FIGURE 2: ASEAN-INDONESIA PRISONER'S DILEMMA MODEL

		INDONESIA	
		Contribute	*Free-ride*
ASEAN	*Contribute*	A 3,3	B 1,4
	Free-ride	C 4,1	D 2,2

The failure of ASEAN to effectively address transboundary haze could be explained through the Prisoner's Dilemma model. As far as the Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution is concerned, ASEAN is divided into two groupings. The first group consists of all states that have signed and *ratified* the Agreement, namely Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Mynanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The second group consists of Indonesia and the Philippines, who have signed but not ratified the Agreement. Although the cooperation of the Philippines is important, it is not as crucial as it plays a negligible role in the production of haze. In comparison, Indonesia's non-cooperation is vital a significant amount of haze originated from within Indonesian territory. This effectively pits ASEAN against Indonesia.

In the Prisoner's Dilemma model as depicted in Figure 2, cooperation refers to states that had ratified the Agreement and undertook steps to abide by the provisions of the Agreement. Free-riding is contextualized by behavior that is non-cooperative and leaves the burden of combating the haze threats to others. The outcome in quadrant A is optimal as it denotes cooperation by ASEAN and Indonesia. Cooperation by both parties enables Indonesia to draw on the resources of other ASEAN member states and the latter's resources could be *directly* utilized to prevent and fight fires at the point of origin and not on damage control and limitation within their political communities. Quadrant D is the worst possible outcome and represents a situation where ASEAN and Indonesia is averse to the risks and dangers posed by transboundary haze. This quadrant represents the pre-1997 environment where, besides a series of high level meetings, nothing substantive was implemented to address future catastrophe. It must be said that Indonesia and other ASEAN states did not have the inclination to spend resources and political capital on this issue as the damage wrought by previous haze occurrences were fleeting and limited in scope. Quadrant C is a likely outcome and common sense would indicate this to be the likely outcome. Forest fires and haze pollution effects Indonesia directly and its citizens bear the brunt of these dangers. It follows that Indonesia would lead efforts to mitigate and contain forest fires, paving the way for other ASEAN states to free-ride

and to bank on the efforts of the Indonesian government. Unfortunately, Quadrant B is the most accurate representation of the state of affairs between Indonesia and ASEAN. Rather than lead the charge to prevent a repeat of 1997 and to prevent forest fires, Indonesia had been dragging its foot at ratifying the Agreement. Conversely, it is the ASEAN states – especially Malaysia and Singapore – that had been more proactive. ASEAN states receive the lowest payoff (1) because it is paying the financial costs and political capital to negotiate the Agreement and implement other capacity-building and training measures but with little results. These efforts were not translated into effective results because without Indonesia's ratification of the Agreement, the resources of the member states were not deployed where it is most needed. The return of the haze to Singapore and Malaysia in 2006 proved that the association's anti-haze efforts *sans* Indonesia was ineffective. On the other hand, Indonesia's free-riding stance means that could continue its wayward approach to open-burning with the comfort of knowing that it could draw on the financial resources and aid of its neighbors if the situation gets out of hand.

Indonesia's sense of apathy is confounding. *The Jakarta Post* reported that several legislators from the parliamentary Commission for Defense and Foreign Affairs were not in favor of ratifying the Agreement. "[T]hey condemned the agreement, which they said placed all responsibility for the haze on Indonesia."[11] According to Brad Sanders of the Asia Pacific Resources International Limited (APRIL), "[t]he problem here [Indonesia] is that the people want the fires to burn. They are lighting them on purpose to clear the land."[12] In the face of pressure, Indonesia has taken remedial actions. However, "while land-clearing by fire has been outlawed, weak enforcement continues to confound the problem."[13] Bureaucratic red-tape and layering complicate implementation and enforcement of laws. "Indonesia is divided administratively into provinces, which comprise several regencies, which in turn are further divided into districts. [...] This system often blurs the chain of command and can slow efforts to stop firestarters or put out fires."[14] The Environment Ministry – the proverbial custodian of environmental protection – does not have effective control over provincial authorities, leading to a disorganized and uncoordinated response to prevent and fight forest fires.

ASEAN's ineffective efforts to combat transboundary haze are symptomatic of the central problem besieging the organization. "The cross-border nature of the disaster initially created some expectation that the neighboring countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) would relax its general policy of non-interference in members' 'internal affairs' and take some collective action to force Indonesia to act more effectively to prevent future fires."[15] ASEAN lacked the institutional mechanisms to enforce decisions as its consensus-based decision-making allows states to ignore the collective interest of the organization and its members. ASEAN states' patience is wearing thin. Going against tradition, Malaysia and Singapore had voice their frustration openly. Azmi Khalid, Malaysia's environment

[11] *The Straits Times*, 14 March 2007.
[12] *Today*, 20 June 2007.

[13] *The Jakarta Post*, 31 October 2006.

