawa Mardudah's reminiscence about his works which mostly deal with royal ceremonies, and matters pertaining to rites of passage (ibid.:23). Moreover, he misuses the prayer for occasions during which sinful activities are practised: "The following day, Hajjul Fatawa Mardudah is praised by stupid people who think that his prayers are very good and sincere, although, all forms of vice and superstitions are included in those prayers" (ibid.:28). This satirical expression supports the movement of Islamic revivalism of the 1970s in which the author calls for the religious leaders and Islamic authorities to reinvestigate some Malay traditions and rituals, especially in royal ceremonies and to eradicate the elements of superstitions which are against Islamic monotheism. More importantly, the author asks the state religious leaders to commit their religious duties to communal affairs, not solely for the monarchy. In short, this story can be regarded as a political satire in which Azizi disagrees with clergymen who have become the tools of politicians.

The criticism of religious men and religious institutions by the Thai and Malay authors reveals their sincerity in detailing social reality. More importantly, it is the authors' attempts to call their people to return to the essence of their religious philosophy, teachings and practises.

Criticism of the Decline of Faith and Morality in Society

The issue of decline of faith and morality in society is dealt with in the short stories on the themes of conversion and individual moral collapse i.e. they are entitled *Ranjit Khur* ('The Story of Ranjit Khur') by Azizi Haji Abdullah, *Nai huang naam kwaang* ('In the Wide River") by Phaithuun Thanyaa and *Pintu dan Jendela* ('Door and Window') by S. Othman Kelantan.

Conversion

Any Muslim converting to another religion is committing a serious sin and brings shame upon their parents and the Muslim community as Azizi Haji Abdullah records in *Ranjit Khur* ('The Story of Ranjit Khur'). It focuses on a young Malay Muslim man, who converts to the Sikh religion to please his girlfriend. The man believes in his right to embrace any religion he wants, regardless of his parents' attitude and feeling. He accepts that his lack of Islamic knowledge causes him to be easily influenced by his girlfriend's religion. He also claims that living in the city discourages him from being interested in religion. Therefore, he does not see any difference between the belief in Allah and a Sikh God. As a Sikh, he is required to wear shorts under his trousers, a bracelet, and carry a comb and a small knife. He is also required to keep his hair long. He feels uncomfortable as these requirements imply that Sikhism worships materialism. He thinks that he had better follow national principles (rukunegara) rather than Sikhism.[7] Eventually, without true faith and proper religious knowledge, he does not embrace any religion.

Throughout the story, the author believes that the weakening of Islamic knowledge among the present-day young Malay Muslims derives from, firstly, the

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[7]According to Ghazali Shafie (1985:22,58), one of Malaysia's prominent and experienced statesmen, the RUKUNEGARA defines not only the relation between the citizens and citizen but also the relation between citizens and the state. It is the commitment of the citizens to their state and vice versa. It contains two parts, firstly, the national objectives and, secondly, their guiding principles applicable to all serving as nexus which helpfully will bind the nation together. The national objectives are to achieve a greater unity of all her peoples, to maintain a democratic way of life, to create a just society in which the wealth of the nation shall be equitably shared, to ensure a liberal approach to her rich and diverse cultural traditions and to build a progressive society which shall be oriented to modern science and technology. The RUKUNEGARA's guiding principles are; Belief in God; Loyalty to King and Country; Upholding the constitution; Rule of Law and Good Behaviour and Morality" (ibid.:58-9).

ignorance of their parents to provide them proper knowledge of Islam, and secondly, the liberal lifestyle of the city. These factors discourage them from being interested in religion and becoming easily influenced by other religions, as expressed through the protagonist's soliloquy:

> "When talking about religion, he would like to raise his hands in surrender. What does he have in his heart? From childhood, he studied at national school, continued at secondary school, took an exam for higher educational certification, and got a job. Living in the city, religion is not the main thing. The city teaches him to live either modest or to be outright. The city does not teach him how to live with the demands of religious understanding. In the city, there is only the call for prayer of a paid muezzin from the minaret, but that sound is drowned out by noise and other music. The city is unlike the village where people who do not perform Friday prayer three times in a row will be summoned. The city is a competitive world." (Azizi 1985:36).

This quotation reveals Azizi's rural and urban bias. He apparently prefers the rural life where people are still serious about their religion. In his view, the city is bad, over-competitive and corrupt because even the call for prayer is barely heard and a muezzin, who performs that duty, must be paid, despite the fact that a muezzin's duty is regarded by Muslims as voluntary work which will be rewarded by God in the hereafter. Azizi's negative attitude towards the city is introduced in this story to strengthen his argument that such an unhealthy environment lures young Muslims away from their religion. Furthermore, Azizi implicitly satirises people in the city, who are less religious than those in rural areas, although in reality this is not always true. It is notable that Azizi also has a religious bias towards Sikhism, as reflected in the protagonist's letter to his girlfriend.

> "Ranjit! I respect and believe in the one God as is required by your religion because, whatever the religions, they are all the same. But as for the rest, especially the fifth symbol, I am unable to accept. I feel that I am forced to believe in material things. Let me not be named a Muslim, although I believe in a God who is one. Let me not be said to have religion, although I have been baptized because, compared with the other four elements, I am happier to choose; loyalty to the king, glory of the constitution, sovereignty of the laws, and modesty and politeness. I do not know what kind of religion I embrace" (ibid.:43).

The above excerpt implies that the author views Sikhism as inferior to Islam because he focuses only on its basic principles rather than on its religious teachings. Interestingly, the comparison between the four important things that the Sikhs wear

and the national fundamental rules the author mentions, implicitly satirises and reveals the author's attitude towards such a religion. As a Muslim, Azizi is not strong enough to make his character truly believe in Sikhism. Perhaps, it is better to make his character not believe in any religion rather than be misinterpreted as promoting Sikhism rather than Islam. In addition, Azizi argues that if people do not strongly believe in their faith, whatever religion they embrace is meaningless, as the text says: "Religion is a matter of faith and belief. If the heart is shaking, it is better not to have religion" (ibid.:43). This is the central idea of the story.

Noticeably, although the theme of conversion does not appear in the Thai short stories under selection, it does not mean that no Buddhist Thais convert to Islam. The selected Thai authors are not interested in such a theme, perhaps because they do not see it as a social problem, but rather as a human right to embrace any religion they like. In addition, they do not believe that it is sinful to adopt other than Buddhism. What they are more concerned with is the issue of moral collapse among present-day people.

Moral Collapse

The question of individual morality in today's society is another thematic preoccupation which Thai and Malay authors highlight in their short stories. Generally, the authors tend to explain the factors which entice people to engage in sinful activities and then cause them to suffer due to their sense of guilt. Stories, such as *Nai huang naam kwaang* ('In the Wide Tide') by Kanokphong Songsomphan and *Pintu dan Jendela* ('Door and Window') by S. Othman Kelantan, address this problem.

'In the Wide Tide' presents the theme of individual moral collapse caused by greed. The narrative tells of Mat, the head of a lighthouse on an isolated island in southern Thailand. On the night of 4th December, he comes to the island to fix the light system of the lighthouse alone while all his staff spend the holiday onshore. Because of a storm he has to stay on the island with only hundreds of rats and a hawk as his friends. Unfortunately, the rats steal the food he and his staff have stored.

In the afternoon of 5th December, he goes fishing and comes across the dead body of a Vietnamese woman. While his hawk nibbles the body, he sees six gold necklaces, four rings and a bracelet tied to the woman's leg. He takes them all and

then pushes the body away from his island. In the night he sleeps fitfully and has a hallucination that a Vietnamese woman appears at his bedroom window as if asking for her gold back. Although he tells himself that he is not guilty in taking the gold, because it is useless to the dead, his conscience persuades him otherwise.

On the 6th December, he tries hard not to think of the dead body but fails, and subsequently dreams about the Vietnamese woman again. The next morning, he feels as if his hawk has turned to be his enemy and has no trust in him. In the afternoon he finds that the current has brought the dead body back to the island where many of the rats have been nibbling at it. He feels as if the rats look at him with no sense of guilt, the same as when they were stealing his food. He feels as if the dead body is making war with him and destroying all his reason for taking her gold without feeling guilty. Frantically he pulls the body back into the sea and waits until it has gradually sunk. He feels relief. Yet, he still has a nightmare that while he is on the train, someone cuts his hand with a sword. He wakes up to see a rat crawling on his chest, his finger is bitten by it. He thinks that the rats are possessed by the soul of the dead body so as to claim back the gold from him. Suddenly the hawk pulls at his necklace which he manages to break off, yet he feels that it too is turning to be his enemy just like the rats.

Finally the next morning, while sailing to return home, the hawk follows him and makes him think that it has come to claim the gold for the dead. He is then ready to shoot it.

Throughout the story, Kanokphong focuses on the battle between the good and bad consciences in the mind of the protagonist to expose that human beings, under the proper circumstances, no matter how good they are, tend to yield to greed. This is achieved through the use of setting and symbols. The setting of being alone on an isolated island encourages the protagonist to steal the gold. This is because he is confident that nobody will witness the act and he argues that the gold is useless to the dead woman. Symbolically, the gold represents greed and is a tester of the protagonist's morality. It seduces him and brings him suffering. For the author, taking the gold from the dead body of the Vietnamese woman is an immoral act comparable to that of a thief. Although she is dead, the protagonist has no right to take her gold. As a punishment, the author makes the protagonist suffer from his sense of guilt and be haunted by the dead body and nightmares.

> "In fact, all those things come from his conscience. The hallucination is attacking him. Her image is also created from his inner mind and that thing makes him imagine that she is asking him for her gold. It means that deep inside his heart he admits that he himself is a thief...Her return defeats his subconscious completely. It is an absolute acceptance that in fact he is a thief because of that acceptance, it is like black magic that muddies be in his conscience in which his good conscience is in the prison while his bad conscience tries to reveal itself" (ibid.:202,208).

Clearly, the dead body is a metaphor for the good conscience of the protagonist which provokes and at the same time condemns him for his thieving behaviour. The condemnation is also intensified by the use of animals as symbols. These are the hawk and rats who are likened to the protagonist because all of them profit from the corpse. In addition, the hawk is also like the dead woman in that it provokes the good conscience of the protagonist. It appears when the protagonist feels that it is against him and condemns his deed. By contrast, the protagonist's attempt to remove the dead body from the island and the shooting of his hawk are his attempts to destroy the evidence of theft and his sense of guilt. However, although he successfully disposes of the dead body, he fails to abolish his sense of guilt which confirms that he is sinful.

As a social critic, Kanokphong uses the protagonist's act of stealing the gold from the dead body to criticise and reflect upon the reality of present-day people who tend to be inhumane and greedy in exploiting one another. The poor are always the losers and are powerless to protect their property. This attitude is expressed through the thoughts of the protagonist.

> "If one has to feel guilty, it will be very little compared with people in society who exploit each other. One group makes profit as if the other group was a lifeless body, senseless and wordless. That is the condition that really exists. A kind of human being eats the flesh of living human beings without any feelings. I am not guilty, am I?" (ibid.:203).

Significantly, the act of stealing is the author's attempt to illustrate the economic injustice of the poor, mainly of the rice farmers and fishermen. These people are powerless to protect their products from the hands of the capitalists who are good at business but who are opportunists. His concern is reflected in the text.

> "It is like everything has disappeared from her hands. It is like the rice has disappeared from the hands of the farmers. It is like the fish have disappeared

from the hands of the fishermen. Although, they realise later that those things have lost from their hands because of deceitful tactics, nobody can do anything about it" (ibid.:209).

Thus, both the rice farmers and fishermen are likened to the dead body of the Vietnamese woman who cannot protect her gold from the thief. In other words, todays' businessmen are like the thieves who steal the wealth from the hands of the rice farmers and fishermen, their act is legitimised by the law of capitalism.

Similar moral questions are also found in S. Othman Kelantan's, *Pintu dan Jendela* ('Door and Window').

The protagonist is a retired man who used to work as a door guard at the Penang ferry and also as a procurer of prostitutes for the crew of foreign cargo ships. One day, he listens to the preaching of an Imam at a mosque that "the right fortune will bring the blessing though they are small...Every drop of blood which is from the prohibited fortune will bring misfortune at the end. Flesh, which grows from the prohibited fortune, will be chewed by the flames of hell soon" (S. Othman 1990:217). The preaching provokes his sense of guilt and makes him worry that his sins will be passed onto his children and destroy their bright futures. The narrator then reveals that his involvement in prostitution derived from his poverty and his ignorance of religious teaching. Today, he wants to wash his hands of prostitution and hopes that God will forgive his sins and bless his children to have a better future. Unfortunately, his good intentions cannot be easily achieved because he has to cope with other threats. Firstly, the government will excavate the land where his house is built to build a factory. Secondly, he is afraid that if he dies, his young wife will become a prostitute to support his four children. Finally, his age does not allow him to do good work. His concern for his age and employment can be understood for many reasons. Firstly, few employers are willing to hire old men to work because they are concerned about their physical strength. Secondly, the payment might not reflect their true contribution when compared with younger workers, and thirdly, it is against the moral code to allow old people work. As a result, he returns to the port to work as a nightwatchman in a factory. This might tempt him to return to his sinful job but he is determined not to do so.

The story has two main aims. Firstly, it criticises the ignorance of the government in dealing with the poverty of its people; and secondly, it calls Muslims

to return to Islam. Regarding the issue of declining individual morality, the text shows that poverty and the lack of Islamic knowledge encourages people to get involved in unhealthy work. Noticeably, S. Othman does not blame the protagonist for working as procurer of girls, but the government, as a result of its ignorance in dealing with poverty.

Regarding the issue of moral collapse, S. Othman uses the former procurer to discourage Malay people from using poverty as an excuse in earning a living from immoral work. This is because, due to Islamic principles, working as a procurer of girls is sinful and the money earnt from that job is forbidden (haram) and will destroy the fortune of the consumers. S. Othman makes his main character repent of his sins and eventually leave his job as moral guidance and warning to whoever participates in prostitution.

Overall, on the issues of the decadence of faith in religion and the individual moral collapse of Buddhist Thais and Muslim Malays, it is apparent that both Thai and Malay authors see social situations as the outcome of economic struggle, materialism and a lack of religious knowledge.

The Literary Expression of Local Beliefs in the Short Stories

Folk beliefs and literature have a close relation with and influence upon each other. In anthropology and folklore, Mohd. Taib Osman calls the local beliefs of the Malays a 'folk religion' as opposed to a 'universal religion', such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. Based on the notion of Gustav Mensching, Mohd. Taib Osman explains that universal religions convey a message of truth from supernatural beings for the salvation of mankind, especially Islam and Christianity. The universal religion ultimately promises salvation to mankind if s/he follows the right path and believes firmly in the Almighty. Folk beliefs, on the other hand, are based on attempts to please the supernatural power to bring prosperity to human beings on earth and to not harm or interfere in their activities (Mohd. Taib Osman 1989:xii). Applying Mohd. Taib Osman's concept of 'folk religion' and 'universal religion', in this study the term 'folk religion' means 'local beliefs' or 'traditional beliefs' as opposed to a 'universal religion'—Buddhism and Islam.

In Thailand, folk beliefs relate to a belief in spirits and are called *'saiyasaat'* (ไสยศาสตร์). Phya Anumaanrajahdon, a Thai folklorist scholar, notes that: "Thai people observe religions as overlapping layers like a stupa as well, i.e., they basically believe in spirits. The next is the belief in superstitions, which exists in Brahmanism and Hinduism, and then Buddhism" (Phya Anumaanrajahdon 1968:7 cited in Suwannaa 1982:253). Similar observation is also revealed in Jackson (1989) i.e. that Buddhist Thai reformist monks completely reject superstition, but other monks do not. For example, Phra Sophanakhanphorn, Jackson's informant, believes in the existent power of spirits by making a reference to Lord Buddha's viewpoint: "The Buddha did not deny the reality or efficacy of *saiyaasaat* but rather taught that it was not the highest spiritual refuge and could not lead to a complete release from suffering" (ibid.:57-8). Yet, Phra Sophanakhanphorn sees the belief in and practise of superstitions as a threat to Buddhism.

> "Thai society might reject religion [sasana, that is, Buddhism] and return to relying on *saiyaasaat*, astrology, and mediumship, until we lose ourselves and abandon the use of reason and wisdom in conducting our lives....If we really reached such a point it would show that society had begun returning to the dark ages...It would mean that people would be debased. One could not speak of protecting the nation and the religion, only of protecting oneself in order to live happily" (ibid.: 58).

A similar situation is also found in Malay society, where local beliefs have been practised side by side with Islam, as Mohd. Taib Osman notes:

> "The Malay have been Muslim for at least five hundred years, but their beliefs and rituals do not preclude elements which are incompatible with the strict tenets of Islam. Side by side with official Islamic beliefs and practices, we find a hybrid body of notions and rituals composed of three principal elements: animistic retentions from the Old Indonesian civilisation, traces from the Hindu period of Malay history, and popular Islamic practices which stand outside the strict dogmas of the religion. The presence of disparate elements in Malay folk beliefs is therefore a historical phenomenon mirroring the socio-cultural history of the people" (ibid.:2-3).

Clearly, both Buddhism and Islam are regarded as religions of wisdom and rationalism, while superstition is considered to consist of irrational beliefs. Nevertheless, today, although both Thais and Malays observe world religions, they still believe in and practise their folk religions inherited from the past and have

integrated them into the domain of their world religions. Many of them choose to believe in both 'world religion' and 'folk religion' to ensure that their lives and business will not be ruined by supernatural powers. Such kind of beliefs and practises reveal that both Thais and Malays share a common cultural root, namely a belief in superstitions.

In literature, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren (1993) observe that "literature has usually arisen in close connexion with particular social institutions; and in primitive society we may even be unable to distinguish poetry from ritual, magic, work, or play. Literature has also a social function, or 'use', which cannot be purely individual. Thus a large majority of the questions raised by literary study are at least ultimately or by implication, social questions of tradition and convention, norms and genre, symbols and myths" (ibid.:94). Their attitude reminds us of a feature and inception of traditional literature of South East Asia, namely poetry, of which some is recited as charms in rites of passage and in agricultural rituals.[8] It can be argued that the traditional literatures, mainly in poetic form in South East Asia in general, and in Thailand and Malaysia, in particular, merge closely with traditional beliefs in spirits and have a certain function in individual and communal affairs. Local beliefs give inspiration to authors who might be shamans or professional poets in the community. In modern prose writings, the elements of folk beliefs, such as omens, magic and charms, still have their place and attract contemporary writers because they are a part of people's way of life in modern society. Thus, the following section will examine and focus on how Thai and Malay authors reflect and use folk religions in their works and for what purposes.

Belief in ghosts, guardian spirits and ancestor-spirit worship

The Thais and Malays have their own terms for ghost, guardian spirit and ancestor spirit. In Thai, the term for 'ghost' is *phii* (ผี), for guardian spirit *phii jao thii jao thaang* (ผีเจ้าที่เจ้าทาง) and for ancestor spirit *phii puuyaa taayaai* (ผีปู่ย่าตายาย). In Malay,

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[8]This is exemplified by the lullaby sung in the cradle ceremony of the new born baby who will first sleep in her/his cradle. In traditional society, Thai and Malay farmers recite the charm in poetic form to please the rice spirit, *Mae Phosop* (แม่โพสพ) in Thai and *Semangat Padi* in Malay so as to protect their rice crops.

the terms for ghost, guardian spirit and ancestor spirit are *hantu*, *penunggu* and *angin nenek moyang*, respectively. In southern Thailand and northern Malaysia, people share the same idea of an ancestor spirit which they believe plays a significant role in the transference of artistic gifts in healing and in performing arts to their descendants. Short stories by selected authors illustrate this. They are *Ubaat* ('Curse'), *Kham phyaako'n* ('The Prophecy') and *Nok khao fai* ('A Fire Dove') all by Phaithuun Thanyaa and *Sial Akar Pecah Lima* ('The Roots of Misfortune') and *Tergelecek* ('Slippery') by Azizi Haji Abdullah.

Phaithuun's 'Curse' reflects the belief in superstitions of the southern Thai-Buddhists as a sign of social backwardness and the exploitation of spirit practitioners from such beliefs to make their living.

The protagonist, Ai Kherm, is mad. His mother, Naang Kham, and the villagers believe that his body "is possessed by a spirit because he chopped down the *Takhien* tree whose trunk is hollow" (Phaithuun 1996:101) and many elders think that his body "might be eaten by *jinn*, a forest ghost, because he built a shelter on the path of the *jinn* (ibid). Without proper advice, Naang Kham consults the spirit practitioner Mo'Am whose diagnosis confirms the villagers' assumptions, as he reveals that "Ai Kherm was done by the spirits at the anthill. He urinated on the anthill. Therefore, the anthill spirit struck him" (ibid.:100). He suggests Naang Kham have cloth wrapped around the anthill located in her pigsty and to ask the spirit for forgiveness. Naag Kham follows his advice but Ai Khem gets worse. She then consults Mo' Paen who diagnoses that Ai Kherm's madness is punishment from his ancestor spirits, who were Nora performers, due to the ignorance of his family in not worshiping them. He urges Naang Kham to have a *Nora Rongkhruu* (โนราโรงครู) performance to pay respect to and ask forgiveness from the spirits. Amazingly, while Mo' Paen performs a shamanistic ritual to diagnose Kherm's illness, Naang Niam, a villager who is watching the ritual, falls into a trance. Her body and soul are believed to be possessed by Ai Kherm's ancestor spirits. The words that come from her mouth are the words of Ai Kherm's ancestor spirits: "You...you do not respect me. You do not respect the ancestors so you receive such a result. Remember from now you must perform the *Nora Rongkhruu* for every three years (ibid.:104). Her transcendental condition and her words strengthen and confirm Mo' Am and Mo' Paen's diagnosis of Ai Kherm's

illness. Although Kherm's mother does everything suggested by the spirit practitioners, Ai Kherm remains sick and gets worse. Eventually, the solution to Ai Kherm's illness comes when Nen Loy, a former novice, visits him. He argues that Ai Kherm's madness must be an outcome of abuse by the poorly-paid volunteer soldiers because he might have violated a command not to work in the rubber plantation up the hill, the suspected occupied zone of the communist troops. Nen Loy's argument convinces the villagers. This is revealed in the condemnation of Pho' Thao Suk towards the soldiers and the spirit practitioners:

> "I now know that ...hum...it is why Ai Kherm becomes mad. He has had hallucinations. He must have been seriously abused physically and verbally...you know...Stop, you all must stop going to see the 'ghost doctor' or 'cursed doctor'. Even the god doctor or the ascetic...like what E-niam has said, cannot cure. This curse is very strong...it has eaten many good people. Ai Kherm is lucky that he is not dead..." (ibid.:109).

Pho' Thao Suk's condemnation is the essence of the story, wherein lies the meaning of its title, *Ubaat* ('Curse'). The word 'ubaat' has two meanings. One is 'curse' and the other is 'the cursed'. For the 'curse', it can be interpreted as the author cursing the superstitious beliefs of the villagers, the spirit practitioners who earn their living from people's ignorance, the poorly paid soldiers who abuse the villagers, the government authorities who hire unwise soldiers that use their power to abuse the villagers, and the ignorant schoolteachers who do not guide the villagers to use reason or modern treatments instead of superstition to cure the illness of mental disorder.

In contrast, only Nen Loy represents reason. He performs the role of the torch of reason to the villagers. Although Pho' Thao Suk, a respected old man of the village and the schoolteachers in the community believe that Kherm is mad, they do not advise Naang Kham to consult a psychiatrist. So, neither play the role of the torch of intelligence for the villagers, as is their duty. They let the villagers be consumed by ignorance and superstition. This might be because firstly, they do not want to interfere in family affairs, and secondly, the schoolteachers believe that they cannot overcome the superstitious beliefs of the villagers. Finally, the author reveals the social reality that education is still far from successfully eradicating the superstitious beliefs of Thai villagers. Naang Kham's seeking for help from the spirit healers reflects the fact that Thai people in general, and villagers in particular, prefer to consult spirit healers

rather than psychiatrists for mental treatment because they do not believe that psychiatrists can successfully cure madness.

In addition, Naang Niam's trance is used to strengthen the villagers' belief in the spiritual world. Phaithuun seems to oppose this kind of belief because it becomes a channel for the spirit practitioners to make their living from the villagers and encourages them to be superstitious. This is proved by the waste of money and the failure of Ai Kherm's mother in curing his illness, using the spirit practitioner instead of modern medical treatment. In this case, Ai Kherm's mother is portrayed as a victim of the spirit practitioner and of ignorance.

Conversely, 'the cursed' refers to three groups of people. The first are the shamans like Pho' Mo' Am and Mo' Paen, who earn their living by exploiting the local beliefs of the villagers. This can be interpreted from Mo' Am's act: "after finishing his words, Mo' Am sweeps the money for his job which is in the tray in front of him into the pocket of his *kui heng* shirt and leaves..." (ibid.:101).[9] Clearly, instead of using the verb 'collect' for money, the author uses the verb 'sweep' to show the greed of the spirit doctor. Therefore, they become 'the cursed' because of their greed and materialism.

The second are the poorly paid volunteer soldiers who misuse their position to harm the villagers. Noticeably, although Phaithuun does not show sympathy toward the soldiers, the reader can interpret them as 'the cursed' because of the political situation, their profession and fear. Linked with the situation of communist expansion, as government soldiers they have to arrest or harm the communist sympathisers or suspects to protect their lives from and to avoid being punished by their military commander.

The third are the villagers. They are 'the cursed' because they allow their beliefs in superstitions to dominate their intelligence. However, the author does not strongly condemn them because he understands their situation in that they lack a leader who can guide them to choose reason instead of superstition in solving their problems. This evidence is provided by Ai Kherm's mother. She is confident that her ancestors were not at the Nora performers, but she does not dare oppose what Mo'

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[9] *Kui heng* is a Chinese-style coat, usually made of silk, fastened with cloth buttons and eyes, now sometimes worn as a pyjama top (So 1965:91).

Paen said and the villagers believe in. She admits that it is because she is ignorant and does not have a good advisor (ibid.:103).

Interestingly, the author is very concerned about the readers who are non-southern Thais and might not understand the local beliefs. To help these readers understand the local belief in 'curses', he explains them through the words of the narrator:

> "In fact, Pho' Thao has heard and seen the spirit doctor remove a curse. That curse has different types. They are things that villagers have believed in for a long time. For example, if there is a stroke of lightening occurring in the area of the house, it is considered a curse, which is called the sky curse. If a cat gives birth to and eats her own baby, it is also said to be the curse and it needs a spirit doctor to expel (such kind of curse)..." (ibid.:106-7).

Therefore, 'Curse', also functions as an anthropological document for readers who are interested in southern folklore. In short, 'the curse' is the word used to condemn deviant behaviours such as abusing other people as well as to condemn the extraordinary behaviours of animals and unnatural phenomena of nature which might harm a human's life.

Phaithuun's concern with local beliefs and the hypocrisy of the spirit practitioners is also presented in his short story, 'The Prophecy'. Phaithuun highlights the theme of superstitious beliefs which cannot be eradicated from the villagers' world-view. The story and theme is constructed around a dispute between the villagers and the temple council on the issue of cutting down the old giant 'Bodhi tree' whose roots have cracked the foundation of the million-baht ordination hall in the temple. In Buddhism the Bodhi tree is the sacred tree under which the Lord Buddha attained enlightenment, therefore it is highly respected. The villagers regard the spirit of the Bohdi tree as a god which must be worshipped and to chop it down would be an act of desecration.

The conflict in the story arises when the temple council decides to cut down the tree. This upsets the villagers who believe in the supernatural power of the tree spirit. Among the protesters is an old spirit practitioner, named Plang, who makes his living out of local beliefs. He plays his role as the defender of superstitious beliefs and as the one who delights in keeping the villagers in the world of ignorance. He condemns the decision to destroy the Bodhi tree as follows:

> "Everybody is doomed. You'll see...Everybody is doomed...anyone whoever dares to think ill of the sacred Bodhi tree will suffer the consequences inevitably. Which devil blinds the abbot to see the bad from good to this extent...You people know nothing. You don't know anything about the order of things. You should know that this Bodhi has been the abode of spirits and angels for many years. In every hollow and on every hold of each branch are deposited the ashes and bones of our ancestors. Our old ancestors buried the bones of the dead there. Whoever think of destroying the Bodhi tree are like challenging the spirits and angels. They will meet with a horrible death. Remember my words...remember" (Phaithuun 1996:114-5).[10]

At this point, Plang's words are the 'prophecy' of the story, which frighten the villagers. To solve the problem the abbot lets people make their own decision by saying they must 'choose the temple or the Bodhi tree" (ibid.:112) which implicitly means 'to choose Buddhism or superstitious beliefs:

> "It had been there for a very long times... and could have continued to be there for a long times, had its powerful sprouting roots not disrupted the big ordination hall nearby. The million-baht ordination hall that had been the pride of the temple, was now completely eclipsed by the branches and stems of the giant Bodhi tree, as if it would not allow any thing to grow and compete with it for greatness at all. But this was not as bad as the invasion of its roots into the foundation of the ordination hall, causing a multitude of cracks to appear on the floor. As day went by, the cracks expanded so alarmingly that it was feared that the ordination hall's collapse was imminent (ibid.:112).