[14] *The Straits Times*, (22 Noveber 2006).
[15] Forests, Fires and Confrontation in Indonesia, p. 132.

minister remarked: "They [the Indonesians] told me they had the systems to control the haze. It looks like their system is not effective."[16] Meanwhile Singapore's Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong called on "Indonesia to deal with the problem in a timely and effective manner so investor confidence in Indonesia and ASEAN's credibility would not be affected."[17] The issue at hand lies not in Indonesia's lack of resources to control forest fires because funding and assistance are readily available from ASEAN states and extra-regional states such as Japan, Germany and the US. An ASEAN Haze Fund has also been proposed. The crux of the matter is Indonesia's lack of political will. While President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono had promised to ratify the Agreement in all earnest, the ratification process is mired at the parliamentary committee level. At the local level, the economic incentive of using fire as a cheap and effective means of land-clearing outweigh the social and environmental costs of forest fires and haze. The primary beneficiary of these environmental unfriendly methods is plantation companies and farmers. As long as the cost of remedial healthcare and fire-fighting are transferred to other parties, free-riding remains an attractive option. Innovative approaches such as the adopt-a-district plan allows ASEAN states to work directly with the local government for more effective monitoring and fire-fighting, and thus circumventing Jakarta's impasse. Under this plan, Singapore and Malaysia had adopted the districts of Jambi and Rokan Hilir respectively by providing direct and dedicated assistance to them.

CONCLUSION: THE WAY AHEAD

The management of transboundary haze is a test case of ASEAN cooperation and inference could be drawn as to the realization of the ASEAN Community. A defining characteristic of a community is the feeling of togetherness and the primacy of collective interest over the individual. Indonesia's actions in the 1997 crisis and beyond are alarming in two regard. First, by taking slow and half-hearted measures to investigate and persecute the perpetrators of open-burning, the Indonesian government is sending the signal that vested interest is more important than public health. Second, as a founding member of ASEAN it is undermining the solidarity of the association by showing its disregard of the security and well-being of others. To be sure, pressure from ASEAN states on Indonesia is beginning to yield positive results:

[16] *The Guardian* (6 October 2006).

[17] Channel News Asia, (11 November 2006). Available at http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stroies/singaporelocalnews/view/234808/1/.html [accessed 13 Octobter 2007].

> In 10 fire-prone provinces, there are now 1560 personnel in fire brigades. The authorities have also identified three palm oil firms that practice open burning, and they are now under investigation. With the help of the German government, Indonesia is developing a fire control centre in East Kalimantan. It is also developing an early-warming system with the help of a Japanese institution.[18]

It is beguiling that Indonesia is more amendable to working with extra-regional actors such as Germany and Japan and keeping ASEAN states at arm's length. Members of a community must be willing to assist fellow members and also be willing to accept assistance. In exercising its sovereign right to stall ratification of the Agreement, Indonesia is paying a high price as it doing so continues to endanger its citizens in fire-prone localities. At the same time, Indonesia's non-cooperative stance is jeopardizing the health and economic position of its neighbors. Indonesia's fixation and uncompromising stance on the supremacy of sovereignty and domestic interests does not augur well for regional cooperation. As dangerous and serious as its indifference toward transboundary haze, the implications and effects of the Indonesian government have far reaching consequences on the harmonious relationship and future cooperation of ASEAN.

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Paper 3 The Effect of the Home Literacy Environment on Reading Habits and Attitudes: An Investigation of Thai Students at an International College

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Introduction

There has been considerable concern in recent years over the apparent unwillingness of Thais to read for pleasure. Literacy rates of over 92% (World Fact Book, 2007) compare favourably with other parts of the world, but the amount of actual reading done appears to be very low. Statistics from 2003 from the National Statistical Office of Thailand for example indicate that the average Thai reads only 5 books a year (Pradit, 2006). This compares with 17 books read by the average Singaporean and 50 books read by the average American. This level of reluctant readership is likely to undermine Thailand's competitiveness in the Information Age.

It may be however that Thailand's reading rates are skewed by the presence in the national sample of large numbers of the less well-educated. It is possible a prosperous middle class in Bangkok has leisure reading rates approaching, or even surpassing, international norms. They and their children may have already acquired the "literacy fitness" levels necessary to compete successfully in the international arena. Their critical thinking skills, life-longing learning habits, and language skills, have all been enhanced by prolonged exposure to the ideas, opinions and experiences of the world's movers and shakers. "Literacy fitness" also implies cognitive fitness. If, however, they have not, and reluctant readership is endemic across the social classes, then there are serious implications for the future intellectual leadership of the Kingdom, and therefore of its ability to adapt to the challenges of the 21st century.

Students at Mahidol University International College (MUIC) provide an opportunity to survey the reading habits of those at the top end of the educational and social spectrum. This paper will report on the findings of the effect of the home literacy environment on the reading habits and attitudes of a large sample of MUIC students.

Literature review

The literature review will cover four areas related to reluctant readership: extensive reading; library provision; the home literacy environment; L1 to L2 transfer.