This description reveals the implicit meaning through the use of symbolism that the roots of the Bodhi tree which destroy the foundation of the temple are the belief in superstition, which has stained the Buddhist teachings and discourages the correct practise of Buddhism. The million-baht ordination hall, on the other hand, symbolises the value of Buddhism. Like the roots of the Bodhi tree, the spirit practitioner, Plang, is an enemy of Buddhism who makes his living out of nonsensical beliefs and blinds the villagers to the truth of their religion. Plang opposes felling the tree, which can be interpreted as him protecting his job and the shamanistic

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[10] Phya Anuman Rajadhon explains that "in the old days the Buddhist Thais buried the bones and ashes of their dear one near the root of the *po* tree (Bodhi tree) so that they may be near the holy symbol of the Lord Buddha" (Phya Anuman 1968:305). Therefore, Buddhist Thais perceive that the destruction of Bodhi tree not only disparages Buddhism, but also disturb the ancestor spirits.

institution. If the tree is cut down, it does not only mean that the belief in spirits is destroyed, but also his job. Consequently, he might not be able to make his living from superstition any longer.

The story then tells that the committee hires a tractor driver to excavate the roots of the tree. When he discovers that it is hard work he also is afraid of the spirits and he leaves the job unfinished. This situation not only reinforces the villagers' belief in the spirits but also makes Plang happier. However, two men, Ai Feua and Fen, accept an offer to finish the job as Fen needs money to propose to his girlfriend and Ai Feua needs to buy alcohol. Moreover, Ai Feua does not believe in the tree spirits and even challenges their power and laughs at rumors about Mo' Plang's dream of the spirits' anger in which they will punish the desecrator of the tree:

> "They are the sounds of birds and crows. Old Plang is a spirit doctor. He has a ghost as his wife. Whatever happens, he puts the blame on and threaten people by exploiting the ghosts. There are no ghosts. I have seen a lot. I have heard till I am sick and tired of all of them. These stories of ghosts inhabiting big trees are all lies. If they were true, how come there are no big hopeas in the forest. They have been chopped down until there were none left. And nothing happened to the persons who cut them down either. If anything, they seemed to get richer and richer, instead. Will you accept the offer or not? I want to know quickly" (ibid.:117-8).

This quotation informs the reader that while Plang is against the cutting of the tree due to his self-interests, these two men cut the tree down because of a huge payment. They do not believe in the spirits because they are obsessed with money, not because they are rationalist. Therefore they also represent modern capitalists who deforest for wealth. The sign of the prophecy, which is the title of the story, begins when they dig up the tree and find some gold caskets. Because of greed, Fen, who is reluctant to cut the tree at the very beginning, persuades Ai Feua to steal these caskets in the night. When night comes, they go to the spot and Fen kills Ai Feua so that he can possess the gold caskets alone. The murder gives Plang chance to strengthen the belief in the spirits' power.

Critically, as the defender of Buddhism, Thaan Mahaa does not fall into the trap of believing that Ai Feua was killed by the tree spirits and orders Fen to complete the job. Noticeably, Thaan Mahaa's assertion to remove the Bodhi tree does not mean that it is the victory of Buddhism because the death of Ai Feua strengthens the villagers' belief in the spirits' power. To some extent, his death can be interpreted as

the spirits' punishment for his challenging their power. Furthermore, Fen can be said to have been seduced by the spirits and possessed by the evil of greed which drives him to kill Ai Feua. It is the spirits' punishment for him because of his participation in destroying the Bodhi tree. Therefore, Phaithuun uses the folk belief in the Bodhi tree's spirits to illustrate the world of the spirits and illogicality where people are blinded to the truth of Ai Feua's murder by a human being. Furthermore, through the use of the gold caskets as a symbol of greed, Phaithuun succeeds in providing a moral lesson that greed brings disaster to human beings. The author's comparison between the Bodhi tree and the expensive ordination hall suggests that he wants his people to return to the essence of Buddhist teaching and leave superstition behind. Linked with the title of the story, 'The Prophecy', and the greed of the characters—Fen and Feua—it can be said that the author himself is predicting that when people are totally dominated by materialism, a certain belief in superstitions will gradually lose popularity.

Belief in supernatural power is also found in Azizi Haji Abdullah's short story, *Tergelecek* ('Slippery'). It focuses on the life of a shaman, named Tuk Man. He is responsible in his career, superstitious and strong-minded in his belief in the power of his charms. One day, Tuk Man is called by Hamid to search for his child who disappeared from the village while searching for his goat. He believes that ghosts might have hidden his son. Tuk Man accepts his call and takes Damid, his orphan grandson, with him to Hamid's village, intending to familiarise him with the shamanistic profession and transferring his knowledge to him. On the day they go to Hamid's village, it is raining heavily, causing floods. Tuk Man and his grandson come across a small river in which the current is rising and the only way to go to Hamid's village is to cross the river by walking on a small bamboo bridge. Tuk Man ignores the danger of the current and the vulnerable bamboo bridge. He continues his journey to fulfil his duty as a shaman. He lets Damid cross the river first so that he can advise him where to place his feet and balance his body to cross the bridge safely. Unfortunately, Damid's foot slips and he falls into the river. Tuk Man is shocked and forgets to recite any spell to help his grandson. Instead he runs along the river to find a way to rescue him. Then he starts to recite a spell to stop the tide from taking his grandson away. Surprisingly, the spell works because Damid is stopped by a tree. Tuk Man then gets close to the river bank to help him. Unfortunately, the river bank, destroyed by the current and rain, collapses. Tuk Man's foot slips off and he, too, falls

into the river. Noticeably, Tuk Man forgets to recite the charm before they start their journey. He even forgets to recite the charm when he and his grandson are in a dangerous situation. When he uses it, it is already too late, and eventually they both drown.

Tuk Man represents the superstitious villagers and the shamanistic institution in Malay communities. He is a man of high responsibility to his job, is not money-minded and lives modestly. Although his responsibility and devotion to his job are positive, his rejection of the truth and of modern science is to blame. He, like many other villagers, believes in the power of spells and spirits because his previous works of using spells to help his villagers in their search for missing things were successful and made him feel proud. Subsequently, he lived in his own world in which he rejected the truth. For example, he believed that Damid's parents died because of the spirits in the mountain when, in fact, Damid's father died because of his kidney failure and his mother was killed by a poisonous snake that Tuk Man believed to be a guardian spirit. Similarly, Tuk Man believed that Hamid's son was hidden by the forest spirit:

> "Of course the current is fast if it is raining upstream. However, his call for help must be answered. Otherwise he is not a shaman. The missing children cannot be found by a doctor or the police. This is the work of ghosts and jinn can only be defeated by charms and spells. And Tuk Man realises that no other shaman can compete with his charms and spells" (Azizi 1989:72-3).

Obviously, Azizi is not against the belief in spells but rather suggests that in certain situations reason and reality must precede a belief in superstition. Men must not be trapped in the world of superstition and forget to see the reality of the world surrounding them. Thus, in this story, superstitious beliefs function as local colour and provide evidence to suggest that Malays be rational. No less important are the story's title 'slippery' and the tragic deaths which educate the reader that arrogance and blindness to the truth bring disaster. They provoke sympathy, mainly towards the innocent boy who becomes the victim of Tuk Man's ignorance in not seeing the danger of the tide; and they suggest that to be responsible to one's work does not mean that one has to put one's life at risk or sacrifice innocent people.

Belief in omens

Besides the belief in guardian spirits, Thai and Malay villagers also believe in omens which can bring them misfortune. These are presented in *Nok Khao Fai* ('The Fire Dove') by Phaithuun Thanyaa and *Sial Akar Pecah Lima* ('The Roots of Misfortune') by Azizi Haji Abdullah. The former reveals that belief in omens is firmly rooted in Thai culture and is not easily replaced by reason or science. The latter uses a belief in omens to add local colour to the story.

In 'A Fire Dove', Phaithuun uses the conflict between superstition and science to communicate the story's main theme. One evening the narrator, a science schoolteacher, falls asleep in a temple where he has a dream. He sees a giant bird standing on the roof of his house, its eyes like a flame. He climbs onto the roof to catch it but when he reaches the bird, he sees his dead father, then also his mother and sister. They are afraid of both the giant bird and his dead father. His mother calls him to come down from the roof while his sister runs away. He tells his mother not to be afraid of the bird because it is fake and made from straw. Suddenly he smells a dead corpse. When he wakes up he finds that it is a quarter past midnight and he was asleep in the temple where there is a statue of the Lord Buddha and a coffin. He returns home and feels guilty on seeing that his mother is waiting for him. The narrator then tells the reader in detail the source of his dispute with his mother i.e. that his mother had bred two pigs so that she could give him money to marry his girlfriend. The narrator had also bred a baby fire dove which one of his pupils had stolen from its nest for an experiment in his science class. The narrator took pity on the bird and kept it because his pupil had destroyed its nest. Then, one of his mother's pigs took ill and died. One day the narrator's uncle comes to his house to visit his mother, and having heard about the death of the pig when he sees the fire dove, says to his mother:

> "It is because ...your son brings a fire dove into the house. It will cause you disaster. Do you know that? The fire dove, nobody would allow you to keep it. It is the curse that you must know. Whoever keeps it in the house will meet with misfortune. Its name already tells...release it right now but do not kill it. It is forbidden. Whoever kills it, will die like it" (Phaithuun 1996:145).

This passage reflects the southern Thai belief in omen in which this species of bird is believed to bring misfortune to the life of its owner because its name is related to the word 'fire', implying heat and destruction. When the word is attached to

anything it is considered negative. Therefore the narrator's uncle regards the fire dove as a sign of bad luck. He advises him to free the dove and warns him not to kill it. Nevertheless, the narrator ignores his advice and still keeps the dove as he argues: "I am a teacher in science. I will not believe in things that cannot be proved. If I follow what my mother and uncle say, would I be more superstitious than those people?...I cannot really do that" (ibid.:147). Then the sign of bad luck is followed by the illness of a second pig. The narrator buys the best medicine he can find for the pig, but it gets worse. This is followed by the illness of his girlfriend whose doctor says she is well. Her condition also worsens. By this time the narrator's uncle forces him to decide whether "to choose the bird or Maalai" (ibid.:149). In other words, choose superstition or reason. To make everybody happy the narrator kills the dove secretly and cooks it to eat with an alcoholic drink. Surprisingly, both Maalai and the pig recover from their illnesses. Nevertheless, such phenomena cannot convince him to believe in superstition because nothing happens to he who killed and ate the bird or even to his uncle who also ate it without knowing that it was the fire dove.

To conclude, the science teacher represents reason and advancement. He wants his family members to see the innocence of the fire dove but fails because he himself cannot find the answer to why his girlfriend and his mother's second pig recovered from their illnesses after the dove was killed. However, he opposes the belief in the misfortune of the fire dove. The narrator's failure to convince these persons to see the innocence of the bird emphasises the theme of the story, that modern science cannot withstand people's belief in superstition. Noticeably, the folk belief functions as his instrument to satirise the superstitious southerners and foreshadows the story. All the symbols such as the narrator's dream of the giant bird, his dead father and the bad smell from the corpse all imply the coming of misfortune which intensifies the belief in the misfortune of the fire dove. Therefore this story also presents the value conflict between traditional and modern beliefs. The question whether the author himself believes in the misfortune of the dove or not is unclear because there is no answer as to why both Maalai and the second pig recover from their illness. It implies that some phenomena are beyond answer by modern science.

A belief in omens is also found in *Sial Akar Pecah Lima* ('The Roots of Misfortune') by Azizi Haji Abdullah. The story portrays the warm relationship between a grandfather and his beloved grandson. During the summer vacation the

grandson, who lives in the city, is sent to live with his grandfather in his village. The grandfather plans to take him up the hill to show him how to shoot langurs, to make a bamboo flute and to trap birds and how to climb up the hill safely. Before they start the tour he prepares his rifle and machete.

On the first day he takes his grandson to the foot of the hill to show him how good he is at shooting animals. He shoots a langur which is eating *petai* (parkia crops). Then he takes the boy to cut some bamboo to make a flute. When they come back home the grandfather shows his grandson how to make a bamboo flute. The next day he takes him up the hill to trap the birds. More significantly, he intends to show him how to climb up to the top of the hill through the jungle and on difficult paths in which he thinks will make his grandson realise the difficulty of life and the need to be careful. The grandfather carries his rifle, machete and decoy bird while his grandson carries some food and drink. On the way he shows his grandson how to use a machete in cutting some hanging roots and branches to clear the way. He orders him to grab the strong hanging roots firmly while climbing up the hill. When they arrive at the top of the hill the grandfather discovers that there is a root which has broken into five roots coming out from the land he had cleared as an arena for trapping birds. He explains the Malay interpretation of the sign.

> "Old people say that if one finds a straight root at the arena, it signals that a snake will come. If it is an old root, a monitor lizard will come. If one finds a root that is broken into three roots, one will get many birds, if it is broken into five roots, a tiger...well, grandpa does not believe in such things" (Azizi 1989:46).

Clearly, the grandfather worries about the last sign but pretends to reject such beliefs. The straight root might be compared with the straight body of a snake. The old root, which is useless and unpleasant, is compared with a monitor lizard because in the system of Thai and Malay beliefs this kind of animal is considered as a purveyor of misfortunate. The three roots might be interpreted as the bird's toes in which each leg has three toes. The five roots might be interpreted as the tiger's paw in which each paw contains five claws and implies danger. This omen might derive from the experience of those villagers who make their living from collecting plants and hunting animals in the forest. Such a belief is one way of reminding them to be careful and observant while working.

According to the text, some omens foreshadow prosperity and some do not. This is presented later in the story when, at the hill, the grandson is impressed by the talent of the grandfather who plays the bamboo flute beautifully and attracts birds to come and listen to his music. As a result, the grandson can catch the birds one after another. Unfortunately a tiger comes to listen to the music as well. The presence of the tiger therefore supports the belief in omens. At this moment the grandfather tells his grandson to continue playing the flute to attract the tiger while he aims his rifle at its head. Then, he shoots the tiger dead and is proud of his skill. By this time he also acknowledges the belief in omens as he says to his grandson "That was what people of the old days said, the root which puts out five roots signals the existence of a tiger" (ibid.:59). After that they descend the hill. The grandfather chooses the same route they ascended to show his grandson that descent is more dangerous than climbing up. Unfortunately, while the grandfather is adjusting his rifle and frees his hand off from holding anything, he missteps and falls. His rifle accidentally explodes and fires at his head in exactly the same spot where he shot the tiger, causing his own death. Finally, the villagers come and take the body back home. By this time the grandson has learnt the value of the lives of both animals and humans because he frees the birds and thinks of the dead tiger in comparison with his dead grandfather.

The death of animals at the hand of the grandfather is a literary device to foreshadow his own death and to reinforce the supernatural power of the five roots which might punish him for his sin of killing innocent animals and capturing birds for entertainment. The death of the grandfather can be interpreted as his *karma* or the punishment of killing and capturing animals and his ignorance in accepting the belief in omens. Ignoring these beliefs and choosing the dangerous way to ascend and descend the mountain bring disaster to his own life and leave his grandson with the horrible experience of his death. To sum up, the death has a didactic function that one should listen to what old people say and should not be too quick to oppose or ridicule their beliefs and rely solely on reason. Moreover, the death of the grandfather infers that although the Malays are Muslims, they share the belief in *karma* with Thai Buddhists.

Conclusion

In summary, works on religion and local beliefs remain the core of many Thai and Malay short stories. Religion and local beliefs are one of the authors' main sources of inspiration in producing their literary works which reflect present-day Thai and Malay social realities. Noticeably, the authors introduce the use of religions and local beliefs to the reader through the title of the texts, the characters' perceptions and their actions.

This study reveals that both Thai and Malay authors share the same attitude towards religion. They see the weakening of faith in religion—whether Buddhism or Islam—and moral collapse among the younger generations, as the result of materialism and greed. The difference between them is that Thai authors do not condemn parents' irresponsibility in providing their children with the knowledge of Buddhism as Malay authors do. This is understandable in that the Malay authors are committed to their Islamic religion in which all Muslims have to possess both secular and religious knowledge equally. In contrast, Buddhist Thais tend to separate religion from the secular world. Religion is the monks' business and secular is the layman's business. Thus, Phaithuun Thanyaa does not use the failure of Buddhist Thais' parents to provide their children Buddhist teaching as a major factor in the weakening of the religion. Instead he condemns the Buddhist monks who practise animism and ignore their responsibility for disseminating Buddhism to the people.

With regard to local beliefs, both Thai and Malay authors expose the social reality of the Buddhist Thais and Malay Muslims that such beliefs have been rooted in their societies and are difficult to eradicate from people's world-view. However, the authors attempt to provoke people to return to the core of religious philosophy and teachings. Noticeably, although both Thai and Malay authors do not strongly oppose local beliefs, they remind people not to be blinded by these beliefs so that they overlook the reality of the world and forget to use reason. In comparison, both Thai and Malay authors use local beliefs, not only to highlight the local colour as the real world of their people, but also to highlight the fictional world of their texts. More significantly, they use local beliefs to reinforce the negative image of the characters and to comment on present-day people and social values. Interestingly, only Kanokphong Songsomphan appreciates the value of local beliefs in the tree spirits as

a means of preventing deforestation and he sees the decadence of such beliefs as a sign of danger for the natural environment.

Briefly speaking, Thai and Malay contemporary short stories about religions and folk beliefs reflect the continuing importance of edification and entertainment in literary creation. The didacticism that grew naturally from the pre-modern prose tradition continues to this day. The Thai and Malay authors never deny the awfulness of the situation in which present-day people tend to be less moral and their faith in religions weak. In addition, Azizi Haji Abdullah, accepts the reality that some Malay Muslims have converted to other religions and the Islamic missionaries fail to effectively disseminate Islamic teachings to non-Muslims. In contrast, the compliance of Buddhist monks in superstitious activities is not a joke to the Thai authors but a serious issue which monks and Buddhist Thais have to reconsider and protect the purity of Buddhism.

Chapter Five

Ethnic Identities and the Representation of Us and the Others

Introduction

This chapter studies the issues of ethnic identities and the creation of 'us' and the 'others' in Thai and Malay short stories. This study aims to examine the subsequent questions: why does 'ethnicity' become a significant theme in Thai and Malay short stories? How do Thai and Malay authors draw images of ethnic groups in their works? What kinds of identities of southern Thais and northern Malays do the authors present in their short stories? How do these authors from different countries and different races portray the images of their fellow countrymen who are of the same race as them and those that are of a difference race from their own, within and outside their region? To answer these questions this study will focus on three issues; firstly, ethnic identities in the region; secondly, ethnic identities and political conflict; and thirdly, ethnic identities and economic conflict.

The Regional Identities of Southern Thais and Northern Malays

This section deals with the presentation of the notion of collective identity of the southern Thais and northern Malays as revealed in short stories. The discussion will focus on the distinctive personality of the southern Thais and northern Malays, as seen by themselves, exemplified stubborn and proud. The short stories are *Khon bon saphaan* ('People on the Bridge') by Phaithuun Thanyaa and *Ayam Sabung* ('The Fighting Cocks') by Azizi Haji Abdullah.

'People on the Bridge' highlights the misinterpretation of the notion of dignity and self-esteem among the Thai people in general, and the southern Thais in particular. The story is set in the south and uses bull fighting, a popular folk sport to add local colour from the region and reflect its peoples' personality.

One morning, while two bull keepers—the red bull keeper and the white—take their bulls for daily exercise, they meet at a 'monkey bridge' which is very

narrow and vulnerable and where only one bull can pass at time. The red bull keeper assumes that the white wants to challenge him and his bull. He orders the white bull keeper to move off the bridge and let his bull cross first. The white bull keeper refuses because he feels that he is the person who walked on to the bridge first. While neither is willing to move back, the two bulls struggle to fight. Then there are four more people who want to cross the bridge, among them a monk who suggests everybody move off the bridge. Aware of the danger if the bridge were to break, everybody stops arguing and moves, leaving only the two bull keepers struggling to prevent their bulls from fighting. At this time they completely forget their dignity:

> "Perspiration flooded the pale faces of the two bull keepers. Now neither was thinking of his own dignity or self-esteem. The backs of both men pressed against each other until they became almost one flesh. The four hands that were pushing the bulls' noses weakened more and more. The heavy roars and hot breaths of both bulls were like the signals from the messenger of Yama, the god of death. Suddenly the bulls sprang into each other" (S. Surang trans. 1996:85).

Unfortunately, it is beyond the ability of the keepers to control their bulls from fighting and both collapse between the horns of their bulls. The bridge breaks and they all fall into the whirlpool.

This story ends with the didactic characteristic that the bull keepers have to pay for their stupidity and stubbornness with their own lives. Their death provides a moral lesson, that stubbornness brings disaster, reflects the author's disagreement with the personality of stubborn southern Thais and provokes readers to accept that one should learn to be the loser to save one's own life. Symbolically, the fighting bulls represent the stubbornness and irrationality of the bull keepers as bulls will naturally fight each other, without reason. Therefore their nature is compared with the bull keepers who place dignity over reason and put their lives at risk because they are occupied with their stubbornness and the unreasonable idea that whoever moves his bull off the bridge first will be considered the weaker.

Highlighting a similar notion of dignity and image of local people but using a different symbol is Azizi Haji Abdullah's short story, 'The Fighting Cocks'. Azizi uses the fighting cocks to symbolise the stupidity and stubborness of the two Malay villagers—Pak Samin and Tok Bidun. Both of them love cockfighting and have raised

birds of their own. Pak Samin's bird is named Jurai, Tok Bidun's, Jalak. Tok Bidun and Pak Samin become enemies because of their birds. One afternoon Mat Bentan returns home from his rice field and finds the two cockerels are fighting in his garden. They have destroyed some of his vegetable plants and made his chicks afraid to go into their barn. Mat Bentan realises that it is not easy to stop these two from fighting so he goes to ask Tok Bidun to catch his cock. After listening to Mat Bentan, Tok Bidun rushes to Mat Bentan's garden, but when he arrives at the scene and sees his chicken is beating Pak Samin' chicken, he then changes his mind not to catch the bird. As in Phaithuun's story, 'People on the Bridge', Tok Bidun believes that if he catches his chicken first, Pak Samin, his opponent, might think that his bird is weaker, so he tells Mat Bantan: "I don't want to catch my fighting cock. My chicken is a fighting cock. If I catch him, it means that my chicken is defeated" (Azizi 1980:20). Mat Bentan therefore goes to seek Pak Samin to catch his chicken. Unfortunately, Pak Samin has the same idea as Tok Bidun. Pak Samin even claims that since Mat Bentan is his tenant, it is Tok Bidun who has to stop his chicken first. Or otherwise Tok Bidun and he would solve this problem by having a discussion at his house or one of their neighbours' houses. Mat Bentan therefore passes Pak Samin's message to Tok Bidun, which makes Tok Bidun angry:

> " 'It is a taboo since the time of my ancestor,'..."Let my chicken die there! To move back first is impossible. I will let my chicken keep fighting if it is necessary! I am not afraid of defeat. My fighting cock is not only one"... "Basically, raising the fighting cock is not my aim to accept defeat, but I want to overcome all cockfights in this village" (ibid.:24-5).

This quotation shows that both Tok Bidun and Pak Samin do not regard cockfighting as a pastime but a sport of dignity and reputation. They do not care about other people's property and the lives of their animals as much as their own reputation and dignity. They are so stubborn and immature for their age that even Mat Bentan cannot help laughing at them. In short, this story reflects Azizi's sense of humour, his observations and experiences in living in a village and seeing the behaviours of his fellow villagers who are fond of gambling in cockfighting.

Comparing the two short stories discussed above, this study discovers that the Thai and Malay authors are concerned about the misinterpretation and misuse of the concept of dignity by their people. The authors use the folk sports—bull fighting and cock fighting—to add local colour to highlight the personality of the local people and

to emphasise the theme of the story. All these authors seem to accept the identity of their people as viewed by people from different regions, that the southern Thais and northern Malays are sometimes egotistical and self-opinionated. In this case and by ignoring racial and religious differences, the southern Thais and northern Malays can be classified as an 'us' group.

Apart from the sense of self-esteem and stubbornness, the sense of belonging as one race or ethnic group is another factor that reveals the sense of 'oneness' between all southern Thais and northern Malays. In relation to this, Azizi Haji Abdullah introduces the racial tie between the Malays in southern Thailand and the Malays in northern Malaysia in his short story, *Siti Laemson.*

'Siti Laemson' is based on Azizi's experience of his study tour to southern Thailand. He chooses the word *'Laemson'* as the name of his female character. 'Siti' is a typical Malay title for a woman and *'Laemson'* a name of a tourist attraction in Songkhla. Thus, the story's title hints that its story focuses on Malay women in southern Thailand. The question is from what perspective and for what purpose.

'Siti Laemson' highlights the racial tie of being Malay among the Malays in northern Malaysia and in southern Thailand through the theme of romantic love between the narrator, Udin, a Malay from Kedah, and Siti Laemson, a Malay girl from southern Thailand. Udin goes to Ranong, a province on the west coast of southern Thailand, and visits the Malay villages such as Khampuan and Tha Chang. At Khampuan village he meets Siti Laemson, whose ancestor was from Kedah and who is also able to speak Kedah dialect. Attracted by her beauty and kindness Udin, who is already engaged to a Malaysian woman, approaches Siti Laemson. He tells her that he wants fifty precious stones so that he can sell them and bring money to marry her. Siti Laemson promises to bring him that amount of stones so he gives her some money. The next morning Siti Laemson brings him fifty stones. He then takes her to Phuket Airport with the intention of taking her to Kedah. When he arrives at the airport he changes his mind because he recognises that although they are Malays, they belong to different countries. He holds Siti Laemson's hand but when he pulls his hand away from her, his engagement ring falls into Siti Laemson's hand.

The point to be addressed here is the Malay racial tie and the perception of Malay men towards Thai women in general. Udin is very happy to meet with Siti Laemson and other people who are able to maintain their Malayness:

> "Truly, he does not think that he will meet with a young Malay Muslim girl in a foreign country. And actually, that is what attracts all visitors to meet the last generation of the Malays who originated from the kingdom of Sri Vijaya from ninth to thirteenth centuries. Khampuan and Tha Chang are the last destination they reached. Udin nearly cries when he sees some Malay adolescents try to speak Malay with difficulty. Udin feels something deep inside his heart when these young Malays prove to him the sign of their love in language (Azizi 1988:14).

Through Udin, this message reflects the author's sense of 'us' or 'oneness' with the Malays in southern Thailand. For Udin, the Malay language and Islam are two distinctive factors reflecting the Malay identity of people in the area. However, within the sense of 'oneness', there is an implication of the sense of 'the other' which can be interpreted from Udin's perceptions towards Siti Laemson's behaviour and characteristics. The text tells that he is interested in Siti Laemson because of her beauty, generosity and, most of all, her being a Malay Muslim. However, he is suspicious as to whether she is a prostitute because she dares to stay in his room, which is improper behaviour for Muslim women, and offers to buy him some precious stones. Thus, it can be said that Azizi presents the general attitude of Malay men towards Thai girls who are percieved as beautiful and approachable. In this respect it is common for the generosity of Thai women with Malay men to be interpreted in a negative way since Haatyai is the main centre for Malay men seeking sexual pleasure with Thai prostitutes. Many Malay men confuse the generosity and kindness of Thai women with that of prostitutes. It is possible to interpret that Azizi perceives Malay girls from southern Thailand to be different from Malay girls in Malaysia based on his assumption of their friendliness and gentleness as presented through Siti Laemson's characteristics.

Artistically, Azizi cleverly uses the engagement ring as a symbol of the relationship between the Malays in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia, that they are one ethnic group whose relationship goes beyond the boundary of the countries and is never cut off. As Udin says to Siti Laemson at the end of the story, "our Malay blood will never be cut out" (Azizi 1988:16). The use of 'blood' shows that Azizi perceives the Malays in this area as siblings or 'us'. Yet, geography has separated them and they cannot be reunited. That is why Udin does not marry Siti Laemson and lets her have his ring.

'Siti Laemson' suggests that Azizi is interested in the Malay minority group in southern Thailand whom he perceives as his 'us' group. His wish to see the unification of the Malays in southern Thailand with the Malays in northern Malaysia is reflected through the ambition of Udin to take Siti Laemson back to Kedah, her ancestral homeland. However, Azizi acknowledges the reality that it is impossible.

In contrast, the sense of oneness between the Thai race in southern Thailand with the Thai race in northern Malaysia does not appear in the works of Thai authors. This is because in personal interviews with the Thai authors Phaithuun Thanyaa and Kanokphong Songsomphan, they admit that they do not have any experience of Thai people in Malaysia. However, this lack of knowledge does not mean that they do not have a sense of oneness with their fellow Thais across the border.

Portrayals of Ethnic Identities and Political Conflict

In political terms ethnic minority groups have long been a regional, national and even international problem for Thailand and Malaysia which neither government has been able to resolve. The clash between ethnic groups in Thailand and Malaysia has inspired authors to discuss ethnic conflict in their countries through fictional writing as a means of helping the government to solve this problem. In southern Thailand, writing about the Malay ethnic group from the perspective of the Buddhist Thai southerner is not new, exemplified by a novelette of Sathaapho'n Siisajjang, *Dek Chaai Chao Le* ('A Son of the Sea'), which portrays the relationship between a young Malay boy and the Buddhist Thais in the south to the mainstream Thai readers as a way of imbuing the understanding towards ethnic differences. Phaithuun Thanyaa and Kanokphong Songsomphan follow Sathaapho'n in writing stories about the problems of the Malay descendents of the south. The best short stories to be discussed here are *Maew haeng Bukit Kereso'* ('The Cat from Bukit Kereso' ') and *Luuk chaai khon chawaa* ('The Son of a Javanese'). In Malaysia, on the other hand, the large number of ethnic Chinese and Indians that appeared in the 1931 census became a major concern of the Malays in maintaining their political power (see Comber 1983:xvi). The Malays' consciousness of this issue is recorded in Azizi Haji Abdullah's short story, *Satu Keputusan* ('A Decision'). This section therefore examines how Thai and

Malay authors introduce the issue of ethnic dissension and the construction of ethnic identities into their works.

To begin with Kanokphong Songsomphan's short story 'The Cat from Bukit Kereso'', this story highlights the ethnic political conflict between the ethnic Malays and the majority Buddhist Thais in southern Thailand—Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. The story takes place in Bukit Kereso', a village in Sukhirin subdistrict, Narathiwat.[1] The narrator, who is a border policeman, tells the reader of his impression of the relationship with his Muslim friend, Haaraan, his experience in living in a Muslim community, and the horrific incident he and his team encountered while they were on duty protecting the schoolteachers of Kereso' village, having to accompany the teachers back home every afternoon. In this village the narrator and his friends meet a beautiful and devoted young Muslim teacher, Faaridaa. One day, there is a wedding ceremony in the village and at first Faaridaa wants to stay overnight in the host house, but she later changes her mind which makes Weng, a colleague of Haaraan and the narrator, angry. However, Haaraan and Weng accompany her back home. Half way to the town Faaridaa comes across a man riding a motorcycle. She knows the man and asks him to take her home because she does not want to bother Haaraan and Weng. However, she never returns home. Fear and tension covers the village. The next day Faaridaa's body is found on the Saai Burii river bank where there are traces of combat boots. Sadly, nobody really knows who killed her. At the close of the story the narrator's team is ambushed and Haaraan shot dead.

The significance of this story lies in Kanokphong's attempt to understand and explain to readers outside and inside the southern region the situations that occur in this area, such as the issue of racial discrimination between the ethnic Malays and Buddhist Thais which leads to ethnic dissidents and Malay separatism. In the story he addresses the following questions: Are there ways to solve the problem of ethnic conflict and separatism? How do the native ethnic Malays perceive such problems and the situation inside their region? What do they really think about Muslim separatists and the government authorities?

To answer these questions Kanokphong makes several choices. Firstly, Bukit Kereso' is the setting of his story, a sensitive and strategic area occupied by Malay separatists. Secondly, he introduces Muslim characters such as Haaraan and Faaridaa

[1]'Bukit' is a Malay word, meaning 'hill'.

to represent the good Malay Muslims. Thirdly, he highlights the government education policy for the Muslim community in Bukit Kereso' to bring the Malay children closer to mainstream Thai society. Fourthly, he selects Weng, a Buddhist Thai, to represent Thai racial discrimination towards the Malay Muslims. Fifthly, he reveals Faaridaa's attitude towards the Malay separatists who are Muslims of her own race and live in Bukit Kereso'. Finally, he narrates the death of Faaridaa to reflect the attitude of local Malays towards the situations that occur in the region.

Geographically, the ethnic Malay communities occupy a peripheral area far away from mainstream Thai culture but close to the cradle of Malay culture within Malaysia. This makes villagers able to maintain their Malay identities through the use of Malay dialect which becomes a communicative barrier between the Thai government officials and the Malay villagers. As the narrator states: "We speak with the children in Malay dialect. Nobody in their group can speak Thai fluently, although they are forced to speak Thai in their classroom. I do not ask them to what extent that they understand the meaning of the word 'Thailand' " (ibid.:125).

Regarding the issue of the Malay separatists, since they live side by side with the villagers and have a good relationship with them, the villagers' perception towards them is positive. For example, Faaridaa does not believe that the separatist group led by Abdul Kadir will harm her and the other villagers. This perception contradicts the government's view which sees Abdul Kadir as a terrorist. As a teacher who works for the government she is supposed to imbue her pupils with a sense of hostility towards Abdul Kadir but fails. This can be explained in terms of racial ties wherein she is hampered by her consciousness of being Malay and the good relationship between the villagers and Abdul Kadir's group, resulting in her dilemma. As the narrator reveals her feelings:

> "How can she explain to them that "All Thais love solidarity" while the children ask her why do Thai soldiers come here? – Should she answer that they come to fight with Abdul Kadir? That man is regarded as the father and a grandfather of the children of Bukit Kereso'. How can she explain to them to understand and admit that it is right for the Thai soldiers to kill Abdul Kadir? (ibid.:126-7).

The excerpt can be interpreted that Abdul Kadir, a representative of the Malay separatist groups, is not the enemy of the ethnic Malays. In fact the villagers do not regard them as terrorists, but as ordinary people who are against the government

authorities. One reason for this might be that the separatist groups are ethnic Malay Muslims like them and they possibly think that they only attack Buddhist Thais rather than ethnic Malays. Kanokphong might want to say that ethnic Malays are not afraid of the separatist movements or of their troops due to their sharing race and religion. Therefore ethnic Malays may consider those separatist troops as 'us'. This is also the reason why the children of Bukit Kereso' call the government soldiers 'Thai soldiers', not 'our soldiers', which implies a sense of 'otherness' and here the narrator implies the separatist troops are part of the 'us' group. However, it is misleading to think that they will consider the Malay terrorist activities as 'our' activities against the government.

In terms of racial discrimination, having a friend like Haaraan and living in the Muslim community, the narrator realises that racial discrimination among the Buddhist Thais towards the ethnic Malays derives from the misguidance of their parents during his childhood, as experienced by the narrator himself:

> "...In my childhood, I was taught to hate and be scared of Muslims. When I was a child and was crying, adults would threaten me that if I wasn't careful the *'phuak khaek'* (ethnic Malays) would operate on our stomach and take out our liver and kidneys and then eat them. This threat scared me so much. There is also a belief which I remembered until I was grown up, that is, Islam teaches its believers to kill animals because they believe that such an act could release animals from their suffering. They will be reborn in heaven. I am not sure who put such wrong ideas into my mind that made me perceive Muslims as cruel people. Not until I was in adulthood could I understand why I had such a negative perception. It was because I grew up when the separatist movement was active.[2] It was undeniable that people who were most strongly

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[2]In the 1960s Thailand was under Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat. He designed programmes to lay a solid foundation of Thai education and language among the Muslims in the south in order to "create and improve Thai consciousness, cultivate loyalty to the principal institutions such as the nation, the religion and monarchy" (Surin 1985:194). Among his well known programmes were the transformation of the Malay religious schools (pondok) and the establishment of self-help settlements in the Malay areas. The former were required to be registered with the government authority and use the Thai language as a medium of instruction and Malay texts were banned. For the latter, the government brought the Buddhist Thais from the northeast to settle in the Malay Muslim communities in order to balance the populations. As a result, the Malays in general and the Malay separatists in particular were against the government programmes. They saw those programmes as a threat to their Malay identities and Islam. Thus, a series of violent activities occurred in this region such as school burning, kidnapping, ambushes, and bomb attacks (Christie 1996:188). Kidnapping the schoolteachers is one of their strategies used to threaten the schoolteachers because they are considered to be government agents who serve the government policies of assimilating and integrating the Malays into the mainstream Buddhist Thais national culture (ibid.).

> influenced by the political propaganda of that time were children. I spent many years erasing the idea of eradicating all Muslims from the world"(ibid.:123).

The above quotation reveals that many Buddhist Thais do not really know or understand Islam or the Malays whom they regard as the 'others' due to their Islamic religion rather than their Malay culture. For example, the Malay Muslim act of sacrificing animals such as cows in a religious rite called *kurban* for religious purposes is perceived by the Buddhist Thais as being merciless. In fact, the Muslims consider this rite as an act of merit-making in which they distribute the meat to the poor. The above message also tells us that the author is criticising the political campaign to suppress Malay separatists which sometimes misleads the majority Buddhist Thais to assume that all Malays are Malay separatist sympathisers. The narrator was one of the Thais who was taught to hate Muslims. Moreover, the term *khaek*, literally meaning 'guests' and referring to the ethnic Malays, used by the Buddhist Thais reflects the fact that Buddhist Thais perceive of Malay descendants as being 'other' or 'foreigners'. The term *khaek* produces the sense of political, racial, and cultural superiority in regard to the Malays. Hence the notion of 'otherness' in this story is obviously constructed by the political, religious and cultural criteria towards the Malay ethnic minority. This is exemplified by Weng's racial prejudice against the Malays:

> "The fearful point in his characteristic nature is that he loves to bear down upon others. This characteristic causes him to have the attitude of racial discrimination towards Muslims who are regarded as a minority group. Sometimes he insults some of their religious principles. Yet, he has some good characteristics in that he loves his friends sincerely. Once he carried his friend who was shot and fatally injured so that they might escape from an ambush successfully. That friend was a Muslim" (ibid.:144).

This excerpt reveals that although Weng is racist he can befriend ethnic Malays. In other words, Kanokphong wants to say that while some Buddhist Thais are racists, once they become friends with the Malay ethnic group their racism is forgotten. He believes that friendship between the two groups can be imbued through social interaction. The above quotation also tells us that Kanokphong is opposed to the Thai-Buddhist's racial prejudice towards the Malay minority group and he wants them to abolish their own prejudices.

In terms of political conflict, Faaridaa's death is used to highlight the perceptions of the Malay villagers towards the Muslim separatist group and the government authorities. It also reveals the attitude of the government authorities towards the situation in the region. In the text, Faaridaa's death and the traces of combat shoes at the spot where her body is found raise controversial suspicions.

> "The traces of combat shoes on the Saai Burii River are not the things that can be judged or identified clearly because each group wears combat boots. No matter we, Abdul Kadir, or even sex offenders have the right to wear them. The fact that we drink alcohol and are infidels makes Haji Solaeh believe that it is us, but I do not believe it. It is not because I protect myself or the troops, but I trust Haaraan"(ibid.:142-3).

This implies that the Malay minority group does not trust the Thai government and soldiers on the basis of religious differences because, for Muslims, non-Muslims are regarded as infidels. Therefore it is possible for the Malays to assume that Faaridaa was killed by a Buddhist Thai soldier when they saw the combat boot footprints at the scene. However, since it is impossible to clearly identify the owner of the combat boot footprints they will remain a mysterious yet crucial piece of evidence whose identification is key to solving the problem. For example, the villagers do not believe that Faaridaa has been killed by a separatist although the journalists and government authorities assume that she has. Moreover, some villagers believe that it is the act of certain local government authorities for political purposes and economic exploitation. They construct the image of the southern border area as a region of unrest as a pretext to the central government's intentions in this region. Therefore the central government might firstly provide a large yearly budget for this region and secondly, pass a law enabling the military to build roads in the mountain areas which are bountiful in forests and commercial timbers. Local people believe that these two possibilities will allow corrupt officials to benefit from the roads' construction and the yearly budget rather than believing that this road will enable the military troops to suppress the Muslim separatists in the mountains. As the text states:

> "Sometimes I am not sure about the news that the government clearly informs us that it is an act of Abdul Kadir. It might be what Haji Solaeh says, that is, we are constructing the situation whereby this regional border is seen as area of unrest. This perception will allow the construction of the stability route on Sukhirin-Betong to become reality. This is one of the forty-eight routes which the military armies is trying to build through the national park. However, Haji

> Solaeh is a Muslim and aims to be a politician, he might see things far beyond reality" (ibid.:143).

Clearly, for local people, the government authorities are untrustworthy and corrupt. Significantly the government fails to identify or prove that all violent activities that happen in the southern region are committed by either Malay separatists or normal criminals. The narrator feels it is unjust to think that certain government authorities commit crimes in the southern region for political and economic purposes because there are also Muslims in the Thai army like Haaraan. Through the narrator, Kanokphong might want to correct the negative view of the Malay minority group towards the government authorities. For him it seems irrational for any Muslim soldier to let his colleagues kill people of the same race as them:

> "In the ambiguous relationship that the Kereso' villagers have towards us, Haaraan is the man who stands in the middle. He is one of the troops and one of the Muslims. He is also the only person who knows that Weng's words, to what extent, contain the truth. However, when he showed his anger in front of us while Haji Solaeh was accusing the troops, I believe Haaraan that Weng did not do that. Haaraan did not do it. We are the persons who came to protect Faaridaa from Abdul Kadir. However, both Haaraan and Weng cannot answer to whom the motorcycle that belonged took Faaridaa to her death. That is the important key we have to investigate" (ibid.:143-4).

This message implies that Kanokphong would like the government to improve its image by investigating terrorist activities and crimes in the southern region and actually proving that they have been committed by Malay separatists rather than ordinary criminals.

It is worth mentioning here that Malay separatism in southern Thailand is a legacy of Thai internal colonialism. It reflects the fact that some Malays in the southern region are against the ruling Thais who are different from them in terms of race, religion and culture.[3] Similarly, the Buddhist Thais also see them as the 'other'

[3] For further detail see Surin Pitsuwan (1985) and also Wan Kadir Che Man (1990).

reflected in the term *khaek* (แขก).[4] Therefore the perception of 'us' and the 'other' is a racial prejudice that exists in Thai and Malay communities in southern Thailand and is normally based on racial, religious and cultural difference. Notably, Kanokphong does not suggest that the Malay separatist movement is a legacy of Thai internal colonialism. Perhaps he does not want to inflame the dissidents among his people of different races. It could also be because the Thai government and Thai citizens, including Kanokphong, have been taught to believe that the region in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia belongs to the Thai kingdom dating back to the thirteenth century. Instead Kanokphong focuses on the cultural diversities and religion of the Malay ethnic groups as the source of ethnic dissence. He emphasises the religious and cultural differences as the primary factor in the ethnic disruption in this region. Nonetheless religious difference is not always the cause since within societies of the same religion the division of 'us' and 'the other' as part of racial prejudice is also found. This is seen in Phaithuun Thanyaa's short story, *Luuk chaai khon chawaa* ('The Son of a Javanese').

The story highlights the issue of racial discrimination by local Thais of both Buddhist and Islamic belief towards the Muslim Javanese in Phatthalung, southern Thailand. The issue of racial discrimination is reflected in verbal insults towards, and the physical maltreatment of, the Javanese family of Wa Sen and his son Yafaad. The text reveals that ethnic discrimination starts with the narrator's mother talking about the coming of the Javanese to southern Thailand which dates back to the time of the Japanese occupation in South East Asia (1942-1945). According to her story the Javanese were brought as prisoners of war. Some of the Javanese were aided to a certain extent by the local Thais, Buddhists and Muslims although they treated them as dogs: "They took care of the Javanese the same way people these days are fond of having cats or dogs" (Harrison (trans.) 1999:144).

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[4]A. Mani states that "the Indians are described as "having turbans with fierce-looking bearded faces" or "wearing a distinct sarong and overall with a funny cap". Though the term 'bang' (brother) is used for watchmen, the term I-bang is reserved for describing watchmen and milk-vendors (cited in Sandhu and A. Mani (eds.) 1993:942). Therefore, the Indians seem to be strange and funny looking for the Thais. In addition, the Thais used the term I- band in which the word 'bang' is corrupted from the Malay word for men 'abang', this is because the Thais also called the Malays *khaek* (guest or foreigner). So, anybody who is non-ethnic Thai and are either Indians, Malays, or even Arabs, are considered as 'the others'.

The narrator remembers how his mother and other local people disliked the eating habits of the Javanese. His mother usually warned him to behave properly while having dinner: "You're messy as Wa Sen...You eat like pigs and you live like Javanese"' ("มูมมามเหมือนไอ้วะเส็นไม่มีผิด"..."กินเหมือนหมูอยู่เหมือนคนชวา") (Harrison 1999:143). She further describes that: "When Wa Sen eats he makes a terrible slurping noise, like a bear scooping up at a bee hive. He gets rice stuck all along his arm, up to his elbow and then, when he's finally finished eating, he swills out his mouth and spits back into his plate" (ibid.:143). The references here can be interpreted as local people imbuing a sense of racial discrimination into the minds of their children. They see themselves as more civilised than the Javanese who are portrayed as savages. The attitude of local people alienates Wa Sen from his community and encourages the children to be racist as well.

The narrator confesses his physical abuse of and verbal insults towards Yafaad, Wa Sen's son, when they were children and were playing games. He and his friends teased Yafaad as a son of a Javanese person who ate smelly leaves *sapruk*. They were happy to have him around because they treated him as their toy. One day the narrator and his friends forced Yafaad to eat the smelly leaves. Yafaad was struggling to escape from them but failed. Luckily his father came to save him. This incident made him ashamed of his bad behaviour towards his friend Yafaad, especially when he saw the pain on Wa Sen's face and in his voice when he lifted his son up and took him home.

> "Okay, that's enough. You have gone too far... You have gone too far this time." He cried out. His voice filled with pain and sounded odd like a man whose tongue is stiff and unable to speak. His voice was filled with a terrible bitterness and grief. What we saw next was that he rushed to Yafaad, picked him up, swung him over his shoulder and then quietly carried him away" (Phaithuun 1996:129-30).

However, racial discrimination does not last long. Evidence of this is provided by the camaraderie and sympathy that the narrator, his friends and the villagers give to Yafaad when Fatimah, Yafaad's girlfriend, commits suicide because of her refusal to marry a man of her father's choice. This is because her father hates Yafaad's father and does not want Yafaad to be his son-in-law.

Comparing this story with Kanokphong Songsomphan's, 'The Cat from Bukit Kereso'', it seems that Phaithuun is less serious than Kanokphong on the issue of

racial discrimination in Thai society although such an issue is a matter that can disrupt the harmony of the country. This can be seen in his selection of an ethnic group, the Javanese, which not many Thai people know about and who never appear on the Thai political agenda as the group who creates problems in the region and the nation.[5] However, both Kanokphong and Phaithuun's stories confirm that racial discrimination exists in Thai society. Both the Buddhist Thais and ethnic Malay Muslims regard people of different races from their own as the "other". Indeed, the authors do not deny that Thai people are racists.

In contrast to the Thai short stories, ethnic conflict in Malay short stories does not deal with the separatist movement between the Malays and the other ethnic groups, but with the struggle of the Malays to keep their political power out of the hands of other ethnic groups. In maintaining their political power, Azizi Haji Abdullah suggests that the Malays should not practise the public health policy of birth control. Such an idea is recorded in Azizi's short story, *Satu Keputusan* ('A Decision').

In 'A Decision', Azizi presents the inter-marriage between the Malay husband, Mustakim, and his Chinese wife, Lian Su, as a way of social integration whereby the wife has to convert to Islam.[6] Azizi introduces the issue of the Malays' social awareness of the growth of the Chinese populations and their subsequent struggle to dominate Malaysian politics through the character of Lian Su, who wants to have many children. Whereas, her husband prefers to make money for the family first rather than have children now. She disagrees with his idea, gives up taking birth control pills and gets pregnant. At first, her husband gets angry with her but this

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[5]According to the historical study on the Javanese in Bangkok done by Kanikar Chuthamas Sumali, almost all Javanese in Thailand, have been assimilated and integrated to be Thais through naturalization, education and intermarriage with local Thais, especially with the Malay Muslims. See Kanikar Chuthamas Sumali, 1998, Yawa-Chawaa nai Baangkok (*The Javanese in Bangkok)* Bangkok: The Thailand Research Fund, The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbook Project.

[6]The practise of inter-marriage between the Malay and Chinese or Indians in Malaysia as a means of social integration does not always seem to be successful because the non-Muslim has to convert to Islam. Research done by anthropologist Long Litt Woon (1989) reveals that some Chinese male who convert to Islam continue to be questioned by the Muslim Malays whether they really believe in Islam, only want to marry Muslim Malay women or want to share the privileges of the Malays.

changes when a baby boy is born. His love for his son gives an opportunity for Lian Su to parody him with the subsequent words:

> "You always think of luxury as if luxury is one of the principles of happiness in a family. We, Chinese do not think like that. The reason we marry is to have children. That is why the Chinese are increasing in numbers compared to the Malays now...For three or four years, will lose...We will be at a disadvantage in terms of politics. Your race will yield to democratic decision although your race has certain rights" (Azizi 1984:19).

Evidently, Azizi uses Lian Su as a tool to put forward his perception about the Chinese whom he interprets as wanting to have many children so that they outnumber the Malays and thereby might possibly grab political power from them in the future. Lian Su's viewpoints here are purposely presented to provoke Malay readers to think about the disadvantages of birth control as Mustakim recognises at the end that: "if he still wants to use birth control, it means that he has ignored the fate of his race in the future. It means that he does not want to determine the destiny of his race any more" (ibid.).[7]

Therefore it can be said that Azizi is a Malay nationalist in being concerned about the Malay race and the political status of the Malays. He disagrees with the policy of birth control which he regards as a means of destroying Malay political power. He believes that if the Malays want to maintain Malaysia as the country of the Malays they have to dominate national politics. This is the result of a democratic system in which vote counting is a key in gaining political power and in shaping the future of the Malays. Thus if the Malays have lesser votes than the other ethnic groups

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[7] Azizi's negative attitude towards the family planning programme is supported by Aihwa Ong's article. She reveals that the programme introduced by the Malaysian government in the 1970s and 1980s was not successful among the Malays. Many Malays viewed this programme as a threat to their ethnic achievement in dominating Malaysian politics. It was anti-Islamic as viewed by some devout Muslims. They saw the family planning as an act of killing the fetus. Moreover, the birth control pill could harm women's health. As a result, the family planning programme "contributed" to the rising birthrates among Malays whereas figures fell among the Chinese and Indians (Ong 1995:169-171). Noticeably, Ong does not mention that some Muslims discourage the family planning programme because they believe that each child has his/her own fortune endowed by Allah. Muslims also believe that having children is their commitment to pass their faith onto the following generations. This could be a reason why a husband discourages his wife to join the programme, instead of seeing his rejection as a threat or challenge to his exclusive rights to their wives' sexuality.

their status and position are in danger. Obviously Azizi warns his Malay readers to be clever and think carefully about the idea of birth control. They should not be so blinded by, or concerned about, the economic poverty of their family so much that they overlook their disadvantages in politics in which birth control will bring disaster to their race when political power falls into the hands of other ethnic groups. Therefore, this story implies that the Malays in general, and Azizi in particular, are racially prejudiced against the Chinese.

Portrayals of Ethnic Identities and Economic Conflict

The loss of economic power of the Thais and Malays to the immigrant Chinese and Indians has become a contributing factor in ethnic conflict and racial prejudice in both Thailand and Malaysia. Historically the Malays blame the British for opening Malaya to the Chinese and Indians to work as cheap labourers in British enterprises such as rubber plantations and tin-mining, mainly in the first decade of the twentieth century. After independence in 1957 its economy was dominated by the Chinese and Indians.

In contrast to Malaysia, the influx of Chinese immigrants into Thailand in the early twentieth century came as a result of the need of the Thai government to hire them to work in government projects such as road construction and tin-mining in the south. However, the Thais and Malays share similar attitudes and perceptions towards the Chinese and Indians who settled in these two countries before the Second World War, both believing that the immigrants maintained allegiances to their motherland (See Comber 1983: 19-20, and Vella 1978:194-5). This was exemplified by Chinese nationalism during the political struggle between communist and democratic parties in China whereby the Chinese in Thailand and Malaysia sent their money back home to their relatives and to support their party. They were therefore seen as money-making, selfish and untrustworthy.

In Thailand and Malaysia today, racial discrimination towards the Chinese is different. The contemporary Chinese in Thailand have been assimilated and integrated into the dominant Thai society. They have adopted Thai culture and practise it side by side with their traditional religion and culture, shared Buddhist belief aiding assimilation. Nevertheless, their dominant role in Thailand's economy still makes

some native Thais feel angry and jealous. Therefore both negative and positive images of the Chinese are drawn in Thai and Malay works. In Malaysia the degree of Malay hatred towards the Chinese is still high because the Chinese cannot assimilate and fully integrate into Malay culture due to religious differences. Moreover, the riot on 13 May 1969 completely disrupted the unification of Malaysian pluralism.[8]

In the literary field both Thai and Malay authors have responded to the discourse of ethnic conflict in their countries, especially in Malaysia. According to Mohd. Thani Ahmad, a Malay literary critic, many Malay authors focused their writing on the issue of ethnic relations after the incident of 13 May 1969. From June 1969 to 1975, more than one hundred short stories on inter-ethnic relationships were produced by Malay authors such as Azizi Haji Abdulah and S. Othman Kelantan (cited in A. Rahim 1990:11). Good examples are the short story of S. Othman Kelantan, *Dedalu* ('Parasite'), and of Aziz Haji Abdullah, *Baru Sekarang Dia Mengerti* ('Just Now He Realises'), *Sepuluh Ribu Harga Maruah* ('Ten Thousand The Price of Dignity') and *Majlis yang Lesu* ('A Dying Party'). Thai short stories include *Khon To' Nok* ('A Bird Trapper') written by Phaithuun Thanyaa and *Phii jaak Phukhao* ('Ghosts from the Mountain') by Kanokphong Songsomphan.

In 'Parasite', S. Othman criticises the hypocritical and opportunistic nature of the Chinese and Indian minorities in Malaysia. The first and most significant point is the story's title in Malay *Dedalu*, literally meaning parasite or birdvine plant. *Dedalu* carries the meaning of a parasite which takes food from the tree it inhabits, restricting the tree from growing properly. When it is used to refer to people, it means those people who profit from the ones they live with. In this story, Dedalu refers to the

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[8]According to Leon Comber, the riot on 13 May 1969 was the result of firstly, the economic imbalance between the Malays and the other ethnic groups, mainly the Chinese; secondly, the dissatisfaction of the Chinese and Indians towards the privilege rights of the Malays and the pillars of Malaysian national identities such as the language and religion; and thirdly, the victory procession of the opposition party, mainly of the Chinese who gained more seats in the general election. During this event the Chinese supporters paraded through the street of Kuala Lumpur and passed through Malay communities. They expressed their hatred towards the Malays with arrogant words such as 'Melayu sudah jatuh' (The Malay have fallen), 'Kuala Lumpur sekarang China punya' (Kuala Lumpur now belongs to the Chinese), and 'Ini negeri bukan Melayu punya, kita mahu halau semua Melayu' (This country does not belong to the Malays, we want to chase out all the Malays), and the like. This incident led to the killing of the Chinese and Malays (Comber 1983:69). It is also to be noted that such insult words have made the Malays perceive the Chinese as 'kurang ajar' (misbehaviour) and ungrateful to the Malays who allow them to stay in Malaysia.

ethnic Malaysian-Chinese and Malaysian-Indians who are seen by the Malays in general, and the author in particular, as the ones who makes profits from the prosperity of Malaysian resources and steal the wealth of native Malays. This negative attitude is revealed through the regret of the Malay character, Pak Kasran, who is a pioneer of Belukar Nangka village. When the village grows bigger the Chinese and Indian traders, Lee Tong Ho and Mohendar Singh, regularly visit and give Pak Kasran many things to encourage his friendship. They persuade him to share his business with them on the condition that their shops will be set up on Pak Kasran's land and they will give Pak Kasran one third of their profits in return. Pak Kasran accepts their offer. When Lee Tong Ho's and Mohendar Singh's businesses are doing well their relatives join them and they reestablish the shops on their own land. Subsequently they stop giving money to Pak Kasran, as Lee Tong Ho explains: "The headman must not misunderstand,...In the past I did my business on your land. Now I have my own land. How can I share my interest with you? You shall think about it carefully, is it reasonable or not?" (S. Othman 1970:10). Clearly, the money Lee Tong Ho and Mohendar Singh gave to Pak Kasran is in fact regarded as payment for Pak Kasran's land where they run their shops. This reveals Pak Kasran's short-sightedness in business as he overlooks the fact that in the world of business nobody gives money to other people without receiving something in return. Later, Pak Kasran's son and grandson are accused of abusing Mohendar's son and his relative. Pak Kasran then sells part of his rubber plantation to Lee Tong Ho and Mohendar Singh to clear the cases. He now realises that both Lee and Mohendar are traitors and opportunists.