Extensive reading

The benefits of extensive reading (ER) for first and second language learners are well documented (Krahsen 1993; Day & Bamford, 1998). In this approach, students choose to read in their own time, with reading materials they have selected

for themselves. They read for pleasure. There are no tasks to complete and there are no tests. It is a leisure activity where students are exposed to large amounts of naturally occurring language in context, an essential component if students are to acquire more complex language (Krashen, 1982). Despite the theoretical underpinnings from Krashen's "input hypothesis" (Ibid), and the extensive research findings in support of ER, it is not all plain sailing. A number of studies suggest there are problems when ER does not take account of local conditions.

Green (2005) reported on the disappointing results in high schools of the Hong Kong Extensive Reading Scheme in English (HKERS). He attributed this to the top-down manner it was implemented. More importantly, he believes it is a fundamental mistake to see ER as a 'stand alone' policy. He argues that for it to be successful ER cannot be simply viewed as an extra-curricular activity, but must be incorporated into the classroom, especially in exam-based environments like Hong Kong. In another study from Hong Kong (Yang, 2001), non-degree adult learners of English were required to read in their own time two Agatha Christie detective novels over a 15-week course. One hour of the weekly three-hour lesson was dedicated to discussing the books, exploring ambiguous language, and previewing the following week's reading requirement. In the post-test, the learners showed significant improvements in both their reading proficiency and motivation over the control group.

In Malawi in Africa, Williams (2007) suggested two main reasons to account for the drop in reading scores four years after the implementation of an ER programme. Firstly, when 'outsiders' do not take in to consideration the 'cultural-educational ecology' of a country, there is unlikely to be a best fit between on the one hand, western beliefs about education, and the role of reading in particular, and on the other, indigenous educational principles. Secondly, and very strongly liked to the first, is the large gap that exists between the theoretical principles that underpin ER, a western concept in origin, and the realities of classroom practice in other parts of the world.

The requirement in the pure form of ER for students to choose their own books, and then to read these in their own time, usually at home, is greatly at odds with the teacher-centred approaches that predominate world-wide. It is also alien to the educational experiences of the overwhelming majority of students. Xinchun et al (1999) reported that in Chinese primary schooling for example intensive reading is emphasized, but ER is neglected. In China, reading is used to assist students' mastery of the complexities of Chinese orthography, not to stir their imaginations, nor expose them to the full range and complexity of their own language.

Exponents of ER would argue the Chinese primary school environment is ripe for exposure to ER. This may be true. Certainly, the Fijian 'Book Flood' scheme (Elley and Munghabai, 1983), and its forerunner the New Zealand 'Shared Book Experience' (De'Ath, 2001), have shown ER works particularly well with young children and adolescents. However, in other situations it may need a strong classroom focus. This is the position of Macalister (2007), who says that with pure ER many students are likely to use their free time to do anything other than read. Krashen (1982) also makes the point that weaker students may need interaction with a teacher to help with meaning. This is what Lituanas et al (2001) did in the Philippines. They trialed a classroom ER program with a class of 60 first-year remedial students whose

ages ranged from 12-18. Ninety percent of them were from low-income families where reading material was scarce, if not non-existent. These students read extensively for 40 minutes every day in class, and had help from the teacher on understanding difficult words, selecting books to read, or simply chatting about what they had read. After six months, this experimental group showed significant improvements in reading comprehension over the control group.

Others have found it necessary to include ER in the classroom alongside intensive reading (IR) - short texts selected by the teacher, read in class, and checked for understanding through a series of questions and exercises. Carrell and Carson (1997) argue that if students are to be properly prepared for university entrance, both IR and ER must be incorporated into EAP programs. In another study, Hamp-Lyons (1983) reported on an ER course she developed, first in Malaysia, and then in the US, to assist non-Western ESL students to cope with their university reading loads. She came to the conclusion that classroom instruction was necessary to assist with the development of reading strategies. She also felt some of the students' reading problems were a consequence of transferring poor reading strategies from their L1.

Another potential barrier to implementing ER is attitude. Krashen (1982) addresses this in his "affective filter". He says if attitudes are not optimal, language *input* may not result in acquisition; *uptake*. He suggests that even if the students understand what it is they are reading, messages do not necessarily pass to the part of the brain responsible for acquisition, unless directed there by the effort of attention. Reluctant readers in effect put up their own psychological barriers to language acquisition.

Yamashita (2004) investigated the reading attitudes of 59 Japanese university students enrolled in a 13-week ER course in English. Her results support the transfer of positive attitudes of reading from L1 to L2, and in particular that positive feelings students had in both L1 and L2 facilitate performance in ER (measured by a TOIC test). She went on to say it was important to "understand learner's attitudes (particularly feelings) to reading both in L1 and L2 for encouraging L2 learners' involvement in extensive reading".

In short, ER works well, especially with younger children and adolescents, but if it is transplanted direct from the West, without regard to local conditions and expectations, it is likely to fail. When used with adults, whose attitudes are more firmly entrenched, the importance of good reading habits and attitudes in L1 become critical. If these habits are weak, or attitudes are negative, then reading may not be the vehicle for second language acquisition many claim it to be.