This story reveals the tactics used by the ethnic Chinese and Indian traders to occupy the land and businesses of the Malay villagers. The narrator reveals that the Malays have lost their land to other ethnic groups because of their poverty, sincerity and lack of business vision. Both Lee Tong Ho and Mohendar represent hypocritical, deceitful Chinese and Indians who become successful businessmen in Malaysia whereas Pak Kasran represents the Malays whose kindness has been exploited by traders. Through Pak Kasran's warning to his sons, the author reminds his Malay countrymen not to repeat the same mistake: "You," said Pak Kasran to Said and Omar, "starting from today, work hard to prevent your plantation from falling into the hands of other people. Don't hope too much on sharing with other people because they are more efficient than us and are full of deceptions" (ibid.:14). S. Othman clearly accepts the ignorance of his Malay countrymen. He does not believe that the

idea of mutual cooperation in business investment between the Malays and those two ethnic groups can be successful. He perceives the Chinese and Indians as parasites, as illustrated by Lee Tong Hua and Mohendar who settle on the land which Malay villagers have developed and suck the wealth from the Malays.

Similar anxieties and negative images of the Chinese and Indians in Malaysia are described in Azizi's short stories, 'Just Now He Realises' and in 'A Dying Party'.

In 'Just Now He Realises', Azizi reveals the weakness of the Malays in business and the negative characteristics of the Malays themselves which discourage them from being successful in trade.[9] Adnan, a young Malay graduate from vocational college, wants to set up a repair shop for motorcycles but he has no money to open the shop. He then asks Tauke Wong, a Chinese businessman, whether he can rent an area in front of his shop. By chance, Tauke Wong is going to set up a business selling motorcycles. He thus allows Adnan to run his repair shop free of charge on the condition that Adnan buys spare parts from his shop and lets his son, Geok, work for him without pay. Adnan and Tauke Wong's businesses are very successful. Adnan teaches his mechanical skill to Tauke Wong's son until he can fix motorcycles skillfully. As a result, Tauke Wong asks Adnan to remove his business so that his son can run his own business in repairing motorcycles. Now Azizi reveals how clever Tauke Wong in disguising his business-mindedness by his kindness to Adnan in allowing him to open his shop on his land. Of course this is not for free because Adnan passes on his mechanical skills to Tauke Wong's son and helps his business by buying mechanical parts from his shop. Adnan only notices these facts when it is too late. As Mohd. Thani comments:

> "At this point, Azizi wants to draw a clear image of the behaviour of some Chinese who are good at manipulating the Malays who are always ignorant of their own weaknesses. At the same time, it mirrors the author's hatred towards his characters. And this situation is strengthened by Adnan, who is unaware that he has become a tool and is used as a tool by a human being who is not of the same race as him" (ibid.).

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[9]Mohd. Thani Ahmad comments: "The short story "Baru Sekarang Dia Mengerti" clearly provokes our self-awareness of the weakness of the Malays in the world of business and commerce. Azizi begins the story with the revelation of the secret and ends his story with an exposure result, which is meaningful" (cited in A. Rahim (ed.), 1990:12).

Mohd. Thani also notes that Adnan enjoys being a boss when Tauke Wong's son works with him and does every thing he is ordered to:

> "And what makes him most proud is his exploitation of the stupidity of Tauke Wong's son like an errand boy. Like a slave. When ordered to carry an engine, he does so. When ordered to clean the rusty chains and other rusty things, he does so too. Geok never refuses. Sometimes he behaves like a boss and sees Geok working all day long. If he fits something wrongly puts something in the wrong place, he reminds him. "It is my opportunity to treat him like a slave!" he says to himself with disgust" (Azizi 1985:33).

Here the author criticises the unpleasant characteristics of Adnan, in other words the Malays in general, who seem to be lazier than the Chinese and enjoy being the boss. The text reveals that Adnan is less clever than Tauke Wong and Geok since he occasionally looks down on Geok without realising that he is getting mechanical training from him as payment. Therefore it is Adnan's stupidity that should be laughed at, not Geok's. Adnan only realises his stupidity when it is too late. Moreover, it can be said that the author wants to show his Malay readers how the Chinese teach their children to work, starting as labourers and becoming a 'tauke' or boss. Thus the Chinese in this story provided a model for the Malays. To some extent the author appreciates the hard-working ethic of the Chinese and criticises the weakness of the Malay. As Mohd. Thani Ahmad points out:

> "The author wants to emphasise that in certain situations, a race that is well-behaved and kind will finally destroy themselves. The kindness and generosity will be used by other people as a weapon against their own race. The relationship among the ethnic groups is limited because of well planned strategies" (ibid.).

Like S. Othman Kelantan, Azizi sees the Chinese as hypocritical and insincere to the Malays. To cooperate with them in business seems to be impossible. Apart from the failure of sharing business between the Malay and ethnic Chinese, Azizi presents a story with a similar concern about the profits of the Malays in 'The Dying Party'.

'The Dying Party' concerns the romance between a young Malay man, Zulkifli, and an Indian girl, Rama Selva. The story takes place at a farewell party held by Rama Selva's parents who are going to leave Malaysia and want Rama Selva to

marry Zulkifli so that she can gain Malaysian citizenship and take care of their property. Zulkifli realises their intention and condemns Rama Selva's parents:

> "Your father has long profited from my country. Your father, your mother and you should be Malaysian citizens a long ago to prove your love for the country, not now or after the May 13. That is why I say that if I take you, it is as if I hire a prostitute. A prostitute needs money so she is willing to surrender her body and you want to stay here because you want to take care of your father's properties. So, you are surrendering your body to me on the pretext of love. In fact, all profits will be transferred elsewhere, won't they?" (Azizi 1984:47).

During the colonial period the Chinese and Indians were British subjects, most not intending to settle down in Malaysia but wanting to obtain economic wealth and return to their motherland. These people had a strong allegiance to their native countries rather than their country of domicile (See Comber 1983: 19-20, and Vella 1978:194-5). The Malays have not trusted the Chinese and Indians and vice versa and intermarriage between the Malays and other ethnic groups is in question, interpreted in terms of profit rather than of true love. Therefore, 'The Dying Party' shows how Zulkifli distrusts his Indian girlfriend. He decides to break off his relationship with Rama Selva. Before that he asks his girlfriend whether she is willing to prove her love to him by transferring her properties in Malaysia to him. As a result Rama Selva, who really loves him, is broken hearted. Zulkifli reveals to her that he does not want to be trapped by her parents and used as a bridge for Rama Selva to get Malaysian citizenship through her marriage with him as such a deed is shameful and he cannot betray his country. He argues: "I love you, but this love cannot be compared with my love for my country. I feel that my sin is unequal to the sin of your parents, who have long been living with hypocrisy in my country" (ibid:47). Azizi highlights the theme of Malay patriotism and reveals the prejudice towards some Indian immigrants who are considered to be too attached to their homeland as opposed to Malaysia. The example here is Zulkifli's girlfriend. She loves Malaysia as the country of her birth but Zulkifli does not believe her. In addition Zulkifli's objection to marrying his Indian girlfriend can be interpreted as the author's warning to the Malays to be careful and wise when marrying other ethnic groups.

All four short stories discussed above reveal the factual problem of ethnic conflict among the Malays, Chinese and Indians in Malaysia as a result of economic

imbalance. The Chinese and Indians are portrayed as hypocritical, greedy and calculating. The Malays, on the other hand, are kind, sincere and short-sighted in business. Therefore the other ethnic groups, mainly the Chinese, are able to dominate Malaysian economics.

An economic imbalance between native and other ethnic groups, mainly the Chinese, similarly occurs in Thailand, although the degree of ethnic rivalry as a result of economic injustice is not as strong as in Malaysia. This feeling is reflected in Kanokphong Songsomphan's *Phii jaak phuukhao* ('Ghosts from the Mountain') through the viewpoint of Jaa Thom, a policeman of low rank. He observes the economic imbalance between the native Thais and the ethnic Chinese while on duty arresting Thai hawkers whose stalls are set up too close to the temple's wall. His racism is expressed through his wrath and hatred towards the Chinese:

> "That bloody man orders me to expel the hawkers whose stalls are set up too close to the wall of a temple. Those are my relatives. I know that they make their living legally. I would not say anything if I had been ordered to capture those Chinese ('jeks') whose stores are many around here, who sell at high prices and are tight-fisted, so it would be fair...But those shops of the Chinese, I won't ignore. If I were that bloody man, I would order the police to sweep out all Chinese children back their own country or else expel them into the sea." (Kanokphong 1992:155-6).

Jaa Thom hates the Chinese because he thinks they have grabbed the wealth from his own country and people. As the narrator states,

> "It is the truth that Jaa Thom hates the Chinese to the bone. He hates them like all the local people do. This is because they were born here and then one day the Chinese from overseas who carried with them a mat and pillow came to live here. Twenty years later all towns are under Chinese power. Now they are not poor aliens, but rich people" (ibid.:17).

It is clear that Kanokphong is showing that some local Thais are prejudiced against the Chinese because of their economic success and domination. Like in Malaysia, Thais consider the Chinese as opportunists who arrived in Thailand with nothing but later become rich and attained citizenship. The native Thais on the other hand, are poor in their own land. Today the Chinese occupy their land and are powerful, having become rich because they are stingy and money-minded. As Jaa

Thom condemns them: "Chinese children only think about wealth" ("สัญชาติลูกเจ๊ก มันคิดถึงแต่ความร่ำรวยนั่นแหละ") (ibid.:16). Noticeably, the Thais call the Chinese 'jek' (เจ๊ก), a derogatory term meaning undisciplined, improperly behaved and careless. It is used by the Thais with a sense of insult because the Chinese immigrants were mostly poor and illiterate (Krit 1986:21,23).

Besides the Chinese, Kanokphong also reveals the racial prejudices of the Thais towards the Indians through the conversation between Jaa Thom and Lek, a timber worker. Lek has a more positive attitude towards the Indians than the Chinese as he admires that: "In fact the Indians are good people...among foreigners they have good characteristics. They live like slaves and do low jobs but they never complain about such things" (ibid.:165). Here Kanokphong reveals that the Thais see the Indians, like the Malays, as 'others' by calling them *'khaek'*. The Indians are seen as similar to the Chinese, perhaps because some of them are money lenders and dominate textile commerce (see K.S. Sandhu and A. Mani (ed.) 1993:942). Having listened to Lek's attitude, Jaa Thom argues: "They are all bloody men. Today they might be good but one day in the future who can tell what will happen as long as they think about money to that extent. The Chinese children used to work like slaves but what is happening now?" (ibid.:165).

This story asserts that racial prejudice towards the Chinese and Indian immigrants does exist in Thailand. It is noteworthy that Kanokphong implicitly tells the reader that the Chinese become rich because they are diligent and thrifty. In contrast, the Thais are generous and extravagant and therefore poor. Such meaning can be traced from the behaviour of the six workers in the story who always spend their money in the brothel and buy their friends food and drink. Therefore while both the Thai and Malay authors appreciate Chinese diligence, at the same time they also dislike their stingy characteristic the most.

In contrast to the Chinese and Indians, the Malay descendants in southern Thailand are presented as poor people like the majority of local Thais. Their image is drawn in Phaithuun Thanyaa's *Khon to' nok* ('A Bird Trapper'), the tale of Yaamin, a poor Muslim. Yaamin makes his living by trapping birds in the forest, using a beautiful myna bird as a decoy. His bird attracts many bird experts, especially Taukae Juu, the sawmill owner, who wants to buy his beloved bird. Yaamin refuses to sell it

for it has helped him make a living for a long time and he feels indebted to it. However, in the end, Yaamin has to sell his bird to Taukae Juu because he needs money to buy medicine for his wife who is paralysed. In this story Taukae Juu is a Chinese businessman who is selfish, corrupt and profits from the poor villagers. The narrator describes the characteristics of Taukae Juu and his business as follows:

> "It has long been for many days that Taukae Juu's sawmill was closed and his business license (of selling timber) was on hold by the authority because Taukae Juu sawed illegal woods in his sawmill, which was only allowed to saw the rubber trees. But the truth was that sawing rubber trees was merely a front because people knew very well that Taukae Juu's sawmill had actually been sawing illegal wood for a long time. When a new, strict district officer was transferred to this place, Taukae Juu was finally arrested " (Phaithuun 1996:60-1).

It is clear that Phaithuun dislikes the Chinese who runs their business through corrupt officials and by engaging in illegal activities. The text suggests that Taukae Juu is selfish because he gives Yaamin only five hundred baht for his myna bird, despite the fact he knows very well that Yaamin's bird cost more than one thousand baht. The narrator reveals Taukae Juu's selfishness and deceptiveness in running his business:

> "In the past few days, Narong, a district official, came to tell Taukae Juu that the new head district officer is fond of birds and is also an expert in them. In his house there are many kinds of birds and his favourite is the myna. Taukae Juu does not imagine that Yaamin is willing to sell his bird to him easily. This is because he estimates that that bird costs no less than two thousand baht and if he adds ten or twenty thousand baht more, it could easily be exchanged for the sawmill license, which had been withheld. If the money is there, the problem will cease. Taukae Juu laughs joyfully in his success till his big belly shakes. He is always sure of his prediction. This plan would in no way be a mistake" (ibid.:61-2).

Here the Chinese are portrayed as corrupt, money-minded businessmen. Moreover, the text suggests that some local government officials benefit from the corrupt Chinese businessmen.

Conclusion

It has been the aim of this chapter to explore the representation of ethnic identities of 'us' and the 'others'. This study makes it clear that short stories on ethnic discourses are the product of the authors' responses to the ethnic conflicts found in their societies. They exhibit the common views of the Thais and Malays in general, and of the authors in particular, towards their people's personality as 'us' groups and the characteristics of the ethnic minority groups as 'others'. This study reveals that the construction of ethnic identities is a complex one. Each ethnic group has both collective and individual identities. What is significant is that ethnic identities provide the sense of belonging to people of one community, race, religion and culture.

This study suggests that (southern) Thailand and (northern) Malaysia are (regions) of racial diversity, though its people share the characteristics of the 'us' group in that they are extremely proud. However, they are sometimes irrational, stubborn and self-opinionated. Both the Thai and Malay authors acknowledge that their people possess these characteristics. For them, self-esteem is good but too much concern for it without good reason can be damaging. Therefore they condemn their people who are stubborn and encourage their people to defend their dignity but be more willing to compromise.

In terms of sharing a sense of being one race, from the perspective of the Malay author, Azizi Haji Abdullah sees the Malays in southern Thailand as people of the same roots as his Malay counterparts in Malaysia. These people are Malays, observe Islam and practise Malay culture. However, their characteristics and geo-political dimensions make them 'other' for the Malays in Malaysia in general, and for Azizi in particular.

This study further reveals that ethnicity is a significant theme in both Thai and Malay short stories because it is relevant to history, politics and economics and can undermine national stability. The Malays in the five provinces in southern Thailand are native Malays who have become an ethnic minority group in Thailand, a Buddhist country, as a result of internal colonialism and the Thai-Anglo treaty of 1909. Thai authors avoid calling this ethnic group 'Malay/Melayu' and see the racial conflict between the ethnic minority Muslim Thai-Malays and the majority Buddhist Thais as a result of internal colonisation. Perhaps, because they do not want to stimulate a Malay sense of 'otherness', strengthen the Malays' consciousness and pride of their

achievement in the past and inflame racial prejudice. These are not useful to the country and people.

In spite of being 'other' to one another, the Malays and Thais in this region become 'us' in their perception of the ethnic Chinese and Indians in their countries as 'others'. The Chinese, both in Malay and Thai short stories, are portrayed as selfish, opportunist, money-minded, stingy, corrupt and deceitful businessmen. Racial discrimination among the Thais and Malays towards the Chinese normally occurs because of their economic wealth and selfish characteristics. They are foreigners who have cultivated the wealth of their new lands and become successful businessmen, whereas the native Malaysian-Malays and the native Thais and Malay descendants in southern Thailand are portrayed as kind and sincere, and economically poor. As a result, the economic imbalance between local people and the ethnic groups of Chinese and Indians strengthens the sense of racial discrimination, especially in Malaysia. None of the Thai and Malay short stories written by the selected authors in this study give voices to those ethnic groups to defend themselves. Moreover none of the Thai and Malay authors call upon their people to abolish their sense of prejudice towards the Chinese and Indians. Therefore the selected authors in this study share the same negative perception towards the Chinese and Indians as their own people do. They do not intend to change their people's attitude towards these ethnic groups.

In contrast, in Thailand ethnic conflict lies heavily on the issue of Malay separatism in the south rather than on economic conflict between the Thais and the Chinese. This is because most of the Chinese in Thailand have been well assimilated into Thai society, culture and religion. In contrast, Malaysian-Chinese and Malaysian-Indians and Malay descendents in southern Thailand are unable to be fully assimilated into their mainstream national cultures due to differences in religion and culture. They want to, and are able to, maintain separate religious, cultural and linguistic identities, all of which become indicators in the construction of their ethnic identities as 'us' and as 'others' by the majority (who, conversely, see themselves as superior to the others). Ethnic conflict can be interpreted as the failure of the government policies of social assimilation and integration and the implantation of mutual understanding of and respect for religious and cultural differences. Thus, ethnic identities are socially constructed, politically bound and racially biased.

Chapter Six

Gender Relations and the Representation of Women

Introduction

This chapter focuses on male and female relations and the representation of women in short stories written by the selected male authors. It aims to investigate the following questions: What modern male and female roles do the selected male authors concern themselves with? Do these authors share similar notions of femininity or have different attitudes? What are the authors' attitudes towards women's concerns, such as issues of polygamy, adultery and prostitution? How do these authors present these issues in their works? Why in the authors' eyes do such things exist and who is responsible? For what purposes and with what objectives do these authors write about gendered difference? To answer these questions the discussion will focus on two major aspects: male dominance and the control of women; and women's experience of sexual oppression under patriarchy.

Male Dominance and the Control of Women

This section will investigate the perception of women, and the patriarchal attitudes and gender bias of the authors' societies in general, and of the authors in particular. The short stories under discussion are *Sii Naang* ('The Story of Sii Naang') by Phaithuun Thanyaa and *Jahiliah Modern* ('Modern Barbarism') by Azizi Haji Abdullah.

'The Story of Sii Naang' tells the agony of a doll maker, whose daughter has been seduced by a man and become pregnant. One morning the father breaks a doll and tries to make a new one but fails because his mind is obsessed with the unfortunate life of his daughter. He compares the broken doll to his daughter's gentleness and thinks how a doll is easily broken. He loves to make dolls in the shape of small girls because he loves the beauty and gentleness of these doll girls. On that

day, he gives up making dolls and walks home. He finds that his daughter has already prepared him dinner. That night the father cannot sleep because of worrying about his daughter's future, and he promises not to allow his daughter to live in unhappiness for much longer. He prays to the statue of Lord Buddha and talks to the photo of his dead wife saying how sorry he is about the fate of their daughter. He asks her forgiveness for his failure to protect their daughter from being seduced by a man who made her pregnant. He thinks that he has made a mistake in sending her to study in town to get a better education without informing her of the dangers of city life and its people. He is sad when he thinks of the dreadful event when his daughter tried to commit suicide. A few days later his daughter has still locked herself in her room. At his workshop he looks at the dolls and feels as if all the dolls were gossiping and blaming him for his daughter's misconduct, so he destroys them all. His daughter comes to see what has happened to him and discovers that the dolls are now broken. He tells her not to be sad because he will remake them to be better and stronger than the previous dolls.

From a patriarchal perspective, the father plays the role of breadwinner for the family and protector to his daughter. He is a responsible and dedicated father. He keeps his promise to his wife to look after their daughter and refuses to have a new wife. He feels guilty when he discovers that his daughter has lost her virginity and become pregnant without a husband. This incident becomes evidence of his failure in performing his duty as a protector to his daughter. He blames himself, not his daughter, because he thinks that his daughter is too naïve to know about men's sexuality and their hypocrisy.

In particular, Phaithuun depicts the social condemnation towards fathers who fail to control their daughters' sexual behaviour, as expressed through the father's imagination.

> "You see... this is the man whose daughter is pregnant without father for her child...He just knows it for a few days that his daughter is pregnant. What a pity! ... As he is a fool, he deserves it. Now he might be upset. Look at his face. He is worried. What a fool he is. He does not know how bad his daughter is.
>
> Huum... It is true. Young girls nowadays are awful. They flirt with men. When they get pregnant, they commit suicide. Actually, her manner looks good, but how come she turns to be like this.
>
> But I think she might have been seduced. She is very young and innocent" (Phaithuun 1991:34-5).

The above confirms that patriarchy is a system of protection of men over women or fathers over their daughters. The condemnation of society on the father implies that the father himself, as well as his daughter, is a victim of the moral standards of society. The monologue above reflects the expected role of the daughter to be innocent. Moreover, the text shows the conservative perception of Thai society towards a woman's virginity which symbolises her dignity and something she should preserve until she is married. Whoever loses their virginity before marriage is considered bad, which is why Sii Naang's father imagines that his dolls are gossiping about him and his daughter. Importantly, the author does not tell the reader what the daughter thinks and feels what other people might say regarding her premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy. However, the reader can assume from her decision to commit suicide that she is suffering from guilt where she has humiliated her father, and also from people's attitude in judging her as a bad and promiscuous daughter.

Phaithuun also reveals the gender discrimination towards women where they are the first to be blamed when they become pregnant outside marriage. This is because women's reproductive capabilities render them vulnerable to pregnancy outside marriage, and therefore having the potential to be considered fragile human beings who can ruin the good reputation of a family. In contrast, men, who may also be promiscuous, are not considered in the same negative way by society. Not many people seriously criticise their sexual behaviour, whereas women lose sympathy if they have had sexual relations, as in Sii Naang's case. This implies gender inequality under patriarchy.

No less important is that Phaithuun implicitly tells the reader that virginity is not part of the criteria to judge Thai women. In the text, Sii Naang is portrayed as a good daughter because she takes good care of her father, such as preparing him dinner. Furthermore, through the love of the father towards his daughter and his making dolls in the shape of girls, it is inferred that a father has no negative bias towards a daughter in Thai society. Nevertheless, Phaithuun expresses the fact that as a member of society, Sii Naang's father is like many other fathers trapped in the traditional role of seeing virginity as a woman's dignity. He sees the debris of the broken doll as a dead body—a symbol of a woman's virginity. In other words, the father recognises the truth that his daughter cannot regain her virginity.

At the end of the story, Sii Naang's father is determined to support his daughter in facing up to her difficulties; to build a new life and forget her past

mistakes. His moral support and forgiveness are concealed behind his words as he tells her not to worry about the broken doll: "Leave it, daughter... it is already broken, so leave it. Father will make a new Sii Naang doll, which is stronger and better than the old one so that it will not easily break again" (ibid.:36).[1] His words mean that he will teach her daughter to be strong and wise in dealing with people in society, especially with men in the city whom he thinks are less sincere than people in the countryside. He is also biased against city men. There is premarital sex among villagers too ending up in elopement and quick marriage or forced marriage.

Through the life of Sii Naang, Phaithuun implicitly pleads with his society to give moral support to girls who are misled into having premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy, instead of condemning or criticising their mistakes. Therefore they can have normal lives and not choose to commit suicide as a way to resolve their problems. Parents are the most significant people to teach their daughters to be strong and wise in coping with any difficult problems.

The Malay author, Azizi Haji Abdullah also reflects the male patriarchal attitude and gender discrimination in his short story, 'Modern Barbarism'. The story begins with an egoistic husband, Samingan, trying to persuade his stubborn wife, Bedah, to take birth control because he believes that having more children will burden them. Moreover, he is afraid to have daughters whom he thinks could destroy the good name of the family. His wife disagrees and reminds him about the negative effects of contraceptive pills to her health. From her viewpoint, she disbelieves that having few children can guarantee the security of the family economy. Marriage in Islam is not only for sexual fulfillment, but also for having more children to uphold the tenets of Islam. She also argues that it is wrong to think that daughters will bring trouble to parents because they will be either good or bad not only because of their environment, but also due to their parents' upbringing. Having many good children is better than worrying about the family economy. Finally, her husband accepts her reasons. Therefore, this story aims to remind that whoever is involved in family planning for economic reasons should not forget Islamic ideology, and the negative effects of contraceptive pills to the women's health.

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[1]The word *Sii Naang* is a dialect of the south. It is used as a pet name for girls and doll.

Noticeably, although this story focuses on the issue of birth control, it reflects the notions of patriarchy and gender bias in Malay society. Bedah's rejection to her husband's will is considered by him to be bad and unacceptable.

> "Do not surrender to the wife even a little because it is a prohibition from his ancestor. When he is married, his mother has warned him to be careful of a woman because whenever a man yields to a woman, it means that he has lost his masculinity. Such man is considered to have eaten *nasi tangas*" (Azizi 1978:48).

This shows that women also take part in reinforcing the social norm that men are superior to women. However, women also seek ways to control men's power; reflected through belief in the black magic of *nasi tangas. Nasi Tangas is* a form of rice specially cooked by the wife during her ovulation period. When the rice is half-cooked, the wife will put some of the rice into a bowl and place the bowl on the floor. Then she will let her monthly ovulation discharge drop into the bowl and she will put the tainted rice back into the pot to be well cooked. When the husband eats it, it is believed that he will lose his true self and become an obedient husband. In Islam, wives who practise this belief are considered sinners.

The text also reflects the natural perception of women that they have to accommodate men's emotional wishes. This perception is expressed through Samingan's confidence that he can persuade his wife to take the birth control pills: "women are like the rice, which sticks at the bottom of the rice pot. Such rice will become softer sooner or later" (ibid). In addition, Samingan's attitude towards daughters reflect the misperception of some Malays, who only think that daughters tend to destroy the good reputation of their family rather than sons; because women are seen to be easily influenced by unhealthy environments: "To have a daughter is the only big burden for us. I say frankly to you, Bedah, I am not prepared to bring up a daughter because even today I notice that it is the girls, who most frequently destroy the good reputation of their parents" (ibid.53).

At the end of the story, the husband is convinced by his wife to have more children, regardless of gender which is meant to demonstrate that Malay parents do not discriminate between daughters and sons. They do not mind having daughters because they believe that children are gifts from God in Islam. Nevertheless, gender discrimination in the text reflects the attitude of society that women are vulnerable, so parents have to pay more attention to their sexual behaviour. Bedah's strong will on

having more children asserts the social reality that Malay wives also have the power to make their own decision in having children.

In comparison, both Phaithuun Thanyaa and Azizi Haji Abdullah reflect the patriarchal ideology of men as leaders and protectors of the family and that women are the vulnerable sex who must be protected. Their stories suggest that they are not against patriarchy.

Apart from male dominance and control of women, Thai and Malay male authors are also concerned with women's experience of sexual oppression under patriarchy which they see as a social problem. The subsequent section will deal with various forms of women's suffering caused by men.

Women's Experience of Sexual Oppression under Patriarchy

Like many other unfortunate women in many countries, Thai and Malay women have been encountering sexual abuse committed by men and, occasionally, also by women. Generally, the types of sexual abuse faced by women include the seduction of women into the sex trade, rape and domestic violence, such as wife-beating and marital rape. This section will discuss these issues with the aim of investigating how male authors depict the position of women and their experience of sexual abuse mentally and physically.

Prostitutes and Prostitution

Comparing Thailand with Malaysia, prostitution appears to be more prevalent in Thailand, especially since Thailand is notoriously known for sexual tourism, attracting both Western and South East Asian tourists. Malaysian men appear to be one of the major clients of Thai prostitutes centering in the Haatyai district of southern Thailand. In contrast, Malaysia is known as an Islamic state which is strongly against prostitution. However, to be known as an Islamic state does not mean that prostitution does not exist. This evidence is confirmed by a study done by Shyamala Nagaraj and Siti Rohani Yahya (1995) entitled *The Sex Sector: An Unenumerated Economy*. Their work reports the failure of the government authorities

in controlling the spread of the sex trade, and in reducing the number of female sex workers. It reveals that female sex workers are from various religions and races, including Malay Muslims. Working as prostitutes makes them outcasts in society and, once having worked in the sex sector, they are trapped by social norms that do not accept them elsewhere in society. The sex trade co-exists with the drug trade, gambling, blackmail, kidnapping, trafficking and the corruption of the government officials (Shyamala and Siti Rohani 1995:96-7).

The notion that prostitutes are outcasts in Malay society is demonstrated by Islam's consideration that prostitution as sinful and defames virtuous women. The al-Quran, verses xxiv.2-5, states that Muslims should have no pity for whomever is involved in prostitution:

> "The whore and the whoremonger –scourge each of them with an hundred stripes: and let not compassion keep you from carrying out the sentence of God, if ye believe in God and the last day: And let some of the faithful witness their chastisement. The whoremonger shall not marry other than a whore or an idolatress; and the whore shall not marry other than a whoremonger or an idolater. Such alliances are forbidden to the faithful. They who defame virtuous women, and bring not four witnesses, scourge them with fourscore stripes, and receive ye not their testimony for ever, for these are perverse persons--save those who afterwards repent and live virtuously; for truly God is Lenient, Merciful!" (Hughes 1896:131).

Clearly, the text suggests that prostitutes and dealers are sinners and must be punished. Nevertheless, Islam will forgive them if they deserted their sinful jobs and live their lives in the Islamic way.

In contrast to Islam, Buddhism is not strongly against prostitution and rather sees it as an individual 'karma' (fate). According to *Sila* or Buddhist moral code, Buddhism asks the believers to refrain from sexual misconduct, i.e., not commit adultery, rape; not having sexual relations which is prohibited by law or custom, or by the Dhamma (see Somdej Phrayaannasangwo'n (Suwathuthano) 1973: 215-222). This section will explore how Thai and Malay male authors who observe different religions present the issue of prostitution in their short stories and the purposes behind them.

One of the outstanding Thai short stories on prostitution is Phaithuun Thanyaa's work, *Yiisip khon nai ho'ng noi* ('Twenty Pupils in a Little Classroom'). The story tells of some poor parents in northern Thailand who sell their daughters into

prostitution. The story is told from the point of view of the narrator who goes back to visit his village only to be told by his former teacher, Khruu Thanong, that all his school girlfriends have become prostitutes and work in brothels in Betong and Sungai-kolok, districts which are notorious for sexual tourism in southern Thailand. The interesting part of this story is the narrator's revelation of the typical ploys used by the procuress to recruit village girls into prostitution. Firstly, the procuress comes into the village and convinces the girls' parents that their daughters would have good jobs in the city. Since most of the parents are poor, they allow their daughters to leave with the procuress. Some of them do not know that their daughters would end up in brothels. Secondly, girls who leave the village for a few years show off their wealth when they come back to visit their parents. This motivates many other parents to sell their daughters as well and many of the village girls to be willing to work as prostitutes. Finally, some parents have sold out their daughters to the procuress since their daughters are still in childhood. When their daughters are in their early teens, the procuress will come the village and take them away. All the issues which Phaithuun discusses here are a direct reflection of social reality.[2]

The last scenario is the most interesting one noted by the narrator. It focuses on the main character named Do'kmaai (lit.'flower'). She is a hard-working girl who tries her best to negotiate with her parents not to send her to work outside the village like her other girlfriends; as Khruu Thanong tells her story to the narrator:

> "She tried her best...You know what? ...She tried her best to compromise with her parents, but failed. She failed like the time she lost her beloved buffalo Jaomo'n."..."She works hard from morning to evening. She works as rice and shallots harvester. She picks up cottons and bamboo shoots. She works as if her small and thin body were not hers. She does everything only to bargain with the exchange that she does not have to go to work in the far land like the other girls" (Phaithuun 2002:88).

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[2]All these ploys are reported in three articles in the magazine, *Silapawathanatham* (Art & Culture), 15,6(April 1994:76-83). The articles are 'Wathanatham Thai luuksao haangen-luukchaai chai ngeun (Thai culture: daughter make money, sons spend money)' by editors, pp, 76-83, 'Tamnaan Do'k khamtai yutthakaan sayupkaankhaa prawenee reu pen khae yutthakaan khayap ngeuak (The Myth of Do'k khamtai: the strategy of abolishing sex trade or just of exercising the gum?)' by Phanida Sanguansereephanit, pp, 84-7, and 'Tok khiew (Reservation)' by Wanich Charungkitanan, pp, 88-91.

The presentation of a buffalo named Jaomo'n is a metaphor for Do'kmaai because both Do'kmaai and the buffalo are the significant labour of her family. In the text, Do'kmaai's parents sell their buffalo to solve their financial crisis caused by drought which destroys their crops. Her parents need money to repair their shabby hut. Her father explains to her that her family has the right to sell the buffalo because it is they who have been feeding it. The motive of selling the buffalo by Do'kmaai's parents here implies that Do'kmaai will also be sold on account of domestic poverty as the story reveals that in spite of working hard, Do'kmaai is sold by her parents to a procuress. It can be interpreted that Do'kmaai becomes a prostitute by force. She represents the unfortunate girls from the north, who are sold out by their selfish and greedy parents to become prostitutes. These parents use poverty as their excuse to sell their daughters. As a symbol of gratitude to their parents, these daughters send money back home to them. The narrator is sad to witness that these parents are not concerned about what is going on in their daughters' lives. They enjoy the money they receive and spend it on building a new house and buying modern commodities, such as televisions and motorcycles. All these material goods become symbols of the family's economic improvement.

Thus Phaithuun condemns these parents and disagrees with the notion of working as prostitutes in order to give money to their parents as an act of gratitude. Apparently, the daughters in this story are the source of family wealth, as Khruu Thanong refers to Do'kmaai: "It is because she is their child, especially a daughter" (Phaithuun 2002:89). In other words, what Khruu Thanong highlights the misuse of parental power over children: in Do'kmaai's case, her parents are the agents of sexual abuse. They use their power as the guardians and owners of their daughter to sell her into prostitution. They destroy her life with no mercy. The author opposes the dominant thesis that a daughter is inferior to a son because all daughters in this story are the saviours of their family poverty and they are daughters in need.

This story also reveals the failure of the educational institution in improving the ignorance and moral conduct of the poor parents. Education fails to stop the girls entering the sex trade as the narrative illustrates that all girls are recruited into the sex sector after finishing primary school. Therefore, the author exposes the social reality of the existence of Thai prostitution.

It is notable that Phaithuun uses the North as the scene of the story, not the South, his home region, though not far from Phathalung, Haatyai, is the centre of

prostitution for the Malaysian tourists and local clients. This is because, firstly, most of prostitutes in the South are originally from the North, secondly, there is no issues of parents selling their daughters into sex trade as occur in the North, and thirdly, some southerner prostitutes take that job voluntarily (See Orasom 2003).

Phaithuun also recognises that this form of selling labour is practised in various countries, where poverty is a central issue as he presents in his short story, *Maemaai haeng Phonsai* ('The Widow of Phonsai') set in Laos. An interesting point Phaithuun introduces is that women become prostitutes because of war, as illustrated through the life of a Laotian prostitute.

'The Widow of Phonsai' is based on the story of the narrator's friend, Raachen, while they visit the Laotian capital city Vientiane on a study tour. The narrator, who is also the author, tells that his friend is a typical Thai man who would like to have sexual experiences with foreign women. This is an uncommon phenomenon because most Thai people look down on Laotians. However, Raachen's desire to have sexual experience with Laotian women can be interpreted as the author's intention to reveal the attitude of Thai men towards women. According to the author, Thai men also see women as sexual objects.

The story begins at the Phonsai Hotel where Raachen meets a beautiful Laotian woman. He approaches her and then follows her to her house located in a slum. Here he discovers that the woman had a long difficult life when North Vietnam invaded the country. She is a victim of war as revealed to Raachen:

> "She has had sex with men before. Her first husband was a Vietnamese soldier. When she was teenager, the Vietnamese soldiers came into her country. They raped her till they were satisfied and they left her. O K...it could happen to anybody at that time, especially beautiful women seemed to be more unfortunate than the others. The Vietnamese soldiers made her pregnant and left her. Luckily, her baby was stillborn" (Phaithuun 2002:169).

This quotation reveals the author's attitude towards Vietnam and the social attitude towards beautiful women. The author sees the invasion of Vietnam over the Republic of Laos as a metaphor of a rapist and a conqueror. The woman subsequently turns to prostitution and is a metaphor of the submissive. Her tragic experience suggests the social attitude that women are usually the unfortunate sex, there to be abused by men for their sexual desire and their beauty. The Laotian woman is said to

be lucky because she is released from raising a fatherless child due to her dead baby. However, her fortune does not last long.

The text goes on to say that after independence from Vietnamese occupation, this Laotian woman meets with another misfortune. She falls in love with a Thai businessman and gets pregnant. However, her romantic love ends up in separation, her lover deserts her. She therefore tries to have an abortion but fails. She now has the responsibility of raising her disabled ugly child by working as a prostitute. Her disturbing story makes Raachen feel guilty and shameful. He realises that he is not different from any other Thai men and Vietnamese soldiers who fulfil their sexual desire with unfortunate Laotian women. To some extent it can be said that the author condemns men's promiscuity and irresponsibility. Men are the ones who force women to become prostitutes. Furthermore, the author suggests that it is men who support the continuation of prostitution because they are the clients and they use prostitutes to fulfill their sexual desires. It is notable that Phaithuun pities women who have become victims of the international sex trade.

Similarly, Malay authors also see men as the beneficiaries of prostitution. However, unlike Phaithuun Thanyaa, Malay authors, such as S. Othman Kelantan, believe that the Malaysian government has failed to eradicate prostitution because it is a product of some promiscuous politicians who are clients of prostitutes. They are the ones who visit brothels. This attitude is derived from the author's prejudice against politicians and appears in S. Othman's short story, *Keputusan* ('Decision') which aims to attack hypocritical politicians. S. Othman uses a former prostitute named Jamilah who is the second wife of Baharum, a Malay Minister, to criticise those politicians. She makes her point as follows:

> "You just pretend to be like that (good person). It is the same as your hypocrisy in front of people as a creator of society. However, you are also a creator of prostitution in this country...Of course, I recognise it. Society views people, like me, a prostitute. Rubbish in good society. Nevertheless, people like me are needed by people like you, by ministers, by lords and by very important persons. All of them are honourable men. Why don't you honour me for what I have done in the same way as you have honoured other honourable people?" (S. Othman 1984:2-3).

Evidently S. Othman degrades those promiscuous politicians by calling them dishonourable men. The character Jamilah also criticises the hypocrisy of people in

society who think that they are good people while they perceive prostitutes as being bad. However, it does not mean that the author wants people to sympathise with prostitutes. Moreover, S. Othman Kelantan presents men's egoism in patriarchy in which some see themselves as heroes in saving women from continuing their careers as prostitutes and in giving them the opportunity to become "good" women through marriage. Men see themselves as the saviour of women's lives as revealed repeatedly through the male character Baharum, who thinks that marrying Jamilah, a former prostitute, is his great task in taking her out of prostitution. He expresses his moral crusade: "But, at least I have saved a human being. At least!" (ibid.:1). It implies the social attitude that men are leaders and are superior to women.

In contrast, the short story, *Pintu dan Jendela* ('Door and Window') written by the same author does not see men as saviours of prostitutes, but opportunists, who exploit prostitutes as their way of earning a living and supporting their family. This is exemplified by the life of a retired worker whose part time job is a procurer for the sailors at Pulau Pinang port:

> "He smiles. He knows that every freighter arriving at the Pulau Pinang port will bring him fortune. The fortune spreads out through women, who are carried to those freighters. In those freighters, "the sea lions " are waiting to taste raw meats, which are half decaying. In addition, the eating of those sea lions by the freighters will give him fortune to extend Fatimah's life. The price of his good deed to those freighters' sailors has become fleshes, blood, bones and nerves in the bodies of Yusuf, Manaf, Zakuan and Zamani. His family has grown well and happily from the product of his good deed in taking the women whose fleshes are half decaying to be the food for those sailors" (S. Othman 1990:213).

The author compares the sailors with sea lions because they use prostitutes to release their sexual desire in the same way as the sea lions will eat any kind of meat to survive. The words 'half decaying' suggest that the prostitutes here are also dying. They are useful for sailors and some poor families who make a profit from their contemptible job. Nevertheless, no matter how useful they are, people still look down on prostitutes.

The male protagonist under discussion can be named as a whoremonger. His poverty is unjustifiable as his excuse in participating in prostitution. Therefore, S. Othman in particular, and Malay authors in general, do not show their sympathy towards both prostitutes and whoremongers.

Like Islam, Buddhism sees prostitution as a sinful job. If either the prostitute or her client is married, their sexual relationship is a form of adultery. Many Thai Buddhist prostitutes believe that it is their karma to be born as such. The concept of karma becomes their excuse to continue their careers. Ironically, since they believe that their karma can be improved and their sin can be redeemed through social acts or donations, they therefore make merit for religious affairs instead of deserting their prostitute careers.

Thus, the perception of Islam and Buddhism on the discourse of prostitutes is slightly different and it can be an answer to why Muslims strongly oppose prostitution and why the Malay authors do not have sympathy for them. Unlike *Yiisip khon nai ho'ng noi* ('Twenty Pupils in a Little Classroom') of Phaithuun Thanyaa, the author's sense of humanity is clear. He expresses his sympathy towards those prostitutes who are tricked into the sex trade. However, like S. Othman Kelantan, Phaithuun also shows the negative perception of Thais towards prostitutes in his work, *Ho'ng maailek haa...lae phuuying mii fan siitho'ng* ('The Room Number Five...and a Woman Who has Gilded Teeth').

'The Room Number Five...and a Woman Who has Gilded Teeth' is set in a fishing village. The story is told by a young boy who observes the on-going situation in a number five house which is a brothel. He wonders why his parents hate a woman with gilded teeth and why his mother forbids him to pick up or admire the beauty of marigold flowers grown by the woman of the brothel. His mother explains to him:

> "A flower, which has no scent, is beautiful only of its appearance. You should not pick it up and play with it, especially that woman's flower...'that woman', my mother calls the woman who has gilded teeth as 'that woman'. The tone of my mother sounds ridiculous and my mother's eyes tell her dislike for that woman (Phaithuun 1996:102).

Like his short story *Yiisip khon nai ho'ng noi*, Phaithuun uses a flower as a symbol for women. However, in the above excerpt Phaithuun uses a flower and colour 'gold' or *Sii tho'ng* (สีทอง) as a symbol for prostitutes. However, it is positive

to view women as flowers in which they embellish the world.[3]

There is an irony in the use of the colour gold. Normally anything that is associated with gold or the colour gold should be viewed as a precious thing, but when it is associated with Thai women it carries a negative meaning because Thai people use the words *do'k tho'ng* (ดอกทอง, or 'gold flower') to refer to prostitutes and promiscuous women. In the text, there are two symbols used by the author in association with prostitutes. One is the marigold flower and the other is the artificial gilded teeth. The yellow marigold flower looks beautiful but its quality is degraded by its lack of fragrance. It is like a beautiful prostitute whose beauty is not appreciated by Thai society at all. In contrast, the 'gilded teeth' represent the old-fashioned artificial teeth which are no longer used by modern-day people. It also implies the decaying of the physicality of the human body. In this context it is representation of prostitutes as bad women.

Prostitutes are the outcasts, neither women nor men love them, as revealed in the conversation between a prostitute and the boy in his dream. The prostitute tells the boy that she is an unwanted woman: "The gilded teeth are things that nobody like any longer. Now nobody has gilded teeth. Some people hate them....Those people are not like you. They speak loudly and dislike this kind of flower. They just pick, squeeze and then throw it away" (ibid.:103-4). From this excerpt, the prostitute calls the fishermen, who visit the brothel *khon phuak nan*, meaning 'those people', the rude fishermen look down on women like her. Furthermore, the boy's mother also disparages her. She always uses the contemptuous pronoun *nang* in her word *nang khon nan* (นังคนนั้น), when she refers to the woman with the gilded teeth. Since the boy does not know that the woman with the gilded teeth is a prostitute, he always wonders why his mother and the other neighbours hate that woman:

> "I don't understand what my mother says and why she mentions her with a disparaging tone. The woman of the same age with my mother in the next house is also the same. Possibly, women themselves do not like women with gilded teeth or they do not like boys who play with flowers?" (Phaithuun 1996:102).

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[3]Man, on the other hand, is compared with a bee Thais say: *phuuying pen do'kmai phuuchaai pen malaeng* (ผู้หญิงเป็นดอกไม้ ผู้ชายเป็นแมลง), meaning woman is flower and male is bee. The metaphor characterizes women as sedentary while men roam around. The metaphor describes the male as actively selecting and the female as passively waiting.

The verb 'play' and the noun 'flower' above have implicit meanings here. The verb 'plays' implicitly means 'having sex' and 'flower' refers to the prostitute. Therefore, the aforementioned passage can be interpreted as good women do not like prostitutes because they see prostitutes as a group that defames the good reputation of women in general. Women dislike men who visit prostitutes as well. The tone of the story also reveals that the author disagrees with people who judge all prostitutes as bad women. His attitude is expressed through the view of the boy. He thinks "But I can think only. In fact, I cannot like that. There are many kinds of people, whom we know, but we cannot tell their kindness to other people" (ibid.:105).

A few years later, the boy notices that many women visit his village. One evening, the boy stops at a small roadside hut to avoid from getting wet from the rain. He comes across a middle-aged woman who offers him sex in exchange for a cigarette. He runs away from her with a feeling of disgust. This can be read as the author and the boy having no pity on the prostitute who has no dignity; she dares to offer her body in exchange for a cigarette. However, like any other person, the boy gradually grows to dislike the prostitute. She reminds him of a smelly marigold flower (i.e. a prostitute) and he despises her for it. This story also reveals the author's humanitarian sensibility towards the confirmed prostitutes who are getting old and do not know how to earn another living.

If religion is against prostitution, why can it not be abolished? The short stories have revealed that poverty and materialism are the main factors that perpetuate the existence of prostitution, as demonstrated in the short stories, *Phii jaak phuukao* ('Ghosts from the Mountain') by Kanokphong Songsomphan and *Keputusan* ('Decision') by S. Othman Kelantan. Kanokphong sees the existence of prostitution as an outcome of corruption among the government authorities, mainly the police who take bribes from brothels. In contrast, S. Othman sees the continuing existence of prostitution as a product of those politicians who are also the prostitutes' clients. Therefore, we can say that the state has also taken a part in allowing women to be continuously sexually abused in exchanged for money. In other words, there is a mutual arrangement between the police, the owners of sexual sectors, and prostitutes in sharing the profit.

Equally important to the ineffective attempt by the police in protecting women from being seduced into the sex trade is the growth of capitalism and the greed of the

media. Women are publicly abused through the mass media. This can be argued that women are not only physically raped by men, but language use can also be viewed as a form of rape.

Mass Media, Domestic Sexual Violence and the Women

In the matter of rape, both Thais and Malays share the same view that it is a crime that can be placed in the family domain and they perceive it as shaming for women. As a result, most women who are victims of rape are unwilling to report it to the police because they do not want to be the target of public discussion and embarrass themselves and their families. Worse, marital rape is considered a Western idea which is unsuitable when applied to their societies. Therefore, both Thai and Malay police are reluctant to interfere in marital rape. Subsequently, since women do not dare to articulate their agony in public, men have the opportunity to continue their sexual abuse against women. However, thanks to Western feminist movements, sexual oppression against women in Thailand and Malaysia has today become a political and public issue. The government and non-government organisations are seeking ways to solve the problem and to mitigate women's suffering. In addition, feminist activities make women themselves become more aware of their rights. Associated with this idea, Phaithuun Thanyaa' s short story, *Nai thi saathaarana lae thuukto'ng taam kotmaai* ('In the Public and Legitimacy') provides the best evidence.

The story condemns the hosts of a television show who persuade a woman, a victim in an accident of the collapse of a hotel, to give an interview. The reason they explain is to reveal to the public the selfishness, corruption and irresponsibility of the owner, the constructional company of the hotel and the government authorities. She tells the reader: "They hope that the show will provoke an excitement and responsibility among those who are involved in the accident, either the capitalists or the government authorities" (Phaithuun 1996:113). Encouraged by her boyfriend, she agrees to be interviewed.

Unfortunately, after the interview, she discovers that both the female and male hosts of the show edited her story and ignored their main aim, which was to condemn the capitalists, instead focusing on her relationship with a man who was also involved in the accident. They implied there was a romantic angle to their entirely innocent

relationship. For instance, they repeatedly ask her to tell about the situation when the building collapsed and how the man lay heavily on top of her. They ask her "what does the man do to her and how far can she trust him?" and " how far can she trust him?" (ibid.:116, 119). These questions intentionally mislead the audience into thinking of sexual intercourse:

> "Well...It means that you two are alone. He is a man and you are a woman, also beautiful. The other thing is that, I do apologise, you are in a uniform. Well... I do not intend to...I think that such uniform is quite short and tight. The picture we saw when you were rescued, your clothes were totally torn out. It was something that..." (ibid.:116).

The concept of women's bodies is addressed here. It is a social norm in Asia that "good" women should dress properly and not to be too sexy to attract men. If women dress sexily, they will be blamed by society for attempting to arouse men's sexual desire as perceived by the male host in the above passage.

When the interviewed woman accepts the reality that under such an unpleasant situation she has no choice but to trust the man, the male host immediately misleads his audience to imagine that the woman and the man might have had sexual intercourse:

> "It means that you have to let things go. In such circumstance, I can understand that whatever happens, we have to let it be. Well...I would like to assume a little that, I suppose only, if that man with you suddenly thought to do something bad to you" ...I think in the way that men in general might think about that if he would like to do bad something to you"... "I think that anything might be possible. You are a young woman. There is no way for you to defend yourself, especially in an isolated place like that...That is, it is impossible for one to read deep inside his heart what he is thinking about, isn't it? Here, if he really wanted to do something, what would you do with that situation? How would you find a way out?" (ibid.:119).

The above passage addresses the social attitude of women's space and the image of the empowered and the powerless. The media is the empowered and is represented by the male host and the interviewed woman is the powerless, the victim of the media. It is socially accepted that men and women should not stay together in an isolated place because, in such circumstances, men and women might fail to control their sexual desires. Significantly, the author condemns the lack of ethics of people working in the mass media. They distort the life story of their interviewed

guests for money without thinking of the consequences for them; as happens to the woman, where she eventually loses her boyfriend's trust. Worse, people in the media business focus mainly on their own interests and on what supposedly attracts their consumers rather than the interests of their guests. This view is what the woman in the story wants to say to the public: "Those people never know that what happen to her and that man because what they want to know and repeatedly question is not the thing she intends to tell. On the contrary, they never ask her the thing she wants to tell " (ibid.:121).

What the woman intends telling the audience is her gratefulness for and the kindness displayed by the man. She tells the reader that the man used his last strength to search for a hole under the debris so that he can hear or give a signal to the rescue team to help them. By doing so, a huge cement pole falls on him and he dies while she survives. Unfortunately, his heroic deed is never made known to the public because the interviewers always interrupt her when she is about to speak. She did not expect that the interviewers would deprive her of this opportunity. Moreover, since it is her first time to appear on the screen, she is nervous and vulnerable and unable to lead the interviewers to the point she wants to make to the audience.

The most significant part of the story is the presentation of a woman's suffering of verbal assault in the mind of the interviewed woman. She feels ashamed watching her face on the screen while giving the interview. She feels that she is raped by the media instead of being honoured by appearing on national television.

> "I was raped." She wants to shout this phrase out loud, wants to let the world know that those people abuse her, tear her body and her clothes out from her body. Their evil and dirty hands massage all over her body, dig deeply inside her secret part, and then strip them off as though stripping the hog's maw. They eat her hungrily until they are pleased and run away. They leave her lying down alone" (ibid.:109).

This message affirms that rape can be in the form of verbal use, and narrative discourse that distort facts and leads to the context of sexual intercourse. In this story the mass media deals with the concepts of demand, supply and profit, sometimes it is used to abuse women. The media is used to serve the interest of the capitalists, not of the public. The story shows that the Thai media is unreliable and some people working in the business lack moral values. Equally important is that when women are

abused by mass media there is no law provided to protect them, as told by the title of the story 'In the Public and Legitimacy'.

No less important is the case of physical abuse. The woman links her bad experience with the media to the girl who is raped and refuses to inform the police. She understands that the girl does not want to be 'raped' again by answering the questions in which the investigation might be made public. The shortcoming of this investigative process discourages women from revealing sexual harassment committed by men. Therefore, Phaithuun Thanyaa criticises the ineffectiveness of the government authorities in providing protection for women. At the same time, he wants to see an improvement in the process of police investigations of women who have been raped to encourage them to seek protection and justice.

Another story in which women find themselves vulnerable to, and unprotected against, unwanted male attention is Kanokphong Songsomphan's short story, *Baang sing baang yaang keut kheun* ('Something Happens').

In 'Something Happens', the female character leaves her school when she gets pregnant. Her mother takes her to have an illegal abortion. Since her fate is against the social norm, her parents condemn her for being promiscuous. She becomes a worker in a rubber plant where she meets a watchman who promises to marry her. She has sexual intercourse with him and later discovers that this man has told other people that she slept with him, rather than being discreet about it as custom dictates. Nevertheless, the girl continues to have sexual intercourse with the watchman and ignores what people say about her because she realises that nobody will feel pity for her including her parents. She accepts that sexual intercourse is a means to carry on with life and the sexual act itself is a manifestation of life;

> "Something that happens sometimes is difficult to explain, isn't it father? I don't know why I feel unable to escape from it and why I give myself to evil. It is as if something huge blocked me, father. I still spend my time after work with him in the watchman house as if I could not escape from him. In fact, I know—it is because I don't want to run away from him. Am I bad, father? If I could say that, in the end of a life in despair, sex is only a pleasant thing that I have. It is the only one thing that comforts and helps me to continue with my life. It is like the water that nurtures my life" (Kanokphong 1996:172).

In this text, a female character uses sex as a means of survival and an outlet to release her psychological pain and escape from her family problems. This is an

uncommon attitude of sex because some people think that it is embarrassing to accept such an idea. This is a result of their traditional attitude that sex is something personal which should not be exposed or discussed in public. The question to be asked is whether sex is a sin or not, as the girl informs in her soliloquy to her father.

> "Sex helps to solve the problem, doesn't it, father? It looks bad and dirty, but its value is more than a wishing crystal, isn't it, father? (I don't want to talk about it.) Sex, for me, is amazing. It is happiness in sin, or pleasure in vice...Sex is the same father. Sex, for me, is not different from drug addiction. When it comes to sex, my true self disappears. I become selfless, lifeless, no parents, no siblings and no house near a pile of rubbish. There is some happiness and strength that pushes me to move forward. When my heart is relieved, those unwanted pictures gradually reappear" (ibid.:172,174).

This statement suggests that the girl realises that sex can be pure either in sin. Sexual intercourse cannot however abolish one's distress for good. The author wants people to accept the reality that sex has its own value to people of all social classes and it should not be seen as a dirty thing.

No less important is the question of voluntary and involuntary sex. The girl is in pain when her aunt's husband rapes her, as she expresses her feeling: "I hate and am disgusted with it. It is dirty, vicious, disgusting. This is not the happiness in sin as I say, but father...I am scared" (ibid.:175). Clearly, sex is pleasure when one conducts it voluntarily but it is highly likely to damage someone psychologically when it occurs by force. Moreover, sex and rape are seen as male tools to abuse woman for their own pleasure and to punish women for her sexual misconduct. It is an expression of male power over the female, as suggested by the fear of the girl to tell her parents of being raped by her uncle.

> "The fear is more than anything else. The fear that I cannot explain. Uncle has something that becomes his power over me. It defeats me...defeats me...over and over again...day by day...It is because uncle knows that I am vicious so that he thinks he can do anything to me. All bad things that are happening are my penalties, father. Therefore, I have to accept them, no matter how painful they are. I am a life that is unable to speak and have no right to plea for anything" (ibid.).

The reader learns from the text the reasons why the girl keeps her secret to herself. Firstly, her uncle has seen her having sexual intercourse with the watchman; and secondly, she has a bad record of sexual misconduct which has become her deep

scar. She therefore assumes that her parents might not believe her if she revealed the abuse. Her fear reflects the situation in Thai society that many women are victims of rape committed by their relatives and are afraid to inform their parents or the police. When women are raped, it is sometimes the woman who is blamed, or they also blame themselves. When rape happens within the family, it is seen as an act of humiliation that must not be exposed to the public. Therefore the girl keeps silent. The author also suggests that one outcome of sexual transgression is that, once a woman is involved in premarital sex her community will condemn her as being promiscuous. She is regarded as the destroyer of the family's good reputation. She not only destroys her parents' dignity but also her own. She is therefore treated by her uncle and the watchman as being no different from a prostitute. To some extent, this story tells the reader what gender bias and sexual abuse means in Thai society.

Besides the physical and verbal assaults perpetrated on women, they also suffer the psychological abuse of male polygamy. Both Thai and Malay authors are concerned about this marital practise and express their views in their writing.

Polygamy

Although polygamy means a man or woman who has more than one wife or husband at the same time, Thai and Malay societies traditionally accept only the notion and practise of men with multiple wives or sexual partners. Muslim men are especially allowed by their religion to sustain up to four wives at the same time. Studying Islamic polygamy, Sonia Ghattas-Soliman says:

> "Marriage is a means of fulfilling one's religion and a way of overcoming one's passion. In a world of temptations and the abuse of human sexuality, Islam offers Muslims the unique opportunity to integrate their sexual desires and affections into everyday life. It is not only desirable that one marries; it is commanded" (1991:97).