Library provision: indirect evidence of reluctant readership

In reader-friendly societies, children as well as adults are likely to read more. When they read more, they become better readers, and better readers in turn read more; a virtuous upward spiral which widens the gap between those who read and those who do not - the "Matthew effect" (Stanovich, 1986). This should not come as a surprise. Reading is after all a skill, albeit a cognitive one, and like other skills benefits from practice. But the converse is also true. Those who read less, that is to

say do little if any practice, will be less proficient. They are also likely to drive less pleasure from reading than those who practice. Thus, lower reading rates are one possible indicator of reluctant readership.

One factor likely to influence reading rates is the availability of printed reading material. The literature indicates that access to books has an effect on reading ability. Where there are fewer public libraries, reading comprehension scores in children are lower (Heyns, 1978). Another study found that the more children visit libraries, the more their reading levels improve (Snow et al, 1991). How does library provision in Thailand compare with elsewhere?

According to Lerdsuriyakul (1999), there are 915 public libraries in Thailand. This contrasts with the UK which has 4,891 public libraries (LISU, 2000). In other words, Thailand has almost 70,000 people per public library, whereas in the UK the figure is only 12,000. This six-fold difference in library provision is very likely to have a concomitant effect on reading rates, that is, one would expect Thais to read less than people in the UK. Data for Malaysia suggests there are nearly 500 public libraries (Jaafar, 1998), and with a population close to 25 million, the ratio is 50,000 people per public library. Apart from public library provision, another potential influence on reading rates is the influence of the home literacy environment.

The home literacy environment: parental influence

A number of studies have highlighted the role of parents in children's success at school. These have focused on parental educational attainment and have shown that as a mother's educational level increases so do the child's L1 reading scores, vocabulary skills and reading performance (NCFL, 2000; Darling 2001). Flouri and Buchanan (2004) claim that active parental involvement is a more powerful determinant of a child's success than a parent's educational background. Bus et al (1995) are even more specific. They claim it is parental involvement in reading that is the single most important determinant of childhood literacy. How much reading to children do parents do, and what is the effect?

A review of The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study for kindergarteners by the US National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), found in a survey in autumn 1998, that nearly half of US parents (46%) read to their children every day (n.d.). The study also found in the spring of 2000 that children who were read to at least three times a week by a family member were almost twice as likely to score in the top 25% in reading than those children who were read to less than this (Ibid). In addition, parents in higher socioeconomic groups were almost twice as likely to read to their children every day as those of lower socioeconomic status (62% as compared to 36%; Ibid). Lomax (1976) also showed that children who are read to at home read more by themselves.

Children are also influenced by what they see. The parents of children who do more leisure reading also read more than the parents of children who are less interested in books (Neuman, 1986). Young children read more when they see other people read, both at school and at home (Morrow, 1982).

To conclude, through their involvement and example, parents significantly influence their children's literacy development.

L1 to L2 transfer

L1 literacy is of considerable interest to EFL professionals because there is considerable evidence to show a transfer from L1 to L2 (cross-linguistic transfer). Findings from a study by Sparks et al (2006) indicated that L1 skills in spelling are important predictors of future achievements in overall literacy development in an L2, perhaps from as early as first grade. Phonological awareness across a range of L1 populations has been shown to accompany high levels of L2 word recognition and spelling (Caravolas and Bruck, 1993). Meschyan and Hernandez (2002) found that L1 word decoding skill of college-age adults in their native Spanish was one important predictor of L2 competency. L2 research with American high school and college students supports the role of L1 vocabulary skill as a predictor of overall L2 proficiency (Proctor et al, 2006). In a review of L2 studies on processing, Ganschow et al (1998) cited numerous authors to show the strength of support for a link between L1 oral and written abilities on the one hand, and L2 aptitude on the other.

The current study

The current study explores for the first time how the home literacy environment may have affected the reading habits and attitudes of Thai university students today. The findings may have implications for understanding how well Thailand is prepared for the demands of the Information Age.

Research questions

The following research questions were examined:

1. Does parental reading to children affect the reading habits of these children as adults?
2. Does parental reading to children affect the reading attitudes of these children as adults?
3. Do parents' past reading frequencies associate with students' present reading frequencies?

Methods:

Participants

The participants were 545 MUIC students, the majority of whom were first- or second-year students. 54% of them were female and 46% were male. They were aged between 19-23 years old, with a mode of 19. Just over 40% of students had studied overseas, and a further 20% had studied at local international high schools. Nearly two thirds of students' parents had graduated from university.

Materials, procedure, and analysis

A questionnaire written in English was developed over a 12-month period, and items deleted or modified as a result of informal feedback sessions with students. The questionnaires were handed to individual classroom teachers to give out to students on the first two days of the new trimester in January 2006. It took about 15 minutes to fill in the questionnaires, and these were collected back at the end of the lesson. The questionnaire data were entered into SPSS (Version 11) and descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated. Effect sizes were interpreted using Cramer's V, or Cohen's (1988) rule of thumb for evaluating the practical importance of *d* (for a small effect d=0.2, for a medium effect d=0.5, for a large effect d=0.8).