She quotes Imam Ghazali's viewpoint: "Whoever marries safeguards half of his faith, let him fear God for the second half" (ibid.). According to Islam, marriage is to promote the family institution and polygamy is allowed in Islam for men only. However, it does not mean that Islam encourages men to practice polygamy. The al-

Quran says: "And if you fear that you cannot do justice to the orphans, marry such women as seem good to you, two three or four, but if you fear that you will not do justice, then (marry) only one or that which your right hand possess" (ibid.:98). In relation to justice, Islam condemns polygamous men who fail to give justice and affection to their wives equally. The al-Quran says: "When a man has two wives and does not treat them equally, he will come on the Day of Resurrection with half his body fallen off' (Hughes 1896:671). Islam allows men to be polygamous only under certain circumstances. Firstly, if the wife has health problem where she is unable to give her husband the child; and secondly, if polygamy could provide women protection and security as a result of war, in which women become widows and outnumber men (ibid.).

Polygamy, for some men, appears to be a family institution. In keeping with religion, Muslim women do not challenge their religious law to ask for equal rights with men. Similarly, Thai-Buddhist women do not challenge their traditional social right to have more than one husband to be equal with men.[4] It is also noted that a study of the notion and practise of polygamy in Thailand and Malaysia must begin by acknowledging traditional social practise and religions as primary cultural factors. However, what is of main concern here is that the notion and practise of polygamy in Thai and Malay societies is significantly different. For example, in Malaysian Muslim communities polygamy is allowed by their religion and civil law. This is a powerful tool to control and indoctrinate Muslim women to accept polygamy. However, in practise, most Malay women are not in favour of polygamy and the law protects women by instructing that a man cannot take a second wife without the approval of his first one.

In Thailand polygamy is legal within Thai Muslim communities due to their religion but it is illegal for Buddhist men. However, polygamy is still practised by many Thai men because they have been given the privilege to have extra sexual

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[4]In fact, the idea of a woman having more than one husband has long been recognised by Thai women through their classical literature entitled *Krisanaa so'n nong* ('Krisana advises her sister'). The story tells how Krisanaa, a polyandrist who successfully pleases her husbands, gives advice to her younger sister who fails to please her one husband. Thai people do not adopt the idea of polyandry at all. They absorb only the didactic elements that women should be good and wisely and know how to please their husband, which reflects the absorption of patriarchy.

intimacy according to the belief that men lack the ability to control their sexual desire and are not strongly condemned by their society. In contrast, their illegal wives, who are called *mia noi* (เมียน้อย) or minor wives, are normally condemned by society as evil women who steal other women's husbands. Worse, the minor wives have no right to claim for inheritance some of their husbands' properties if their husbands die.

In comparison, Muslim women in a polygamous system are better off than the Thai 'minor wives', whose right is not protected by religious and state laws. However, the similarity is that both legal and illegal wives share the same trauma of psychological torture by their husbands. The former usually gains sympathy from their society whereas the latter does not. Generally, polygamy is unacceptable both in Thailand and Malaysia and is considered as a channel for men to abuse women. In Malaysia certain conditions and regulations are imposed before men are allowed to take more than one wife. This is to ensure that the first wife and her children will not be deserted by her husband (Raja Rohana 1991:62-5). The question to be addressed in this section is therefore how the selected male authors respond to the issue of polygamy. The selected short stories are *Uban-uban di Kepala* ('White Hairs on the Head') by Azizi Haji Abdulah, *Keu luat neua lae chiiwit* ('It is Blood and Flesh') and *Pratuu baan thi pit waai* ('The Closed Door') by Phaithuun Thanyaa, and *Tergerak di sini* ('Aroused Herein') by S. Othman Kelantan.

We begin with the factor for the formation of polygamy where Azizi Haji Abdullah sees polygamy as a social act derived from male psychological symptoms. He introduces this idea in the short story, 'White Hairs on the Head'. The story deals with an old man whose anxiety, insecurity, fear and frustration overwhelm his life. He is annoyed with the white hairs on his head since they remind him of his old age and of the universal truth:

> "People say that the white hairs are the sign of old age and to become older. Religion says the same that the white hairs are the condition of old age. Religion makes a comparison that a white hair which grows out means that our age is getting old every day " (Azizi 2002:62).

This Muslim male protagonist rejects social perceptions that aged men should dedicate their time in the mosque reading the al-Quran or play with their grandchildren at home. Searching for an outlet to escape from the fear of becoming

old and to prove his physical strength, he thinks that polygamy, i.e. to marry three wives at the same time, is a good idea because "having less white hairs means looking less older. When it is seen as getting less older, certainly, it means looking younger. Automatically, people will say he is still strong. No wonder he is married with four wives" (ibid.:63). Clearly, women are presented as sex objects to test men's sexual potency.

The story tells further that neither the protagonist's friend, Maun, nor his wife understand his true reasons in having more wives. They believe that he wants to have more wives because of his sexual desires. His wife does not see any possible reasons, in relation to Islamic law, to allow him to have additional wives when he has already become a grandfather. She satirises him for having such a ridiculous idea that "I am your wife, who is open-minded. Tell me your reasons. I recognise that a man does not belong to one woman as a woman must belong to one man" (ibid.:62). Here Muslim women have to prepare themselves to deal with polygamy because, at any time, many men consider practising polygamy. It also suggests that Malay women do not expect much in the way of fidelity from their husbands because generally women absorb the notion that men are hardly satisfied with only one partner. By contrast, women are told to control their sexual desires. Noticeably, the author does not encourage women go against polygamy. However, it might be wrong to make a conclusion on gender-bias that this is because the author himself is a Muslim, male. In fact, the author already sees the social reality in which polygamy is an unacceptable system in modern society, although it is allowed in Islam. The author therefore makes his protagonist wonder why nobody agrees with his polygamous idea as illustrated in the text: "They do not see additional marriage as a sign of worship or building a mosque. They do not see additional marriage as the way to decrease the numbers of women to become widows or old maids" (ibid.:61). Behind the blunt tone, one detects a strong attack on superficial arguments of men's need to have more than one wife. Since the protagonist has already become a father and grandfather, he does not have a good reason to take more wives.

Equally important is the language used to reflect social perceptions towards men's desire to practise polygamy. The Malay words are *uban*, *cabut uban* and *gatal*. The Malay word *uban* or *phom nhgo'k* (ผมหงอก) in Thai means 'white hairs'. It is said that white hairs are itchy when they are growing. In this story, they are a symbol of

old age, seniority and respect. Culturally, it is the norm that the young have respect for their seniors. In contrast, the word *cabut uban* or *tho'n ngo'k* (ถอนหงอก) in Thai literally means 'to remove the white hairs' and it is a satirical analogy for the aged, whose behaviour or manner does not suit their age. Whoever is said to have their white hairs removed by children, it means that s/he is disrespectful. This is a result of Thai and Malay perceptions that children are not allowed to touch or play with adults' heads. The adjective *gatal* or *khan* (คัน) in Thai means itchy. When it is used in a sexual context it means promiscuous. Malay men, who want to have multiple wives, are said to be *gatal* meaning to be obsessed with sex. Therefore, the author makes use of the words 'white hairs', the act of 'removing the white hairs' and the symptom of itchiness to mock men who want to be polygamists.

At the end of the story, the protagonist gives up his dream of having more wives to maintain his dignity.

> "Of course, it is disgraceful if someone did something on one's head. If s/he does it at the knee, it will not matter much. If it was done at the shoulders, certainly it will not feel anything. But at the head, the topmost of the body which is the most respectful, such act is disrespectful" (ibid.:64).

His decision suggests that polygamy is seen as men's weakness in controlling their sexual desires and men's exploitation of the system for their sexual fantasy. On the other hand, women do not see polygamy as a means of overcoming their women's passion or as the way of fulfilling one's religion. In fact they see practising polygamy as a social problem created by men and the abuse of this system brings mental suffering to women. This notion is supported by the Islamic scholar, Imam Ghazali, who "provides a unique interpretation of polygamous, showing that it is no more than a selfish way of fulfilling men's desires. He holds that polygamy provides a man with a means of satisfying and indulging his sexuality, with no regard for the woman's feelings or needs" (Ghattas-Soliman 1991:99). Imam Ghazali's comment, perhaps, has been widely accepted by men in general, and women in particular. His attitude is reflected in S. Othman Kelantan's *Tergerak di si ni* ('Aroused Herein').

'Aroused Herein' points out that polygamy is a form of male domination and is exploited for men's sexual pleasure. At the beginning, S. Othman portrays the image of his female character, Marnisah, as a modern Muslim woman who is religious and, at the same time, active in politics. However, he fails to continue

presenting her modern image when he makes her accept the idea of polygamy and become the second wife of the male protagonist.

The story focuses on the narrator who married his second wife, Marnisah, because of sexual desire, not out of love. He thinks that "the masculinity of men is unlimited to the women they love because 'the expanse of his love is like the sea. Put in no matter how many Marnisah into the ocean of love, they will get wet and not a jot less" (ibid.:57). The last sentence, 'they will get wet and not a jot less', means men will not hesitate to have sex with women. The author compares a man's love to the wideness of the ocean in which male sexuality is infinite. Marnisah represents women whom men are ready to have a relationship with or to approach. In the story her husband divorces her because he wants to show his responsibility to his first wife and his two children. In making this decision it reflects his irresponsibility to Marnisah. Moreover, by the time he leaves Marnisah she is pregnant and keeps the news to herself. Twenty years later, the narrator discovers that he has fathered twins from her. As an act of revenge to her irresponsible ex-husband, Marnisah refuses to let her two children know who their father is which is the only power she has over him. S. Othman Kelantan's attention on the second wife is continued in his short story, *Malu* ('Ashamed'). This story shows that men are unwilling to practise polygamy because of social class and social reputation.

In 'Ashamed', the male protagonist commits adultery with his young divorcee servant, Nursiah, because he is attracted to her country girl characteristics such as kindness, shyness and sincerity. When Nursiah gets pregnant the man asks her to have an abortion. She rejects his idea but is willing to leave the house if the man promises to marry her in order to secure the status of her unborn baby. Unfortunately the man refuses her demand because he does not want to hurt his wife and children. More importantly, marrying a servant as his second wife will ruin his family and his reputation. His concern is revealed in his monologues:

> "Then his face will be covered by pig's skin throughout his life. Where will he hide his face? Where? Oh...God! He questions himself in his heart. He knows that he has gone too far. His deep sorry punctuates firmly in his heart. Why did he do that in his own house? Why did this thing happen in his forties, which has long been protected? Oh...God!"(S. Othman 1979:108).

This message, to some extent, reveals the fact that Malay society sees the men who have sexual intercourse with a servant as a deed of shame. According to Islam, a pig is an untouchable animal for Muslims. Therefore, the pig's skin is used here as a symbol of shame and a forbidden deed, that is, the adultery between the man and the servant. It also stands for the failure of the man's control over his sexuality. Critically, it is interesting that the author sees the sexual intimacy between the man and his servant as a result of their sexual desire rather than of love, that is, the man is trapped by Nursiah's femininity. On the other hand, Nursiah is attracted to him because of her desire for sexual expression, as revealed through the man's point of view: "And since he has seen Nursiah's familiarity, has recognised her womanhood of being a widow...until it appears to be an act of strong desire...and it happens for many times after that, he can notice the thirst of a young woman, who has been deserted by her husband" (ibid.:106).

S. Othman, perhaps, is trapped in this illusion because he has not given his female character a voice to express her true feelings and the reasons why she has had sexual intercourse with the man. Nonetheless, the author does condemn the polygamous character. The man's refusal to marry his servant is perceived as an irresponsible act and shows him as being selfish. He passes his responsibility to another member of his staff, Sulaiman, by asking him to marry Nursiah to maintain his good reputation. As a kind and considerate man Sulaiman is willing to marry Nursiah in order to protect her dignity. At the end of the story, when Nursiah gives birth to the man's son, Sulaiman divorces her and gives her the money he has asked in return for marrying her, which is thirty thousand ringgit. What seems to be an injustice for women, as shown in the above quotation, and through the sexual relation between the man and his servant, is that a woman is usually judged to have sexual intercourse with men because of her strong sexual desire. However, the most unjustifiable point is that a woman who becomes a widow or divorcee is viewed as a sexually hungry and her sexual desire is seen as stronger than unmarried women. This is an attitude of social and gender bias existing in Thai and Malay societies at present.

In a polygamous system women are seen as sex objects, for women in this situation are often trapped into being mentally abused by their husbands. Normally, as S. Othman points out, the first wife is usually in a secure position and gains more moral support from the public than the second wife or a minor wife. However, this is not the case in Phaithuun Thanyaa's short stories, *Kheu chiiwit lae leuat neua* ('It is

Life, Blood and Flesh') and *Pratuu baan thi pit wai* ('The Closed Door') in which he focuses on the suffering of the first wife.

In 'It is Life, Blood and Flesh', the focus is on a heavily pregnant woman, whose husband is living with his minor wife, leaving her, their daughter and unborn baby to face a difficult life all by themselves. The story begins in a rice field where the woman and her little daughter are collecting some kapok to be used for the unborn baby's mattress. When they return to their shabby hut the mother discovers that she does not have much to prepare for dinner. She asks her daughter to collect some eggs from the barn. Apparently, all their eggs have been stolen by a pregnant, vagabond dog. A few days later, the dog steals their eggs again. This time the woman gets angry and she takes a stick to hit the dog. However, when she arrives at the bush where the dog is living she discovers that it has already given birth to small puppies. She pities the female dog caring for its puppies alone. She feels that she is in the same situation as the dog, fearing that she will not be able to cope by herself when her child is born. At this point, Phaithuun attacks polygamy by comparing an irresponsible man to a male dog, as revealed in the mind of the female protagonist:

> "Shortly, she thinks of herself and then of that new mother dog. Long before, she might not be lonely like this. She used to have a male dog to stay with her closely. They must have had a happily life together. However, when the season of love has gone, the male dog, which has shared happiness with her then leaves her to seek for a new mate. He leaves her to take a responsibility for the new life terribly...the female dog's life is not much different from her life. She thinks of a man, whom she knew and spent her life together in the old days, but, today, she cannot even see his shadow.
>
> What is the difference between some men and some male beasts? One is called human being, and the other is the beast. However, both human beings and beasts have the same natural instinct...that is the instinct of exploitation and selfishness" (Phaithuun 1996:85).

This quotation not only reveals Phaithuun's opposition to polygamy but it is also the Thai means of cursing irresponsible men by making reference to dogs. It is regarded as the rudest way of expressing anger and contempt as the author condemns the husband in having the same bad nature as a male dog. In contrast, the female protagonist is portrayed as a dutiful mother who is ready to fulfill her motherhood without support from her husband. The narrator reveals her determination "She is ready to be responsible for the coming of her new-born baby with her two hands like the female dog, which is taking care of her puppies" (ibid.:85). It can be seen that this

woman represents a strong woman who can stand on her own two feet and cope with any difficulties without a man's support. It can be argued that Phaithuun takes sides with the first wife instead of the minor one. Similar views are expressed in his second story, *Pratuu baan thi pit wai* ('The Closed Door').

In 'The Closed Door', Phaithuun suggests that women can help eradicate polygamy by divorcing their polygamous husbands. In the text, when the female protagonist discovers that her husband has a minor wife she locks herself in her flat with her pet cat to keep herself away from listening to her neigbours' gossip. These people want her to fight with her husband's minor wife because they believe in the traditional value "Let a pile of gold as high as your head be stolen, but not a husband be lost to another woman" (เสียทองเท่าหัวไม่ยอมเสียผัวให้ใคร) (Phaithuun 1991:9). These women are aware of the rights of a wife and it also reflects the value that Thais give to men; women must fight for the love of their husbands. In the story, although her neighbours encourage her to fight to get her husband back from his minor wife, she disagrees with them. In fact, her refusal to follow the above saying can be argued as the author's suggestion to women not to be blinded by that belief. Implicitly, polygamous men deserve to be eradicated from women's lives. The female protagonist spends her time on rethinking her life and searches for ways to resolve her problem. At this point, the author uses the parallelism between the life of the female protagonist and of her mother, who is also abused by her stepfather, to highlight the themes of polygamy and women's suffering within that system.

The female protagonist remembers that her mother has had a difficult and miserable life with her stepfather. He has a minor wife and spends most of his time with her. He comes to her mother only to take something from her and then leaves. What she never forgets is that her mother has two things to live with; one is her silence and the other is her tears. She always cries silently (ibid.:16). Her mother works hard. She does all the housework and waits for her stepfather. Her mother's life suggests to share a husband with another woman is an unbearable experience. Her mother therefore warns her not to be like her, as she advises "you can be a woman like your mother but not be like your mother" ("ลูกเป็นอย่างแม่ได้แต่อย่าเป็นอย่างแม่") (ibid.:18), meaning to be a woman is not wrong but don't be a first wife like your mother". The implication of the first wife being mentally abused by her husband and the author's sympathy towards the first wife is clear. It can be interpreted also that the life of her

mother is illustrated to emphasise the theme that polygamy has long taken root in Thai society and women have been abused by their husbands from generation to generation. This situation is also strengthened by a television programme on a melodrama involving a battle between a first wife and a minor wife over their husband's affections. As the text says, when the female protagonist hears the melodrama from her neighbour's television she feels annoyed and complains to herself when such problem would be abolished. This implies the social reality that Thai women still struggle with sexual harassment deriving from polygamy in a male-dominated society.

The author's technique in attacking polygamy, which is the predominant theme in this story, provides the reader with a psychological insight into the dehumanising effect of this custom on women. In the text a remarkable notion made by the author is his encouragement to women to liberate themselves from polygamy with their own hands and by their own actions. This notion is asserted by the symbolic act of the female protagonist in the closing scene in walking out of the house carrying her pet cat with her, suggesting that 'The Closed Door' is now open. It communicates that women must not tolerate nor allow men to practise polygamy. They must not allow themselves to be treated like a pet cat by men any longer. They must fight for their freedom and crush the traditional belief that 'it is better to lose a huge gold as high as one's head than a husband'.

Overall, the short stories on the theme of polygamy reveal the Thai and Malay social reality that polygamy is an unpopular form of marriage and that it causes more problems for women than men. It reflects men's irresponsibility and dishonesty towards their wives. Apart from polygamy, illicit sex also brings sufferings on women rather than men, as discussed bellow.

The Question of Sex outside Marriage: Adultery and Fornication

Sexual intercourse in Islamic and Buddhist contexts must be regulated within the ethical and social framework of religions. Islam and Buddhism see sexual intercourse outside marriage as illicit sex. There are two types of illicit sex to be focused on, one is adultery and the other is fornication. In Islam, sex outside marriage,

adultery or fornication, is called *zina*. In contrast, sex outside marriage in a Thai context has various terms. They are *phit prawenii* (ผิดประเวณี) or *luang prawenii* (ล่วงประเวณี), *pen chuu* (เป็นชู้), and *mii chuu* (มีชู้). The word *prawenii* (ประเวณี) means intercourse. It also refers to sex inside marriage. On the other hand, the word *phit prawenii* or *luang prawenii* means adultery. The term *penchuu* is used for married man having sex with married woman. By contrast, *mii chuu* is used for married woman having intercourse with married or unmarried man (see *Thai Dictionary* of Rajabandittayasathaan edition 1982:272, 515, 503). Therefore adultery involves at least one married individual, whereas premarital sex occurs between unmarried persons. However, this is not the case in Islamic perception because both adultery and premarital sex are the same. They are regarded as illicit intercourse and a crime against religion. Therefore, as a protective device against premarital sexual relations and adultery, marriage is highly recommended to Muslims of both sexes. On the other hand, Thai Buddhists consider premarital sex as sexual misconduct against their good traditions rather than their Buddhist religion. According to *Sila*, as explained by Somdej Phrayaannasangwo'n (1973:215-222), a girl who is unmarried and still in the custody of her parents is compared to property. A man who has sex with her is seen as a thief because he steals something precious from the girl's parents, even if it is the girl's consent. Moreover, the girl's misconduct is sinful because she disgraces her parents' reputation.

What has to be mentioned also is sexual segregation. In traditional Thai and Malay societies sexual segregation is part of a social idea to protect men and women from fornication. However, no matter how strict the religious rules and custom are, some people cannot help breaking their religious rules of sexuality, that is, committing adultery or fornication. The question is why do these people, especially youngsters, break their religious law and social tradition? What are the outcomes of their illicit intercourse? In response to these questions, the short stories to be studied are *Baan keut* ('Hometown') by Kanokphong Songsomphan, and *Lauwamah* ('Degrading') and *Pengampunan* ('Forgiveness') by Azizi Haji Abdullah.

'Hometown', highlights the idea that the lack of proper sex education among Thai youngsters leads them to discover their own sexuality in improper ways and brings danger to their lives. In the text the male narrator reveals his knowledge of sex

derives from his own curiosity which began when he was a child. He narrated that one day his parents and other adults had looked at a magazine and said "it is obscene" (Kanokphong 1996:70). They did not allow him to look at the magazine. Since then he was aware that the adults, including his parents, had a secret. He therefore searched for that magazine and found it in his parents' wardrobe. It was a pornographic magazine, 'the other book', which he had never read or seen before. He looked at it full of excitement and humour. From that moment he felt guilty and started thinking about Priiyaa, the girl who was adopted by his parents and his closest person to him in his family. He remembered that he discovered his first sexual appetite when he slept in Priiyaa's bedroom one night:

> "Priiyaa, I should not have been a bad boy. If I had not searched for it in my father's wardrobe, I would not have thought about you. I still remembered the night I slept in your room. When you murmured in your sleep and hugged me tightly, I was afraid and, at the same time, wanted to learn about it. I started to hug you, caress your body and use my finger to penetrate some parts of your body. It made you moan and frightened me. I had to wake you up. It was the first time—Priiyaa that you were so angry with me that you hit me. I was so afraid and cried. You also cried and then hugged me tightly again" (ibid.:77).

Commenting on the above quotation, the author implicitly suggests that parents should have separate rooms for their teenage sons and daughters to avoid incest. It also reflects Thai's perception on sex in which it is regarded as an issue that should not be a theme for public discussion. It is suitable only for adults and not for children and youngsters to learn about. Children or immature adolescents who are curious about sex are said to be bad or naughty. Having such an attitude, many young Thai adolescents discover their sexuality without proper knowledge of sex. For example, girls do not know how to protect themselves from pregnancy as the author comments further that the narrator commits fornication with Priiyaa and then made her pregnant. Since they are brought up like brothers and sisters, their sexual relationship and their youth are regarded by the narrator's mother as an inappropriate and embarrassing relationship. His mother takes action by taking Priiyaa to see an illegal abortionist. As a result, Priiyaa is seriously ill and deranges.

The abortion, in order to solve the narrator's sexual mistake, has been done on behalf of her love for her son and her family's good reputation. Therefore, the author does not blame the narrator's mother but highlights the issue that an illegal abortion is

a final outlet for some parents and adolescents; normally chosen as a way to solve the problem of unwanted pregnancy. Moreover, the author also reveals the power of the mother in determining her son's future and taking charge in protecting the good reputation of her family. Conversely, by bringing Priiyaa to have an abortion, the narrator's mother can be condemned or criticised as an immoral woman, who takes part illegally in the sexual abuse of a fellow woman. Abortion might be seen as a device of punishment on women for their illicit sex. Moreover, Priiyaa's mental disorder emphasises the social condition that women usually face after they suffer from being victim of illicit sex. No less important is the didactic implication that not providing proper sex education to youngsters might bring disaster to them and their families in the end.

Kanokphong's concerns about the dangers of withholding information on sexual issues from youngster continue to be told in *Bon thanon kolisiam* ('On the Coliseum Street'). Unlike in 'Hometown', Kanokphong provides more factors that become agents in motivating sexual eagerness of children. Firstly, it is the poor surroundings; secondly, it is adults' carelessness in their sexual activities; and thirdly, it is the pornographic media such as films and videos. Like in 'Hometown', Kanokphong repeats the same idea that sex is taboo for children.

Significantly, Kanokphong's stories are evidence of his commitment to his society, his concern about the danger of the pornographic media and the lack guidance of sex education for the youths. He points out that sex is not something to be hidden and it cannot be hidden either, because it is available in the sexual market. Sexology therefore should be reconsidered and taught in educational institutions as part of the normal curriculum. He also suggests that sex is an aspect of human nature that needs to be learnt and carried out in proper ways. Like Kanokphong, Azizi shares this attitude. He records his view in *Lauwamah* ('Degrading').

'Degrading' takes place on Resurrection Day, when all dead souls have to face judgement over the good or bad deeds they had committed in the world when they were alive. In this story, the married male protagonist is being questioned of his sin by an angel. From the investigation, it appears that his serious sin is his committing adultery with a married woman, who is the stepmother of his teenaged girlfriend. The intercourse occurs when his girlfriend invites him to stay overnight at her house. That

night, the girl's stepmother comes to his room and they commit adultery. Their sexual intercourse is witnessed secretly by the young girl through a hole in the wall as the angel informs him "She watched every step of your act with her stepmother. She, who was still immature, felt that your action is a kind of pleasure. As a result, she found a way to go out with other men. She wanted to taste the pleasure, like the one she has seen" (Azizi 1985:81). The result of the girl's premarital sex is an unwanted pregnancy. Therefore, this story is a pedagogic tale which gives warning to adults that they must be careful and must keep their sexual activities away from the eyes of immature adolescents.

Kanokphong's stories 'Hometown' and 'Something Happens' and Azizi's story 'Degrading' reveal the authors' commitment to their religions. In contrast to Azizi, Kanokphong seems to perceive and emphasise sex from a secular aspect where it is a natural affair between male and female. Sex should be practised in proper ways and at the right time, place and age. He does not touch on the issue of religious punishment for those who commit adultery and fornication despite the fact that those types of misconduct are sinful. His disinterest in on religious punishment might be due to the fact that he is more interested in a secular way of life than a religious one. There is a further difference, while Islam knows punishment by God in Buddhism only the law of Karma, 'reap what you sow', will cause appropriate sanction.[5]

In contrast, Azizi shows a stronger commitment to his Islamic religion than Kanokphong's Buddhism, in the respect that he emphasises the didacticism that adultery is an offence and a serious sin which is against Islamic law. Muslims who commit this sin must receive punishment as evidenced by the adulterer in the short story, 'Degrading'. There is no excuse to be forgiven from God. In the text, Azizi presents the idea that the male character commits adultery because he cannot control his sexual desires when seduced by the stepmother of his teenaged girlfriend. At this point, Azizi shares the same perception with S. Othman Kelantan, in his short story, *Malu* ('Ashamed'), that a married woman who does not have regular sexual

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[5]*Buddhist Tripitaka* does not state a secular punishment for adultery, and it does not ask society to punish it. The adulterers will face the result of their sins in the future. However, *Traiphuum Praruang*, a classical religious text, written in 1345 by King Lithai of the Sukhothai period, teaches that adulterers will suffer in hell. The adulterer is forced by the hell guardian to climb up and down the cotton tree to chase for his adulteress. He will never reach her and both of them will be tortured by the flaming thorns of the cotton tree on the way through (Phrayaa Lithai 1975:26-7).

intercourse with her husband for a long time will have greater sexual appetite than a man. In 'Degrading', the stepmother commits adultery because her husband is paralytic and cannot fulfil her sexual desires. Moreover, issue regarding time and place encouraged the stepmother to commit adultery, as the man says "Yes, it is true. The time and place are appropriate. And a human being, who is hungry, is the stepmother of his girlfriend, who is still young" (ibid.:80). These messages reveal the man's sympathy for the stepmother. However, he himself also receives sexual pleasure from her and he continues to repeat his sexual relationship with her:

> "But, it is strange that he feels pleasure in sin, although at the same time, he feels guilty and is cursed by God. Then, between consciousness and unconsciousness, he has repeated the same misdeed after the first event. His degrading sexual desire encourages him, but when he finishes it (his intercourse) till he is exhausted, he feels guilty again. Everything seems to be forgotten. It supports him so that his body goes further. His body, which has fallen on the bed with his leg parted, is motionless" (ibid.).

The aforementioned message reveals the battle between virtuous and vicious instincts in the mind of the male character. As a result, the vicious one successfully occupies his mind, that is, the man allows his sexual desire to lead him into adultery in spite of knowing very well that it is sinful. He admits his failure in controlling his sexual appetite because he finds the mystery of pleasure in that forbidden intercourse. However, that forbidden pleasure is discouraged by the author. Instead, he warns the reader of the disaster of adultery where the fruit of this act is not always sweet. Penalty is waiting for the adulterer and the adulteress on the Day of Judgement.