Results

The main independent variable

The main independent variable asked *how often students were read to as children at home*. Results indicated three fifths (60.4%) of respondents had never been read to as a child, and less than one fifth (17.2%) had been read to three times a week or more. Of those who had been read to, in 87% of cases it was one or other, or both of their parents. For the remainder, it was a mix of older siblings and grandparents.

1) Never	60.4%
2) Less than once a month	1.7%
3) Less than once a week	5.1%
4) Once or twice a week	8.3%
5) Three time a week or more	17.2%
6) Yes, but not indicated	7.3%

For statistical analysis, when one-way ANOVA or Chi-Square was used, the main independent variable was converted from 6 groups (see above) into three:

1) never read to
2) read to less than once a week
3) read to more than once a week
* The 'not indicated' group was dropped

For use with the Independent Samples *t* Test, the main independent variable was converted into two groups:

1) *read to less than once a week* (including the 'never read' to group)
2) *read to more than once a week.*
* Again, the '*not indicated*' group was dropped.

Research Question 1: parental reading to children and these children's reading habits as adults

Students' reading habits were determined through two questions, one assessing how often they read each week, and the other how long they read each day.

In the first question, students were asked to record how often they read for pleasure eight different types of reading material: magazines, newspapers, cartoon books, short stories, novels, non-fiction, technical books, and the Internet. 540 respondents answered this question and a frequency graph was computed by allocating 0-4 points for their answers of *never / rarely / once a week / often / almost every day* respectively. The maximum score possible was 32 which would indicate that a respondent read each of the eight items almost every day.

Computation of the raw data gave a mean, a median, and a mode, all very closely aligned at 15 points. This would indicate that the typical student reads each of the eight items once a week, or reads one of the items once a day.

One-way ANOVA was used with the three levels of the main independent variable (as outlined earlier) and from Table 1 it is clear that there were significant differences between group three - those who were read to once or more a week by an adult - and the other two groups, though the size effects were small. That is, those who were read to by their parents once or more a week as children were significantly more likely to read more frequently as students than the other two groups.

Groups	Mean difference	Sig. level (p)	d	Description of d
1 & 3	1.22	.014	.15	< small effect
2 & 3	2.00	.031	.25	Small effect

Table 1. Statistical significance (p) and effect size (d) for the 3 reconstituted groups with the largest mean differences when comparing the main independent variable and reading frequencies.

For the second question, students were asked how much reading they did every day. Over a quarter of respondents said they read for pleasure for more than an hour a day (26.0%), including 5.2% who read for more than two hours a day. At the bottom end, nearly 40% read for 20 minutes or less, with more than one in twenty (4.4%) saying they never read. Average reading time was between 20-30 minutes a day.

More than 2 hours	5.2%
1-2 hours	20.8%
30-40 minutes	34.3%
5-20 minutes	35.3%
None	4.4%

A statistical comparison was made with the main independent variable, *how often parents read to their children*. Results were only significant at p=.077; Cramer's V was only .101, a negligible effect size. This approached statistical significance.

Reading rates were also compared with the main dependent variable, student reading frequencies. Pearson chi-square was $\chi^2 = 99.058$, df=8, p=.000 and Cramer's V was .316, a significant result with a medium effect size. This suggests that those who read more frequently also read for longer.

Research Question 2: parental reading to children and these children's reading attitudes as adults

Students' reading attitudes were determined through three questions: their view of reading as an activity; their self-appraisal as readers; the number of non-academic books they own.

Students were asked to describe reading on a scale from a) *"very boring"*, to e) *"fun"*. The mode was in the *"okay"* category with 45.1% of the 550 respondents choosing this position. Nearly 38% of respondents viewed reading in a positive light (the top two categories) compared to 17.3% who viewed it negatively.

Fun	11.6%
Quite enjoyable	26.0%
Okay	45.1%
A bit boring	13.8%
Very boring	3.5%

One-way ANOVA was rejected because the group sizes were too unequal even when merged, and an Independent Samples *t* Test violated the test for the homogeneity of variances. Initially, for Chi Square, there were too many cells (40%) with less than the minimum tally of 5. This was overcome by reducing the number of categories from five to three:

1) those who viewed reading ***negatively***
2) those who were ***neutral***
3) those who were ***positive***

The main independent variable was used with two groups (those who read to their children less than once a week; those who read more than once a week). Pearson chi-square was $\chi^2 = 8.183$, df=2, p=.017 with no cells with less than the expected count. This was statistically significant, but Cramer's V was only .127, a weak effect size.

The second question asked students to describe themselves as readers from a) *I will do anything to avoid reading*, which scored 0 points, to e) *I read a much as I can*, which scored 4 points. The mean was 2.03, placing it just above *"I read occasionally"*. This neutral position (58.9%) was also the mode. 21.4% respondents viewed themselves negatively as readers, as opposed to 19.8% who rated themselves positively.