According to Islamic law, as explained in *A Dictionary of Islam* by Thomas Patrick Hughes (1896), the punishment for those who commit adultery and fornication is different, that is,

> "At the commencement of Muhammad's mission, women found guilty of adultery and fornication were punished by being literally immured—Suratu' n-nisa (iv.) 19, Shut them up within their houses till death release them, or God makes some way for them...This, however, was cancelled, and lapidation was substituted as the punishment for adultery, and 100 stripes and one year's banishment for fornication...The punishment for fornication is one hundred stripes (or fifty for a slave). The scourging to be inflicted upon a man standing and upon a woman sitting; and the woman is not to be striped. It should be done with moderation, with a strap or whip, which has no knots upon it, and the stripes should be given not all upon the same part of the body" (Hughes 1896:11,130-1).

The punishment for illicit sex in Islam is a serious one because it is a crime against religion and a disobedience to God's command. Noteworthy also, is that "a famous passage of the Quran on slander requires that an accusation of fornication be proven by four witnesses and prescribes a harsh penalty for false accusations. The implication of this injunction is that it is difficult, if not impossible, to legally prove adultery short of a confession by the guilty party" (Ibid.:159).

As a former religious teacher, Azizi is very concerned about his religious rule as seen in his subsequent short story, *Pengampunan* ('Forgiveness') in which he highlights the theme of punishment for adultery. Like 'Degrading', the 'Forgiveness' is also set on Resurrection Day. The main character is the soul of an adulterer. He is walking to a place in which he himself does not know. On his journey, he is called by many babies who claim him as their father. At this stage, his crime of committing fornication with many women is revealed by those babies. Because of his sin, he encounters difficulties and suffering from the very start of his journey to the land of judgement. The things he encounters are the hot sun, the disgusting saliva and smelly sweat, and pressure from the crowd. The author illustrates this scene as follows:

> "His eyes are already dazzled. The radiance heat of the sun seems as if it was only twenty-five centimetres high above his head. The smelly sweat, which he is wading, the suffering of the need to move forward and to go first, seem to be a torture that never ends. Of course, that is not the final suffering' (Azizi 1985:25).

Therefore, this message provides a didactic purpose by the author as part of his religious commitment to his Islamic religion. Noticeably, the punishment upon fornicators, as told in Azizi's short story above, is widespread in Muslim societies, both in Malaysia and southern Thailand. It is the punishment of Islamic law about illicit sex that Muslim parents in those areas introduce to and teach their children. It is believed to be the most powerful and effective device to threaten their children so as not to be involved in sexual activities outside marriage.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to examine problems in relations between men and women from the male authors' perspective as illustrated in their short stories. We have seen

how women in males' writings continue to suffer humiliations, degradation, dehumanisation, physical and psychological torture caused by the patriarchal system, polygamy, and the demoralisation of people in capitalism, such as in mass media and sex businesses. To solve women's problems and liberate themselves from male domination the authors provide some alternative suggestions for women.

Firstly, women must possess positive perceptions of themselves. For Thai authors, Phaithuun Thanyaa and Kanokphong Songsomphan, they encourage women to be more independent economically from men so that money cannot be a factor in men having power over women. Secondly, women must destroy some forms of inequality in social values and practises which subordinate women to men, that is polygamy. In this case, the Thai authors believe that women have the capability to demolish this system by divorcing their polygamous husbands.

However, unlike the Thai authors, the Malay authors, Azizi Haji Abdullah and S. Othman Kelantan, believe that polygamy in Islamic communities can be abolished by men if they understood correctly the essence and condition of polygamy as allowed in Islam. Furthermore, they remind Muslim men not to exploit polygamy on behalf of Islam only for their sexual satisfaction. By and large, it can be argued that both the Thai and Malay male authors are not supportive of men who abuse the system of polygamy.

Finally, the Thai authors remind women and their parents not to misuse and misinterpret the moral code of gratitude. Parents, who sell their daughters into prostitution, must be condemned. The daughters, on the other hand, should not choose prostitution as their way to support their family. In relation to the issue of prostitution, Phaithuun Thanyaa reveals the dark side of Thai society in which the parents are not always good. Some of them sell their daughters into prostitution for their own profit. In this case, the Thai authors have a chance to show their humanitarian sympathy for these kind of prostitutes. In contrast, the Malay authors do not show sympathy for prostitutes. This can be understood from an Islamic perspective in which prostitutes are classified as sinners and sympathy must not be given to them. In addition, most prostitutes in the Malay texts are not sold by their parents. They become prostitutes on the excuse of poverty, which is seen as an unjustifiable reason.

The works on male and female relations also reveal the different interests of the Thai and Malay authors regarding the problems of women. From this study, only the Thai authors reveal the sexual violence committed against women, i.e., rape and

abortion that occur in Thai society. Rape is committed both by women's male relatives and their superiors. On the other hand, abortion is apparently carried out by women themselves. Unlike the Thai authors, Malay authors only focus on adultery and fornication as a crime against religion. This is because the Malay authors want to give moral lessons to men and women rather than to call for women's justice.

No less important is that the Malay authors use women as minor characters to become their puppets in condemning men's sexual misconduct rather than to present the inner sufferings of women. However, in doing so, they attack men's exploitation on women for their sexual satisfaction such as fornication and adultery. In other words, their male protagonists become women's voices revealing women suffering caused by men. Similarly, both the Thai and Malay male authors reject sexual immorality in the lives of their male protagonist, such as adultery and fornication. Indeed, all four male authors in this study perceive that the abuse of, and domestic violence against women cannot be solved without the cooperation, support and participation of both men and women.

In short, through men's positive attitude of women, they raise the reader's awareness of the need for social justice and equal sexual participation in matters that affect humanity. In this way they contribute in giving pride to women in Thai and Malay short stories and, by extension, they encourage all to appreciate the significance of womanhood. This chapter has also shown the way in which relations between men and women in Thai and Malay societies are portrayed as closely related to social, cultural and religion agendas. It can be said also that the construction of Thai and Malay women in Thai and Malay short stories is not only gender-based, but also religiously bound. It is noticeable that works written by male authors respond to the feminist movement and the problems of women in their societies. The problems of women, such as polygamy, prostitution, and sexual violence against women, become the source of inspiration for male authors to present their notions and give voices to women.

Conclusion

It is useful to study selected Thai and Malaysian writers from the regions of southern Thailand and northern Malaysia to highlight and identify their distinctive characteristics. This study has highlighted the similarities and differences of the authors' role they play, the literary techniques they use, the regional and national affairs that concern the authors, and their perception of the regions they present in their short stories.

In Chapter One this study reveals that Thailand and Malaysia in general and the regions of southern Thailand and northern Malaysia in particular are the lands of multi-ethnicity, multi-culture, multi-religions and beliefs, where people identify themselves and others based on their religion, race, language, and nationality. The region of southern Thailand and northern Malaysia has been perceived by both Thai and Malaysian government as a region of trouble. These distinctive characteristics are displayed in and shape the nature of the short stories under consideration. This chapter also reveals that both Thai and Malaysian short stories should be studied within the Thai and Malaysian contexts—politics, society, religion and cultures—which help readers to understand some implications of texts. In addition to these contexts, some Western literary theories are also useful in reading the texts.

In Chapter Two this study finds that the authors' life and work are interdependent and the formation of regional literary associations in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia is related to their respective political situations. The auto/biographical works of all the selected authors reveal that their family members have supported and imbued in them a love of literature, and the authors' educational and regional backgrounds have helped to improve and shape their ideas and their writing style.

Regarding the issue of regional literary associations, this study found that the southern Thailand group, or *Klum Naakho'n*, was indeed motivated by a sense of regionalism. In contrast, the literary associations of northern Malaysia—of Kelantan writers and Kedah writers—were primarily motivated by Malay nationalism, and secondly by regionalism. The Malay writers use their works to promote their indigenous culture, language and literature as symbols of Malaysia. They feel they

have to do this for the ethnic minorities of Chinese and Indians to reconise that Malaysia had belonged to the Malays long before the coming of the Western powers and the immigration of Chinese and Indians during the British colonial period. Moreover, the Malay writers oppose the idea of using English as an official language, as proposed by the small minority group of English educated Malays, Indians and Chinese. The Malay writers see English as the language of the coloniser and a threat to Malay identity.

In contrast, the Thai writers do not purposely use their works to promote the Thai culture, language and literature as symbols of the state because there is no rejection of choosing Thai as national language.[1] However, both southern Thai and northern Malay authors shared the same aims in the formation of their literary associations. These aims were to promote their regional cultures and to seek publication. In addition, membership is based on brotherhood, sisterhood and teacher-principles. Importantly, the ideology of the literary associations has had a direct influence on their work.

Due to the thematic study, although the authors in question are different in race, religion, region, language and culture, they write short stories concerned with similar issues to be found in their societies, but with different perspectives due to the condition of their national and regional history, politics, religion, and culture. These issues have been discussed in detail from Chapter Three to Chapter Six.

In Chapter Three, this study manifests the authors' similar concern with the way national and local histories had been documented and the operation of power by the rulers and government authorities during their countries' political crises, such as during the Japanese invasion during the 1941-1945 and later communist expansion. In addition, the authors also portray the relationship between the coloniser and colonised through the use of fictional figures and folktales. This study finds that the short stories on the theme of the Japanese occupation of Malaya and Thailand reveal that the Thai and Malay in general, and the authors in particular, shared the same attitude of hatred for the brutality displayed by the Japanese troops. However, the degree of their hatred to Japanese soldiers' brutality during the war had a slight difference. In the Thai short

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[1] In the 1940s, the Malay ethnic group in the five border provinces of the south used to request the Thai government to recognise and allow their Malay language to be taught in addition to the national language.

story, they mistreat the Javanese prisoners and not the local Thai who technically were the allies of the Japanese. Whereas, in the Malaysian short stories the Malay villagers who suffer first-hand from the Japanese army's brutality.

In contrast, during the later communist expansion and government suppression of communist troops, Thai and Malay authors had different attitudes towards government operations to abolish the communist troops. Malay authors supported the Malay government in suppressing the communist troops due to their racial prejudices and religious concerns. The Malays considered the communists, who were mainly ethnic Chinese, as 'foreigners' not Malaysians. These people aimed to occupy Malay land and communist ideology conflicted with Islam. Therefore, the Malay government operation to eradicate communist troops was regarded as an act of protection of Malay rights and Islam. On the other hand, Thai authors opposed the overt display of power by the government authorities in operations to eradicate suspected communists. They did not see the communist troops as foreigners but as their fellow countrymen whose political ideology differed from that of the government. However, these authors were neither communist sympathisers nor government supporters. They distanced themselves from appearing sympathetic to the government because at that time the government's abuse of power was apparent all over the country and many of their victims were innocent villagers. Religion was not the authors' tool to authorise their government to suppress communists.

With Malaysia being a former British colony, Malay authors present the British as both master and hypocrite. The Malays, on the other hand, are depicted as servants whose dignity needs to be restored. In Thailand, authors present the government authorities as both the coloniser and oppressor who exploits their power to oppress their own people. Similarly, both Thai and Malay authors perceive and condemn politicians as hypocritical and corrupt people who exploit their position for their own wealth. The authors' attack on this misuse of power by their rulers and corrupt politicians suggests the social reality that corruption and power abuse represent some of the darker aspects of their countries' social ills.

In Chapter Four, the authors reveal the way their people address their religions and indigenous beliefs. This chapter displays similar attitudes in how Thai and Malay authors regard the situation of faith in religion amongst their people. The administration of superstitious practises by Buddhist monks for rich gifts of all kinds suggests that materialism has invaded religious institutions and undermined the

morality and responsibility of the monks towards their religion. This however is not a new nor unique problem. In Thai history, monks always performed superstitious practises, such as giving out charms, amulets for soldiers, blessing the troops and predicting the future. This behaviour is actually forbidden in the Pali canon but usually tolerated in Thai society. This free service was considered as an act of merit. Today, however, since the blooming of capitalism/materialism in Thai society, Monks perform these rituals only for financial gain. Many respected monks even sell the statues of Lord Buddha for money.

Similarly, this unpleasant situation also occurs in Malay societies where Islamic leaders enjoy wealth and good reputation whilst ignoring guiding Muslims to the truth of Islamic teachings. Muslim children who have converted to other religions also exhibit a decrease of faith in religion as a result of lacking religious knowledge provided by their parents. In contrast, Thai authors do not concern themselves with the conversion of Buddhist adolescents to other religions because there is no perception of this conversion being regarded as a sin. Rather it is considered as an individual's right. This different viewpoint depends on the difference of religious teachings and an author's concerns. For example, Islam does not distinguish the secular from the religious world. It is all Muslims' duty to understand and respect both spheres as one. Moreover, the concept of brotherhood and sisterhood in Islam itself leads Muslims to be seen as communal societies. In contrast, many Thai Buddhists are likely to separate the religious world from the secular one.

Regarding local beliefs, both Thai and Malay authors expose the fact that the beliefs of the Buddhist Thais and Malay Muslims are rooted within their respective societies and would be difficult to eradicate from people's worldview. The authors demonstrate that both Thais and Malays still believe in and practise superstition in parallel to their primary religions—Buddhism and Islam—because they believe that some superstitious beliefs are not completely irrational and do not harm people's lives. Instead some of them, such as the belief in tree spirit among the Buddhist Thais, has helped to protect the natural environment. However, it is unavoidable that since materialism, greed and capitalism have come to dominate people's lives, local beliefs are decreasing and the slow degradation of these beliefs has harmed the natural environment, a point which is amply illustrated in Kanokphong Songsomphan's writings.

Similarly, both Thai and Malay authors do not overtly condemn people who believe in superstition. However, the Thai author, Phaithuun Thanyaa, does condemn animistic practitioners as people who exploit such beliefs to earn a living. In contrast, the Malay author, Azizi Haji Abdullah, admires the strong sense of responsibility displayed by Malay animistic practitioners, which suggests that Azizi is not against superstitious beliefs. Importantly, although both Thai and Malay authors do not strongly oppose local beliefs, they remind people not to be blinded by these beliefs to the extent that that they overlook the reality of the real world. Interestingly, only Kanokphong Songsomphan appreciates the value of the local belief in the tree spirits as a means of preventing deforestation, and he sees the degradation of such beliefs as a sign of impending danger for the natural environment.

In Chapter Five, this study confirms that Thailand and Malaysia are countries of racial diversity and, as a result, racial prejudice exist. The construction of 'us' and the 'other' identities is based on race, religion, culture, language and geography. The significance is that ethnic identities provide a sense of belonging to people of one community, race, religion, and culture. It is also a fact that colonisation makes the division of both the 'us' group and the 'other' clearer. Noticeably, the construction of ethnic identities is not always fixed but is a dynamic one, where each separate ethnic group has both a collective and individual identity. In terms of the collective identity of people in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia, this study suggests that the authors also accept the identities of their people as perceived by their fellow countrymen outside the region. They criticise some negative identities of their people as a source of destruction and only admire the positive identities that should be preserved. The distinctive characteristic of the Malaysian short story is that the authors provide evidence that the racial tie between the Malaysian Malays and the Malays in southern Thailand still exists, although it is not strong, because they have been long separated from one another by political geography. However, the sense of belonging as one race cannot be separated by political geography. There are also signs that the Malays of both countries are beginning to perceive each other as the 'other'.

The similarity is that both Thais and Malays are racially prejudiced towards the Chinese because of their economic success. The ethnic Chinese and Indians in Thailand and Malaysia are portrayed as greedy and hypocritical businessmen. Such negative images have stimulated a sense of anger among readers towards these ethnic groups and perpetuated racial conflict within their societies. However, the Thais'

racial prejudice towards the ethnic Chinese in Thailand is weaker than those of the Malaysian Malays towards the Chinese in Malaysia because, by observing the same religion of Buddhism with the majority Thais, most ethnic Chinese in Thailand have been assimilated into the mainstream of Thai Buddhism. Religion is not in a barrier in stopping them becoming a part of the mainstream Thai culture. In contrast, Malaysian Chinese and Indians and Malay descendents in southern Thailand are unable to fully assimilate and integrate into their mainstream national cultures due to differences in religion and culture. They want and are able to maintain their identities in their religion, culture and language, all of which become indicators in the construction of their ethnic identities as 'us' and as the 'others' groups by their majority countrymen. In the case of Thailand, the Malay separatist movement in the south confirms that the political struggle and racial prejudice between Buddhist Thais and ethnic Malays is very much apparent.

An overall view is that ethnic conflict can be interpreted as the failure of the government policies of social assimilation and integration, as well as the implantation of mutual understanding of and respect for religious and cultural differences. Thus, ethnic identities are socially constructed, politically-bound and racially-biased.

In Chapter Six, this study discovers that the Thai and Malay authors are also aware of the unequal relationship between men and women under patriarchy, and that women's suffering from sexual abuse occurs in the form of rape, labour-selling as prostitutes, and polygamy. All authors do not blame the patriarchy but the men who fail to perform their duties as leader and protector of women as assumed by patriarchal ideology. With regard to the issue of rape, two types of rape—verbal rape and physical rape—are presented by Thai authors. In contrast, Malay authors do not write about rape but about premarital sex and adultery. Therefore, sexual violence and sexual misconduct are seen as social problems in both Thai and Malay societies. The difference is that the Thais do not regard premarital sex as a sin but as an act of transgression of social value. In contrast, premarital sex is a sin in Islam and those who practise it are condemned on the basis of religion. The short stories on the issue of premarital sex suggest that both Thai and Malay societies do not accept the practice of sex outside marriage both in terms of religion and social values.

With respect to prostitution, the authors reveal that materialism is the main issue that has led both Thai and Malay women into the sex trade. Thai authors such as Phaithuun Thanyaa reveal the decadence of the parents' morality in selling their

daughters into prostitutes and he also comments that many women work as prostitutes voluntarily. Works on the issue of Thai prostitutes, to some extent, prove the image of the country as a country of sex tourism, and southern Thailand is one of sex centres of Thailand. Distinctively, works on prostitution by Malay authors do not show sympathy for prostitutes. This can be understood from an Islamic perspective in which prostitutes are classified as sinners and sympathy must not be given. In addition, most prostitutes in Malay texts are not sold by their parents but rather are voluntarily workers. Their excuse for becoming prostitutes is one of poverty which is an unjustifiable reason.

Regarding the issue of polygamy, as Islam allows men to practise polygamy within certain boundaries, Malay authors do not condemn the system but observe that some men exploit it for sexual gratification. In Thailand, polygamy is illegal but many men still practise it because society has long given the privilege to men to be promiscuous. To solve the problems of women's suffering from polygamy, the Thai author, Phaithuun Thanyaa, encourages women to liberate themselves from their polygamous husband by divorcing them and dismantling the social values that subordinate women.

No less important is that Malay authors use women only as minor characters in the larger condemnation of men's sexual misconduct, rather than of the inner suffering of women. However, by doing so, they attack men's exploitation of women for their sexual satisfaction such as fornication and adultery. In other words, their male protagonists become a voice for women, revealing their suffering caused by men. Similarly, both Thai and Malay male authors reject sexual immorality in the life of their male protagonists. Indeed all four male authors in this study perceive that the abuse of and domestic violence against women cannot be stopped without the cooperation, support and participation of both men and women. In addition, this chapter has also demonstrated relations between men and women in Thai and Malay societies according to social, cultural and religious conditions. It can also be said that the construction of women in Thai and Malay short stories is not only based on gender bias but also on religion. In short, a thematic study on the themes of history, politics, religion, local beliefs, ethnic identity and gender relations exposes the problems of Thailand and Malaysia in general, and of southern Thailand and northern Malaysia, in particular.

Besides being thematic, this study elucidates that oral narrative tradition is another distinctive feature of modern Thai and Malay short stories. This study has found that folktales and classical literary texts are the authors' source of writing, and that literary devices of oral narrative form such as repetition and parallelism influence their writing style. Distinctively, only the Malay authors make use of their folktales as sources of inspiration to form the background to the stories, to comment on the present-day political situation, to satirise, and to give moral lessons to some corrupt politicians. In addition, their new interpretation of oral tales and classical written texts reveals the authors' opposition to traditional interpretation of the texts. Some folktales the Malay authors allude to are used to remind their readers, and emphasise the mistakes and unworthy action of the rulers in the past so that the same mistake will not be repeated. In contrast, Thai authors do not use oral tales to comment on or highlight the present-day political situation. They use ordinary people to directly attack the abuses of power by the government authorities. The different techniques used by the authors of the two countries suggest that Thai authors tend to use Western techniques, whereas many Malay authors are still attach to an oral tradition. However, they make use of narrative techniques of story-telling, of repetition and parallelism to emphasise the themes and conflicts within the narratives.

Like oral narrative tradition, regional elements such as dialects, variations-names of objects, places, customs, beliefs and practises are also used to highlight images of the regions and their people, and to enhance the themes and conflicts of the narratives. Local elements are presented through the title of the texts, the characters' perceptions and their actions. In addition, some elements such as local beliefs as discussed in Chapter Four are used to reinforce negative images of the characters and to comment on present-day people, social values and the local practises of their indigenous beliefs. Importantly, local elements by themselves also give identity to the writers as regional authors.

Besides regional elements, didacticism is another interesting feature of oral narrative tradition found in the short stories. The didactic element is illustrated through the actions and thoughts of the characters or from the narrative tone and traditional sayings. Significantly, didacticism asserts the authors' commitment to their society, religion and literary tradition.

This study asserts the fact that the region has a strong influence on the writings of the Thai and Malay writers. The use of regional elements and problems in their writing display the authors' sensibilities and concerns for their home region. However, the themes are not limited to regional or local subjects, but cover national ones as well. It is because these authors produce their work for the whole nation and it should be seen in the context of national literature. The writers themselves are recognised within their societies as national and regional authors. Their works, which deal with local problems, are their main tool in highlighting local issues for readers outside their home region, so that these readers can recognise the similarities and differences with their own problems. The oral narrative tradition that they benefit from suggests that Thai and Malay authors share the same literary traditions within South East Asian literature and of Thailand and Malaysia, in particular.

Appendices

Appendix I: A Brief Survey of Thai and Malaysian Short Stories

> "The modern short story, wherever it may be found, is a highly popular and flexible genre of prose fiction. Its development from, and affinities with, earlier forms of the prose fiction medium are often discernible. These relationships create the hybrid nature of the genre: the modern short story both preserves and can recall its mixed origins. Thus it eludes generic definition; an individual story may reveal its kinship with various forebears and these diffuse associations permit the genre's ready acceptance and assimilation into the spectrum of South East Asian literary forms.
>
> Jeremy H.C.S. Davidson (1982:1)

What Davidson refers to here is characteristic of South East Asian short stories formed from a combination of South East Asian traditional literature and an adaptation of Western writing styles. Thai and Malaysian short stories both fall into this category, combining the oral tradition of the 'tale' with Western literary trends of social realism. The content of the short stories include local issues, such as politics, economics, society and culture and have been popular with readers from their first appearance on the Thai and Malaysian literary scenes in 1874 and 1920 respectively. The nature of South East Asian short stories can be traced from the shift of the term 'short story', the literary sources of writing, the introduction of printing technology and the growth of journalism, and the development of the genre in a socio-political context.

Definition of the short story

The early terminology 'short story' was used loosely both in Thai and Malay. The term first used in Thailand was *nithaan* (นิทาน, tale) which covered all kinds of tales, fables and fictional stories. This term was then more clearly used when the first Thai magazine *Darunowat* (ดรุโณวาท, 'Advice to Young Men') published a story entitled *Nithaan patyuban* (นิทานปัตยุบัน, 'A Tale of the Present Time') in 1874 (Wibha 1975:21). The word *patyuban*, meaning 'present time', was used to signify a halfway stage between the traditional 'tale' and an adaptation of Western prose narrative in which oral elements such as proverb and allegory were still used together with the Western realistic short story form. The characters, setting and dialogue are more

realistic. The contents of the stories were driven by writers' concerns over contemporary issues such as politics, economics and religion. Moving to contemporary times, the term used in Thai short stories now is *reuang san* (เรื่องสั้น, short story) which derives from the combination of the two words *reuang* meaning 'story' and *san* meaning 'short'.

In Malay the early term referring to the short story was *cerita*, a traditional word for story used also for tales and fables. In 1926, Za'aba (1926:4 quoted in Hashim 1975:14) explained the early form of the short story with reference to the term *'cerita'* as "stories which can serve as lessons, examples, models and the like, not fairy-tales or fantasies which are unacceptable to the minds of the people of today". In 1939, Muhammad Arifin Ishak (1939:219 quoted in ibid.) further stated that "We do not need war stories, princes, and gods who die and are reborn and other superstitious stories. What we need is stories that contain examples to guide people's life in the present time". Two years later, Abdul Kadir Sheikh (1941:9 quoted in ibid.) went on to argue that "Stories which are written in Malay language on the Malay peninsular of today can be said to have been quite developed and in the process of development". Hashim summarises that the three quotations above prove that Malay society and writers during the years 1920-1941 did not know what the short story was. Even though they made an attempt to clarify the term of their new form of writing, which was different from that of the traditional tale, the terms that they were familiar with at that time were *cerita* rather than *cetera*, *kesah* or *hikayat*, all of which mean 'story' and are included in Malay traditional literature. Both Hashim and Maimunah (1987:27) state that the short story was (and still is) used as a didactic tool to give readers moral guidance, but most importantly to call for the social and economic reform of the Malays, whose conditions at that time were backward compared to those of the Chinese Malaysians.

In Malay the term used for short story changed from *'cerita'* (story) to *cerita pendek* (short story) and then to *cerpen*, which is an acronym from the word *cerita* meaning 'story' and *pendek* meaning 'short'. It is to be noted that the terms used in Thai and Malay are similar to the English word 'short story'. The fact that this term is

translated from the English word 'short story', implying the shortness of the genre, shows the short story can be argued to be of Western origin.[1]

Sources of inspiration for local adaptation

The sources of Thai and Malaysian short stories, as in other South East Asian countries, derive firstly from the religious canon, secondly from foreign tales and thirdly from local tales. The first sources are deeply rooted in Buddhist texts such as the *Jatakas*, and *Pancatantra* tales, and in Hindu works such as the *Hitopadesa*, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* (Wibha 1975:19-22). In Malaysia when the Malays converted to Islam, Islamic sources such as the tales of their prophets *Kisah al-Anbia* and other heroes were brought in to their writing to promote the religion (Ismail 1982:115-37). Importantly, the traditional sources of content for the development of both Thai and Malay short stories are oral folktales, myths, legends, history and proverbs, all of which were used as a tool to give moral lessons and to entertain their audiences. The oral tradition shaped both early modern Thai and Malaysian short stories, giving them their didactic and humorous characteristics. As Muhammad Haji Salleh (1987:17-8) points out:

> "Malaysian literature has been in transition from the oral to the typographic for almost a century now. The phase is not slow, it benefits from comfortable length of time when the writers could choose from the different traditions and create a work of art that they consider will reflect their times and in the medium of their literary traditions".

What Muhammad says here of the importance of the Malay literary tradition applies similarly to Thailand and implies a development of modern Malay writing from oral to written traditions.

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[1]Phitthaya Wongkun, a Thai literary academic, argues that the term *reuang san* was not translated directly from English but appeared when a so-called novelette was introduced into Thai literary scene and the publisher wanted to distinguished the size and length of the short story from the novelette (Phitthaya 1990:75).

The trend of using classical texts and folktales as the sources of modern Thai and Malay short stories by contemporary writers continues and is to be found in many pieces of work written after the Second World War.[2]

It is clear that traditional literatures of both written and oral texts are one of the consistent and outstanding sources of modern Thai and Malaysian short stories. The reason, as identified by Muhammad Haji Salleh (1987:20), is that the modern writer is a member of two literary traditions—the oral and the typographic.

Narrative style and traditional influence

Apart from traditional texts as sources of inspiration, it is noteworthy that the tradition of storytelling performed by a storyteller and puppeteer also has an influence on the writing style of many modern Thai and Malaysian writers. Muhammad Haji Salleh (1987:20) identifies that modern Malay writers narrate their stories to the reader by imitating the formulaic forms of presentation of the *penglipur lara*. They also make use of the *mentera* (magic) language recited by the *Pawang* (shaman) to create action. In this context, Muhammad also elucidates that, "The voice of the author is eloquently heard, not as one writing but as a narrator speaking his story" (ibid.). In this context, Muhammad says that "This voice is that of an omniscient writer who creates the setting, lays down the plot, colours the characters and arranges all these actions through his language. Like the Pawang (Shaman) who recites his mentera, so the author directs the thoughts of his characters(and consequently his readers) by leading them towards a certain conclusion in events or ideas" (ibid.). Thailand is no exception, as it also has an important oral culture bound in tradition. Moreover, Pratt notes that: "Orality can be counted as one of the important factors behind the short story in the modern literatures of many Third World nations and

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[2] For example, Sidaoreuang, a Thai woman writer, uses characters from the classical Thai text the *Ramakien* in her short stories called *Chut Chao Yak* ('The Demons'). In these stories Sidaoreuang gives a new interpretation of the characters and contents. For further details see Harrison (1995). In Malaysia, Fatimah Busu, a Malay woman writer, is inspired by the Malay legend *Puteri Gunung Ledang* ('The Story of Princess Gunung Ledang') to write the short story *Mahar Asmara* ('Gift of Love').

peoples, where, not incidentally, it is taken much more seriously as an art form than it is elsewhere" (Pratt 1994:108).