I read a much as I can	4.4%
I like to read a lot	15.4%
I read occasionally	58.9%

I read if I have to	21.2%
I'll do anything to avoid reading	0.2%

In the statistical analysis, One-way ANOVA was abandoned because the group sizes were unequal. Though an Independent Samples *t* Test was statistically significant: t (499)= -2.167, p= .031, the effect size was negligible at .11. An initial Chi-Square test had too many cells (48%) containing less than the expected count. This was overcome by reducing the number of groups from five to three:

1) those who read reluctantly (21.4%)
2) those who read occasionally (58.9%)
3) those who read a lot (19.8%)

Pearson chi-square was $\chi^2 = 7.430$, df=2, p=.024. which was significant at the .05 level, though Cramer's V was .122, suggesting again only a very weak effect size.

The third question asked students to estimate how many non-academic books they have of their own at home. The mean was around 40 books:

More than 100	20.0%
More than 50	23.6%
20-30	29.9%
5-10	24.8%
None	1.8%

When student book ownership was compared with the main independent variable, the result for Pearson chi-square was $\chi^2 = 17.097$, df=8, p=.029, with only 13.3 of cells with less than the expected count. This result was significant beyond the 95% level of certainty, but with Cramer's V of .130 the effect size was weak.

When reading frequency was compared to book ownership, an Independent Samples *t* Test was statistically highly significant: t (499)= -9.462, p= .000. The effect size d was .43 which was in the range small to medium. Thus the more books students owned the more likely they were to read.

Research Question 3: parents' past reading frequencies and respondents' present reading frequencies

Parents' past reading frequencies were determined through a question asking how often parents were seen to read every week by students when they were children. The results from 549 responses suggested the average frequency was about twice a week.

Never	1.3%
Rarely	18.4%
Once a week	7.5%
Often	43.5%
Every day	29.3%

For Chi Square the two categories "Never" and "Rarely" were merged, and then the variable was compared to the main independent variable, the frequency with which parents read to their children, and the resulting Pearson Chi Square was χ^2 = 16.064, *df*=3, *p*=.001. This was statistically highly significant and with Cramer's V value of .172 had an effect size approaching moderate in strength. That is to say, those parents who read more were statistically more likely to read to their children.

This variable was also compared with respondents' present reading frequencies and Pearson Chi Square was χ^2 = 27.336, *df*=12, *p*=.007. This was statistically very significant, but the Cramer's V value of .130 showed only a weak effect.

Discussion and Conclusion

Summary of main findings

This study investigated the relationship between the reading frequencies and attitudes of MUIC students and two key variables related to the home literary environment. The main findings are described below.

1. Differences in students' reading frequencies were associated with three aspects of the home literary environment:
    - how often their parents read to them as children
    - the degree of parental book ownership
    - the extent of past parental reading frequencies
2. Differences in students' reading attitudes were associated with the frequency their parents read to them as children. These reading attitudes were:
    - reading as an enjoyable activity
    - self appraisal as a reader
3. Differences in students' reading frequencies were associated with student book ownership. Those who had more books reported reading more.
4. The association between student reading times and parental reading to children approached statistical significance.

Discussion of reading frequencies and reading rates

The average student reported reading for a total of about 20-30 minutes a day. There were no gender differences. A survey for the 5th World Book Day in the UK found that 15-16 year old teenage boys spent 20 minutes a day reading for pleasure compared with 40 minutes a day for girls (Teenage readers, 2002). UK female teenagers read nearly 50% more a day than the students in this survey.

In a study on adult leisure reading in Holland, Knulst and Kraaykamp (1998) found the time spent on reading books was 1.2 hours per week in 1995. The time spent reading by students in this study was on average about 2 hours a week. To manage 1.2 hours a week, students would have to spend 60% of their reading time on books, which is very unlikely. As an estimate, 30%, or half the Dutch book reading rate, would be a more likely figure.

Discussion of the home learning environment

The effect of parental reading to children at home was compared to student reading frequencies today. Statistical analysis indicated there was more than a 95% probability that those students who were read to more than once a week as children read more frequently today than those who were read to less than once a week.

When asked how often they had been read to as a child, 60% of students from what is the top socio-economic group in Thailand replied, "never". Only 17% had been read to three or more times a week. This is in stark contrast to 36% of kindergarteners from the lowest socio-economic groups in the US who are read to every day (Coley, 2002, p55). That is, the lowest income groups in the US read to their children twice as often as the top socio-economic group in Thailand. This is a huge gap born out by other international comparisons. Thailand participated in a 32-nation study on reading literacy conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and was placed 26th on reading achievement for 9th grade students. In the same study, the US was placed 4th (USDE, 1996, p5).

At the other end of the social spectrum, data from the National Survey of America's families of all children aged 1-5 throughout the US in 1999 indicated only 13% of high income families read to their children less than three times a week (Vandivere et al, 2000). The comparable figure for this survey was 83%, six times higher.

Parental and student book ownership

Another element of the home literacy environment is book provision. The number of books children have access to is associated with reading achievement. For example, Weinberger (1996) found that children with literacy difficulties owned fewer books than those who did not have difficulties. In this survey, over 25% of students had less than 20 books of their own. This is below the minimum of 25 books set by the US National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to be classified, for the purposes of their survey, as having books in the home (Donahue et al, 2001, p58).