The role of printing technology, journalism and modern education in the inception of the short story

The birth of Thai and Malaysian short stories was associated with the advent of printing technology, the growth of journalism and the introduction of modern education. What will be noted here are the similarities and differences of the three elements in the contribution of the Thai and Malaysian short stories as a new form of writing.

Thai and Malay press histories were close to those of the Christian missionaries who introduced printing technology to produce Christian texts. By contrast however, Thai and Malay intellectuals made used of it to spread their respective national religions of Buddhism and Islam. Men of letters who took part in the press business in its early phase were kings, princes, the Western-educated elite and later, the educated middle classes.

In Malaysia printing technology was first set up in Singapore by Christian missionaries to circulate religious teachings, of which their first periodical was *Pungutan Segala Remah Pungatauan* ('The Malay Gleanen') published in 1852 (W. Roff 1972:62). By contrast to Thailand it seems likely that, since the Malays were under Western influence, the royal family and the Malay elite disappeared from literary activity. Instead, Roff notes that it was the Indian-Muslims or the *Jawi Peranakan*[3], not the Malays, who played a significant role in the development of Malay literature and were the first local people to own and run presses.

In the early twentieth century, Kelantan also established printing houses where the journals *Al-Imam* ('The Priest') and *Pengasuh* ('Educator') were produced. These journals not only provided teaching materials, but also significantly fuelled debate between readers and authors, especially on Islamic issues. The former was a forum for the Islamic Avant-garde and the latter for the Islamic conservative *Ulamas*.

In this period, authors and readers were Islamic educated in the Middle East (Persia and Turkey) and also from the Malay Islamic school. The move in ownership

[3] The Muslims of Indian-Malay descendants

of the printing press from Indian-Muslims to the Malays appeared only in the 1930s with the birth of *Warta Malaya* (Malayan News) and *Utusan Melayu* ('Malay Courier') led by Onn (later Datuk) bin Jaafar and Abdul Rahim Kajai. They were the key Malays in the print media who paid attention to local social problems and the political situation of their time (Roff 1972:9).

The growth of journalism and the developing characteristics of the short story were inter-related as newspapers and magazines became the forum for authors to publish their work. The close connection between the short story and journalism was seen most clearly in the case of Malaysia where, in the 1930s, the short story became known as *sastera persuratkhabaran*, or the literature of journalism, since most appeared in newspapers and were written by journalists (Hashim 1975:189) in a journalistic style. As A. Samad Ismail (1992:56) observes, *sastera persuratkhabaran* was an improvisation of the political journalist, a creature spawned by the increasingly critical phase of the independence struggle. Such journalist-authors were highly politically conscious and worked as a tool for social criticism and to implant the concept of nationalism.

Equally important to printing technology and journalism in the creation of Thai and Malay short stories was Western education. Although the only autonomous country in the region, Thailand could not ignore the West and Western education became a part of its project to modernise itself and place it on a par with Western "civilisation". King Chulalongkorn therefore sent royal children and members of the aristocracy to be educated in Europe and America. These young elite men then brought back Western cultural influences and literature into Thai society. They were the first authors who translated and adapted Western fiction for Thai readers and wrote their own short stories for a readership also from an elite Western-educated background.

The reign of King Prajadhipok (r.1925-1935) marked a shift in the class origin of writers and increased the literacy rates and reading public as a result of expanding public education. The newly educated middle-class emerged as professional journalists and short story writers, such as Si Burapha, Maalai Chuuphinit and Song Thayphaasit. Although their short stories revolved around typical themes of love, arranged marriage and value changes, their works showed a move from the mythical world to the human world and a new trend of realism (see Mattani 1988 and Phaithuun 1998:9-24).

The experience of Thailand is in contrast to that of Malaysia in that Western education was introduced into the country under British colonial rule. Maimunah's study on the historical perspective of modern Malay literature (1987:12,20) elucidates that two types of school were set up in colonial Malaysia, one teaching English literature and British history in English; and other Sultan Idris Training College (SITC) teaching Malay language, literature, culture and vocational subjects. The latter contributed greatly to the inception of modern Malay fiction, focusing as it did on the translation of Western literature as a result of the transfer of the Malay Translation Bureau from Kuala Lumpur in the school. Since most authors produced by this school were from peasant backgrounds, they wrote about rural life as opposed to high society. Thus, Ismail Hussein (1974:5-8) characterises modern Malaysian literature as anti-feudal, written by the younger generation in a young country.[4]

The development of the Thai and Malaysian short stories in a socio-political context

A close link can be seen to exist between the emergence of the Thai and Malaysian short story and the socio-political concerns of the countries. From their first appearance until today, Thai and Malaysian short stories have developed along with the socio-political situation of the countries because their authors were always sensitive and responsive to the political environment around them and inscribed it into their work. As a result, their works have become an instrument for social and political purposes, reflecting and providing the outlook, thoughts and emotions of the authors. In addition, Thai and Malaysian short stories can hardly be free from political forces in which the authors cannot release themselves from government censorship. By those means, political force has interrupted or encouraged the increase or decrease of Thai and Malaysian short stories. With reference to these matters of fact, evidence can be examined from the Thai and Malaysian short stories produced during certain political crises or people's struggle for freedom. Examples include the Thai and Malaysian

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[4] By contrast, the Malay elite did not participate in writing activities because "throughout the twentieth century Western educated elite were the most inactive and passive group in cultural and social problems of the country" (Ismail 1987:8). They were mainly trained in administrative affairs. Moreover, it is known that the Malay elite of those days was focused on Western values.

short stories during the Japanese invasion of South East Asia (1942-1945) and the short stories of the widespread dissemination of Communism in South East Asia after the Second World War.

During the Japanese occupation of Malaysia (Malaya) and its control over Thailand, the socio-political phenomenon within each country had an impact on the growth of short stories. Among the significant events were censorship from the local and the Japanese governments on local writing, the decrease in the popularity of the genre, the closing down of publishers, and changes in themes and styles of writing. All of these events interplayed with each other.

The crucial difference in the situation with regard to censorship and the role of the short story during the Japanese intervention lay in the fact that the Thai censorship board was set up by the Thai government, not by the Japanese, and Thai writers did not produce short stories to propagate the Japanese ideology of *Asia for Asia* as in Malaysia. Instead, some Thai writers wrote against Western and Japanese colonialism in South East Asia (see Sathien 1982:211). This clearly shows that Thai writers did not ignore the political situation of the region. The significance of this is that while some Malaysian writers implicitly used their short stories to criticise the Japanese and to be against Western colonialism, Thai writers expressed their anti-colonial feelings but wrote to fight for national democracy from the internal dictatorship of Phibun.[5]

The persistence of political power and its impact upon the production of short stories continued to exist in the short stories produced after the Second World War, especially following the triumph of Communism in China in 1949 led by Mao Tse-Tung.[6] Thailand and Malaysia shared some historical events that influenced their short stories' development. These were the issues of political struggle, communist insurrection and the influence of the western literary concept of 'art for the people' or *wannakam pheua chiiwit* (วรรณกรรมเพื่อชีวิต) and *seni untuk masyarakat* in Thai and Malay respectively. These factors influenced the thoughts of Thai and Malaysian writers and the themes of the short stories they created.

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[5] He was a right wing leader who came to power through a coup d'etat, and ruled in 1938-1944 and 1948-1957. He reformed Thai culture, simplified language, promoted nationalism, and proclaimed censorship against writers who opposed his policies. For more details about the short stories produced to oppose and satirise his policy see Manas (1982:69) and details about the writing situation in Malaysia during the Japanese Occupation read Arena Wati (1968:7-27).

[6] For further details see Anderson (1985:16-20).

The Thai and Malaysian Short Stories of the Post-Second World War (1945-1957)

From the point of view of the political struggle, the Thai and Malaysian writers fought with different powers and for different purpose. According to Sathien(1982:249), between 1945 and 1947 Pridi Phanomyong dominated Thai politics.[7] Pridi abolished the Communism Act 1933 and set up a diplomatic relation with the socialist countries such as Russia and China. His policy, therefore, gave an opportunity for the socialist writers to freely translate the socialist works of China, France and Russia into Thai market. Besides, this period was illuminated with the western literary concept of 'art for the people'. It stimulated the avant-garde writers of *Chomrom nakpraphan* ('Writers Club'), which was formed in 1950, to be more critical and responsible for their nation. The key writers were Si Burapha, Saynii Saowaphong, Asani Pholajan, and later Jit Phumisak. Their works revealed the social class inequities and political injustices. Unfortunately, the freedom of expression was interrupted by the return of Phibuun into power in 1947–1957. Since then socialist writings were under control and some of them were imprisoned, such as Si Burapha and Suphaa Sirimanon, and accused of being communists and of undermining national democracy (Reunruthai 1998:41). The government accusation of those writers came because at that time Thailand was an American ally in the suppression of the communist insurrection in Thailand in particular and in South East Asia in general.

Malaysian short stories, on the other hand, were affected by two major historical events. One was the British proposal of the Malay Union in 1946[8] and the

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[7] He became the Prime Minister in March 24, 1946, to August 31, 1946 (Charnwit 1995: 387).
[8] The British proposal of the Malay Union was introduced in 1946, and which, among other things, would have dispossessed the sultans of their sovereignty by transferring it to the British Crown. Citizenship was to be made available to all, irrespective of ethnic group. Malay opposition to the Malay Union was so great that it was revoked and replaced with the Federation of Malaya of 1948 which, among other things retained the sovereignty of the sultans and made citizenship available only after fifteen years of residence. The event was significant in that it underlined the political strength of Malay solidarity in respect to their position and identity (Andaya and Andaya 2001:34).

other was the Emergency event between 1948 and 1960.[9] No less important was the growth of new publications, journalists and new professional writers from various fields—teachers, politicians, clerks, and police, which was centered in Singapore. Therefore the themes of nationalism and the concern about the socio-politics of the Malays were writers inspiration.

By contrast to Thailand, the adaptation of 'art for the people' (*seni untuk masyarakat*) in Malaysia was so great that it became the yardstick of the modern Malaysian short story and aspiration for independence. This concept was promoted by the literary group *Angkatan Saterawan 50* or *Asas 50* ('The Generation' 50'), which was formed in 1950 and led by Keris Mas. Nevertheless, in 1954 this concept was challenged by the concept of 'art for art's sake' (*seni untuk seni*) which was promoted by Hamzah, a former member of Asas 50. Hamzah's preference for *seni untuk seni*, according to Osman came at an improper time when the Malays were struggling for independence, as well as there being a lack of press to disseminate such ideas. The idea therefore failed to win the hearts of the Malay society. On the other hand, the writers of *Asas' 50* had already dominated the Malay papers, which could spread their ideology to the wider public (Osman 1961:104).

By contrast to Thailand, the western concept of 'art for the people' and socialist writing came into Malaysia through the works of socialist Indonesian writers. It was remarkable that the short stories of the *Asas 50* were used not only to awaken the Malays from their ignorance of socio-economic backwardness, and political consciousness, but also to fight for independence. Therefore, Ungku Maimunah (1987:37) referred to the literature of the Asas 50 as the *literature of the underdogs*. Thai writers, on the other hand, used their works to call for social justice and political democracy from the dictator-prime minister Phibun.

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[9]The Emergency was the British response to the communist assassination of Europeans working on plantations. The British military took action to suppress the communists in Malaya. The Emergency Law empowered the government to arrest and detain without trial, so that by the end of 1948 a total of 1779 known communist sympathizers were held in detention, and hundred of others had been deported (ibid.: Andaya and Andaya).

Short stories of the Thai 'Dark Age' and Post Malaysian Independence (1958-onwards)

Since the year of 1958 to 1963, Thailand was run by the dictator Prime Minister Sarit Thanarat. His regime was referred to as the *Yuk meut thaang panyaa* (ยุคมืดทางปัญญา) ('the Dark Ages of Intellectual') and also *Yuk thamin* (ยุคทมิฬ) ('Dark Ages'), in which a rigid censorship was imposed, dozens of intellectual writers were imprisoned, jailed, and driven into exile, and writers preferred romantic stories over political criticism (Reunrethai 1998:52), which might put their lives at risk. As a result, many social engaged writers wrote about rural life instead. Among the significant writers were Lao Khamhom who wrote about the poverty of the northeasterners, and Ajin Panjaphan who wrote about the life of the mining workers of the southern Thailand. It could be said that their writing became an inspiration for contemporary writers. After the death of Sarit in 1963, the leadership passed to Thano'm Kitikhajo'n who held power between 1963 to 1973. Benedict Anderson (1985:19) identifies the period of Sarit and his successor Thano'm as the 'American Era' in modern Thai history.[10]

With reference to the short story, after the death of Sarit, the literary concept of 'art for the people', which was shown in the 1950s, reappeared in the hands of the intellectual university students in 1964.[11] In 1967, came the formation of literary groups by university students, which were active until 14 October 1973. Among the very influential groups were *Klum Phrajan siew* (กลุ่มพระจันทร์เสี้ยว) ('The Cresent Moon') of Thammasaat University students, the *Num naaw saaw suai* (หนุ่มเหน้าสาวสวย) ('The Young and Beautiful') of Silapakorn University, and *Klum Lo'm faang* (กลุ่มลอมฟาง) ('A Hay Stack') of Kasetsaat University. The leading writers of this period were Suchaat

[10] Thailand was developed through the Americanisation and gained financial support from the American government. It was a time that America had great influence on Thai politics, culture, social and economic development, both in urban and rural areas (For further details see Anderson 1985:19-32).

[11] Socialist works from Russia and the East Asia such as China were translated into Thai. The earlier socialist works of Si Burapha, Jit Phumisak, etc. were republished and widely circulated among university students, readers and short story writers (Reunruthai 2541:105-6).

Sawatsii, Surachai Janthimaatho'n, Withayako'n Chiengkuun, Nikhom Raaiyawa. These new groups of writers explored and brought western writing's style such as symbolism, surrealism, stream of consciousness as well as the theme of alienation into Thai short stories. Therefore this period was sometimes called *Yuk sawaeng haa* (ยุคแสวงหา) (The Era of Searching') (Suchaat 1998:83). It was said that the works of these new writers gave new glimpses of the Thai literary movement in themes and writing style and were called *Kleun luuk mai* (คลื่นลูกใหม่) ('The New Wave'). Popular themes included the criticism of social injustice, economic inequity and the backwardness of the university educational system (Suchaat 1998:83). However the most significant issues contributed by those writers, especially by Suchaat Sawatsii, who was an editor of the journal *Sangkhomsaat Parithat* ('Social Science Review'), from 1968 were government corruption, protest against the American bases in Thailand and protest against Japanese and American capitalism. The roles of these progressive writers had a strong influence on the students in the universities who formed the literary group named *Wannakam Pheua Chiiwit* (วรรณกรรมเพื่อชีวิต) ('literature for life') in early 1972.

On 14 October 1973, these university students together with academics and politicians took a leading role in toppling the dictators Thano'm Kittikhajo'n and Praphaat Jarusathien. "This historical event marked the great significant change in the history of Thai politics and had impact on Thai literature" (Reunruthai 1998:105) produced between October 14, 1973 and October 6, 1976 and was known as the blossoming of 'literature for life' and as one of extreme freedom. Short stories revealed the dark side of the society caused by the imbalance between rural and urban development. They reflected the life and the struggle of the villagers and working class people who were exploited and oppressed by their employers. Writers believed in social commitment and their short stories were used as a tool to criticize the society and politics of their times. Western modernism such as 'stream of consciousness', 'symbolism', and 'socialist realism' were practiced by leading writers such as Sathaapho'n Siisajjang, Sii Daoru'ang, Wisaa Khanthap, Winai Bunchuai, Assiri Thammachot and Wat Wanlayangkuun. Their works have been very influential for the young writers of the post October 1976 period up to present.

By contrast, after Malaysian independence, the writers of *Asas 50* became less popular. Nevertheless, their concept of *seni untuk masyarakat* was passed to and developed by the university-educated writers who appeared in the 1960s. They were Shahnon Ahmad, Kasim Ahmad, S. Othman Kelantan, Azizi haji Abdullah, Fatimah Busu and Anwar Ridhwan. These writers developed the Malaysian short stories of Asas 50 and experimented with western 'modernism' in their style of writing including such styles as 'social realism' and 'stream of consciousness' to increase their literary quality and make it more valuable and equivalent to the Western short story. It was significant here that Thailand and Malaysia from the 1960s onward were in the period of development. Therefore their short stories were concerned about the impact of rural development and urbanisation. As a result, the themes of their short stories reflected the backwardness of villagers, farmers and fishermen and the shortage of teachers in the remote villages caused by the imbalance of the urbanization. Not less important was the ethnic crisis in 1969 in Malaysia, which made the Malaysian writers became more conscious of their plural society and national integration.

Thai short stories after October 6, 1976 and Malaysian short stories of the 1970s onwards

The events of October 1976 changed the lives of many Thai short story writers. Some of them went into the jungle to join the Communist Party of Thailand to avoid arrest by the government. However, living in the jungle, their voices were still to be heard. Most of their short stories reflected their disappointment with the government. The representative writers were Wat Wanlayangkuun, Prasert Jandam, and Surachai Jantimathorn. Writers who did not join the Communist Party and lived in the city continued to produce short stories. Their works focused on the theme of humanism, which reflected the hardship of the poor. When the government changed its policy and granted amnesty to whoever joined the Communist Party, they came out from the jungle and some have continued their writing career up to present. Their works have been very influential on the young writers of today.

It is to be noted that it was the progressive movement since the late 1960's to 1970's brought significant change in literary trend and in historical studies. After the event of October 1976, Thai short story writers from the South paid attention to their region in which local cultures and problems became their sources of inspiration (Yurachat 254:176-80). By 1982, Thai historians were interested in local history and local myth, as opposed to national history. In 1989, therefore, the study of history from the bottom up was widespread in every part of Thailand to preserve and promote local cultures and ethnic identities as a part of national cultures. Prime Minister Chuan Leekphai announced 1994-1997 as Thai Cultural Promotion Years in a response to support the UNESCO promotion of 1986-1996 as the years of local cultural studies in every part of the world (Thida 1982:40-60, Thongchai 1995:99-120, and Seri 2000:38). Thus, regional affairs have been dominant themes in Thai short stories until now.

By contrast in Malaysia in the 1970s-1980s there was controversy concerning the concept of *sastera Islam* (Islamic literature) between Shahnon Ahmad and Kassim Ahmad in Malaysia. Therefore, short stories produced in these two decades were used to promote Islamic religion. This was a period of stronger emphasis on the return to Islamic roots as a source of Malay identity.

Conclusion

To sum up, Thai and Malaysian short stories have developed from their oral tradition through the adaptation of modern Western techniques and of the Marxist ideology of *'literature for the people'* or *'committed literature'*, as a call for economic and social justice. It is also to be noted that even though Thailand and Malaysia brought the Western concept of Marxist ideology into their literature, this ideology was not adopted into the mainstream politics of the two countries (Harrison 2000:43). For example, in two recent significant Thai events—the student uprisings of October 1973 and the crackdown of student movement in 1976—short stories with a socialist leaning were used to ask for social justice from dictatorial government, not for changing the political ideology of democracy to support for socialism in Thailand during that period, i.e. Social Action Party, Social Democrat Party. In Malaysia, short

stories of socialist leaning were used to reflect the poverty of the masses and to criticise irresponsible politicians. These short stories have developed in relation to the transition of the internal political and social changes of the time.

Appendix II: List of the Short Stories of this Study

1: The short stories of Phaithuun Thanyaa

Ko' ko'ng saai (ก่อกองทราย, Building Sand Castle) Patumtanee: Nakorn Publishing House, 1996.

1. *Khon bon saphaan* (คนบนสะพาน, 'People on the Bridge')
2. *Khon to' nok* (คนต่อนก, 'A Bird Trapper')
3. *Pheuan bun* (เพื่อนบุญย์, 'Friend of Merit')
4. *Kheu chiiwit lae leuat neua* (คือชีวิตและเลือดเนื้อ, 'It Is Life, Blood and Flesh')
5. *Ubaat* (อุบาทว์, 'Curse')
6. *Kham phayaako'n* (คำพยากรณ์, 'The Prophecy')
7. *Nok khao fai* (นกเขาไฟ, ' A Fire Dove')

Thanon nii klap baan (ถนนนี้กลับบ้าน, This Road leads to Home) Patumtanee: Nakorn Publishing House, 1991.

8. *Pratuu baan thi pit wai* (ประตูบานที่ปิดไว้, 'The Closed Door')
9. *Sii Naang* (สีนาง, 'The Story of Sii Naang')

Boi bin pai jaak waiyao (โบยบินไปจากวัยเยาว์, Flying Away from Youth). Patumtanee: Nakorn Publishing House, 1996.

10. *Ho'ng maailek haa....lae phuuying mii fan sii tho'ng* (ห้องหมายเลขห้า...และผู้หญิงมีฟันสีทอง, 'The Room Number Five...and a Woman with Giled Teeth')

Tuklaakhom (ตุลาคม, October) Patumtanee: Nakorn Publishing House, 1996.

11. *Kaanmaa yeuan kho'ng ratthabaan* (การมาเยือนของรัฐบาล, 'A Visit of the Government')
12. *Phaendin kho'ng khao* (แผ่นดินของเขา, 'Their Land')

13. *Nai thii saathaarana lae thuukto'ng taam kutmaai* (ในที่สาธารณะและถูกต้องตามกฎหมาย, 'In the Public and Legitimacy')

14. *Luuk chaai khon chawaa* (ลูกชายคนชวา, 'The Son of a Javanese')

Doe withii kho'ng rao eng (โดยวิธีของเราเอง, In Our Own Way) Patumtanee: Nakorn Publishing House, 2002.

15. *Yiisip khon nai ho'ng noi* (ยี่สิบคนในห้องน้อย, 'Twenty Pupils in a Little Classroom')

16. *Mae maai haeng Phonsai* (แม่ม่ายแห่งโพนไซ, 'The Widow of Phonsai')

2: The short stories of Kanokphong Songsomphan

Saphaan khaat (สะพานขาด, The Broken Bridge) Patumtanee: Nakorn Publishing House 1996.

17. *Saphaan khaat* (สะพานขาด, 'The Broken Bridge')

18. *Nai huang naam kwaang* (ในห้วงน้ำกว้าง, 'In the Wide Tide')

Khon bai lieng diew (คนใบเลี้ยงเดี่ยว, Individual) Patumtanee: Nakorn Publishing House, 1992.

19. *Nai paa leuk* (ในป่าลึก, In the Deep Jungle')

20. *Phii jaak phuukhao* (ผีจากภูเขา, 'Ghosts from the Mountain')

Phaendin eun (แผ่นดินอื่น, The Other Land) Patumtanee: Nakorn Publishing House, 1996.

21. *Bon thanon kolisiam* (บนถนนโคลีเซียม, 'On the Coliseum Street')

22. *Baan keut* (บ้านเกิด, 'Hometown')

23. *Maew haeng Bukit Kereso'* (แมวแห่งบูเก๊ะกรือซอ, 'The Cat from Bukit Kereso'')

24. *Baanh sing baan yaang keut kheun* (บางสิ่งบางอย่างเกิดขึ้น, 'Something Happens')

25. *Phae nai kubo* (แพะในกุโบร์, 'Goats in the Grave')

3: The short stories of S. Othman Kelantan

Beberapa Pembetulan (Several Corrections) Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka 1990.

26. *Tergerak di Sini* ('Aroused Herein')

27. *Pintu dan Jendela* ('Door and Window')

Ibu (Mother) Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann 1980.

28. *Perjuangan* ('The Fight')

Perkahwinan Rama-rama (The Butterflies' Wedding) Kuala Lumpur: Teks Publishing, 1984.

29. *Keputusan* ('Decision')

30. *Ustaz* ('Teacher')

Surat (Letters) Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1979.

31. *Keputusan* ('Decision')

32. *Malu* ('Ashamed')

33. *Pahlawan Buntung* ('A One-Legged Hero')

Cerpen-Cerpen S. Othman Kelantan (The Selected Short Stories of S. Othman Kelantan) Kota Bharu: Syarikat Dian Sdn. Berhad, 1970.

34. *Dedalu* ('Parasite')

35. *Putera Sang Siput* ('The Snail's Son') In *Akar* (Roots) 2(January-April 2001):17-21.

36. *Putera Si Luncai* ('The Si Luncai's Son'). In *Dewan Sastera* 26,3(March 1996):12-19.

4: The short stories of Azizi Haji Abdullah

Rindu Bonda (Missing Mother) Kuala Lumpur: Teks Publishing, 1980.

37. *Ayam Sabung* ('The Fighting Cocks')

38. *Jebat* ('Jebat')

Mardudah Selangor: Marwilis Publishing & Distributors SDN. BHD, 1987.

38. *Hajjul Fatawa Mardudah* ('The Story of Hajjul Fatawa Mardudah')

39. *Mayat dan Kerenda* ('The Corpse and Coffin')

Latifah Rabbaniah (The Selected Short Stories of 1967-74) Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1985.

40. *Baru Sekarang Dia Mengerti* ('Just Now He Realises')

41. *Manager Baru* ('A New Manager')

42. *Luwamah* ('Degrading')

Keakuan (Egoism) Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann, 1978.

43. *Salibnya Patah* ('His Cross Was Broken')

44. *Jahiliah Moden* ('Modern Barbarism')

45. *Yakjud dan Makjud* ('The Deceivers, Yakjud dan Makjud')

46. *Sami Napuh* ('A Monk named Napuh')

Songsang (Turn up side down') Kuala Lumpur: Teks Publishing SDN. BHD.: 1984.

47. *Satu Keputusan* ('A Decision')

48. *Majilis Yang Lesu* ('The Dying Party')

Istiqamah Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1989.

49. *Sial Akar Pecah Lima* ('The Roots of Misfortune')

50. *Tergelecek* ('Slippery')

Pertiwi (Motherland) Kuala Lumpur: Tek Publishing SDN. BHD., 1985.

51. *Pengampunana* ('Forgiveness')

52. *Ranjit Khur* ('The Story of Ranjit Khur')

53. *Tan Sri Tuah* ('Tan Sri Tuah') In *Dewan Sastera* 23,1(January 1993): 37-42, 66.

54. *Uban-uban Di Kepala* ('White Hairs on the Head') In *Dewan Sastera* 32,1(January 2002): 61-64.

55. *Siti Laemson* ('Siti Laemson') In *Dewan Sastera* 18,13(March 1988):10-16.

Illustrations

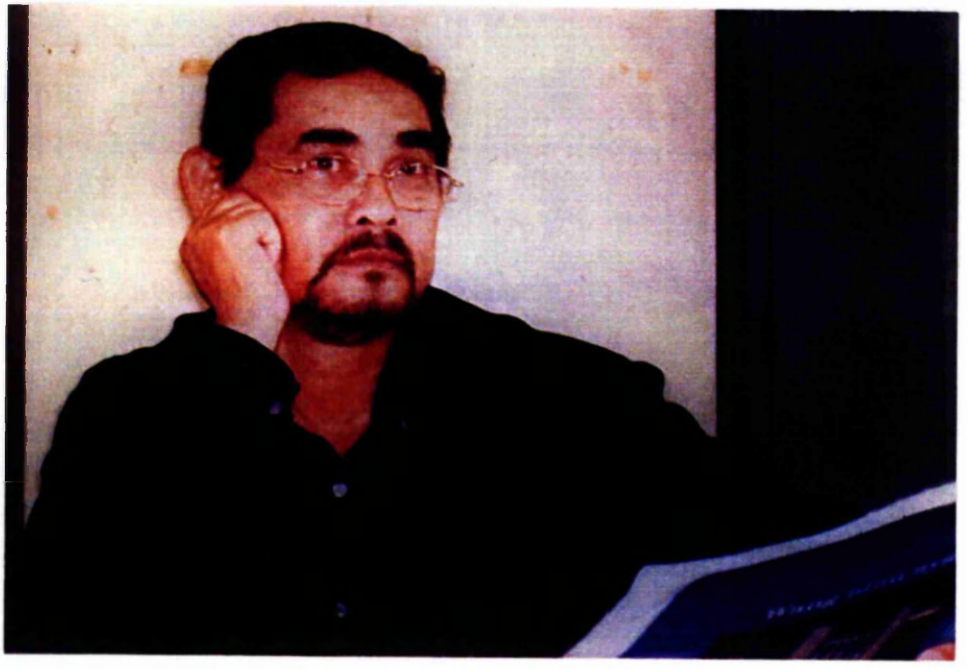
I: Southern Thai Authors

Phaithuun Thanyaa

Kanokphong Songsomphan

II: Northern Malaysian Authors

S. Othman Kelantan



Azizi Haji Abdullah

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