Though the average number of books owned was low by international comparisons, higher book ownership for both students and parents in this study was associated with higher reading frequencies. Thus, the finding for this sample of the Thai population supports the IEA claim that the availability of books in the home is a key factor in higher reading achievement (1994).

Socialising effects of the home on reading habits

As well as the importance of being read to by parents, and book provision, a number of authors have looked at the 'socializing effects' of the home literary environment toward reading (e.g. Van Peer, 1991). These effects include children seeing their parents read, being encouraged to read by their parents, discussing books (Guthrie et al, 1995), and generally living in a household where there is a positive view towards literature. Verboord and Van Rees (2003) found that socializing effects on children's motivation and literary competence were still evident in adulthood. In general, parental involvement, not just in reading, predicts educational attainment by the age of 20 (Flouri and Buchanan, 2004).

Using representative data for the Netherlands for 1998 (n=1,762), Kraaykamp confirmed that parents who read literature have a positive effect on the present reading levels of their offspring (2003). This survey of students would appear to provide some Thai support for this conclusion, as there was a small but significant association between students' present-day reading frequencies and their parents' past reading frequencies.

Julia Strong from the UK government-funded National Reading Campaign sums it up best when she says, "Children copy what they see and if you don't come from a reading house, or haven't been read to as a child, there's a much stronger chance you won't read yourself" (Buckley, 17 August 2005). From the evidence presented thus far, Thai households may well be falling short in their support of their children's "literacy fitness".

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest Thais have reading rates significantly below those of other countries. This has implications for their willingness to access information on-line and therefore to compete in the Information Age. It also has implications for their ability to learn other languages; an important consideration for the 21st century. Those who do not read in their own language are unlikely to read in a second language, and so will not benefit from extended exposure to large amounts of naturally occurring language found when reading extensively.

The study found that the home literacy environment had a significant influence on students' reading habits. However, the effect sizes were small, indicating that there are other major influences on students' reading habits, as well as the home environment. One of these is likely to be schooling, and there were suggestions of this in student responses to this survey, but not mentioned in detail here. It is also possible that simply reading to children is not enough on its own. Children probably need to be actively encouraged to read, as well as to listen. Positive interaction with the words on the page may be an essential component of the reading experience.

Further research would investigate the effect of schooling on reading habits and attitudes, and inquire into the type of reading interactions positive readers had with their parents.

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Paper 4 **Personal Epistemological Development during the Undergraduate Education: Beliefs about Knowledge and Knowledge Acquisition of Thai University Students**

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Abstract

Objectives: This research investigates students' beliefs about knowledge and knowledge acquisition (i.e., personal epistemology) to evaluate how students develop epistemologically during their undergraduate education. Methods: Two groups of undergraduate students (N = 3,050) in a Thai university completed a questionnaire: first-year students who were about to begin studying in the university (n = 870), and students who had just graduated from the university (n = 2,180). Results: A five-factor structure is identified for the personal epistemology of the students. Significant differences are identified between the first-year students and the graduates in four out of the five factors. The differences between the male and female students are also significant in four out of the five factors. Further separate breakdown analyses by students' subject major indicate that the discrepancies between the first-year and the graduates are more noticeable in some majors than others. Conclusions: The research results provide a global picture of the dimensional structure of personal epistemology of Thai university students. Moreover, they also suggest that undergraduate university education has an influence on the students in developing their epistemological viewpoints in certain aspects.

Keywords: knowledge, knowledge acquisition, personal epistemology, student learning, university undergraduate education, student development

Introduction

How is knowledge structured? Is knowledge a collection of isolated bits of information? Is knowledge stable over a period of time? Where and how do people gain knowledge? For more than two decades, researchers has been empirically investigating what do people believe about these issues. This research topic, termed "personal epistemology" by Hofer and Pintrich (2002), has drawn increasing attention and interests from a large number of educational psychologists. It is largely because of the potential power of these beliefs in individuals' learning and knowledge acquisition. People would naturally learn and acquire knowledge in particular manners consistent with their beliefs about knowledge and knowledge acquisition. Consequently, the achievements and outcomes of learning would be inevitably determined in part by the learners' epistemological beliefs. In fact, many empirical studies have had results supporting the relationships between individuals' epistemological beliefs and variables of learning processes and outcomes. Moreover, originally the purpose of the early pioneering empirical studies was to evaluate and trace how students change their epistemological beliefs during the undergraduate study period. While they attend a university, students are expected not only to learn,

but also to develop epistemologically and to become to understand the true nature of knowledge. Students develop epistemologically to have more sophisticated views about knowledge, as many studies have empirically identified. However, very little is known about theses epistemological developments at dimensional levels. At which dimensional levels students develop epistemologically? Are there any epistemological dimensions where the university education can effectively foster? Do students develop epistemologically faster in some dimensions than in others? This study will address these issues of developmental nature of personal epistemology.

Research on Personal Epistemology

Empirical investigations of what people believe about knowledge and knowledge acquisition began about two decades ago by researchers with various disciplinary backgrounds and from different perspectives (Hofer 2005; Schraw & Sinatra, 2004). Numerous different terms has been used to categorize this area of research, reflecting the varied scope of each study (e.g., Baxter Magolda, 1992; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Hofer, 2000; King & Kitchener, 1994; Kuhn, 1991; Schommer, 1990). Hofer and Pintrich (1997) were among the first to address this chaotic situation. They reviewed and integrated what had been identified in the studies to date. Hofer and Pintrich (2002) proposed the umbrella term "personal epistemology" to categorize this area of studies. Hofer (2004) defined "personal epistemology" as "a field that examines what individuals believe about how knowing occurs, what counts as knowledge and where it resides, and how knowledge is constructed and evaluated (p.1)."

There are two different lines in the personal epistemology studies (Chan & Elliott, 2004; Hofer, 2001). The first approach is concerned with its developmental aspects, trying to describe individuals' trajectory of personal epistemological development. Most of the studies in this category can be traced back to Perry (1970), who examined undergraduate Harvard students in longitudinal studies. Individuals are measured to identify their stage or position of personal epistemological development. The developmental models suggest that individuals move "from a dualistic, objectivist view of knowledge to a more subjective, relativistic stance and ultimately to a contextual, constructivist perspective of knowledge (Hofer, 2002, p.7)". The major models include those proposed by Baxter Magolda (1992), Belenky et al. (1986), King and Kitchener (1994), and Kuhn (1991), as summarized by Hofer and Pintrich (1997).

The second stream focuses on the dimensional structure of epistemological beliefs, intending to uncover its components and nature. Schommer and her colleagues (Schommer, 1990; Schommer, Crouse, & Rhodes, 1992) pioneered this second approach, and made a clear departure from the developmental approach that was dominant at that time (Hofer, 2001). Schommer conceptualized the personal epistemology as a system with five distinct independent dimensions: (a) Structure of Knowledge, ranging from "knowledge is compartmentalized and isolated bits" to "knowledge is highly interrelated and integrated," (b) Stability of Knowledge (also referred as Certainty of Knowledge), ranging from "knowledge is absolute and unchanging" to "knowledge is constantly evolving," (c) Sources of Knowledge, ranging from "knowledge is handed down by omniscient authority" to "knowledge is reasoned out through objective and subjective means," (d) Ability to Learn (also

called as Control of Learning), ranging from "ability to learn is fixed at birth" to "the ability to learn can be changed and learned through experience," and (e) Speed of Learning, ranging from "learning is quick or not-at-all" to "learning is gradual." However, Schommer has been unsuccessful in empirically identifying one of these five factors regarding sources of knowledge (Schommer, 1990). Schommer also developed a first paper-and-pencil questionnaire on personal epistemology that has been the most widely used (Hofer & Pintrich, 2002). This type of research also has made a large contribution in empirically identifying the correlations between this construct of personal epistemology and other variables in learning, such as comprehension in text reading, conceptual change, and study strategies (Chan & Elliott, 2004).

Development at Dimensional Levels and Cultural Variations

The number of studies investigating dimensions or components of individuals' personal epistemology still remains limited (Hofer, 2000). There is no consensus between researchers of the field regarding even the number of the dimensions (Pintrich, 2002). Furthermore, in the first place, the boundaries of what we mean by "personal epistemology" remain controversial among researchers (Pintrich, 2002). Undoubtedly the construct requires further clarification in terms of its dimensional structure. In addition, more importantly, very few studies have examined the epistemological development over a period of time at dimensional levels (Schraw & Sinatra, 2004). Studies of epistemological development have been intending to identify individuals' position only at the holistic level. It is empirically identified that individuals transform their epistemological views over a period of time to become more sophisticated in terms of these views. However, this transformation at the dimensional levels is not yet clear.

Although there are many studies of personal epistemology in the United States, research that examined cultural variations is almost nonexistent (Chan & Elliott, 2000, 2002; Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). Chan and Elliott (2000) are one of the first published works investigating this aspect by comparing the dimensional structure reported by Schommer (1990) to that of Chinese students in Hong Kong. The dimension of Omniscient Authority, which was not clearly extracted in Schommer's studies, was very distinctive for these Chinese students. Because they were unable to duplicate Schommer's (1990) results in their later research, Chan and Elliott (2002) argued that "culture is an important variable in the study of epistemological beliefs (p.410)." Clarebout, Elen, Luyten, and Bamps (2001) also used Schommer's 63-item questionnaire to investigate students of higher education institutes in Belgium and the Netherlands. The factor structure identified was different form that of Schommer's (1990). Most recently Karabenick and Moosa (2005) compared Omani (West Asian) and American students in terms of their epistemological beliefs in the sciences. They found several significant differences between these two culturally different groups of students.

This current study addresses these two particular aspects of personal epistemology: (a) individuals' epistemological development at the dimensional levels and (b) cultural variations of the personal epistemology. Regarding the first issue of the epistemological development, two groups of students within in a same university but at different stages of their education, that is, one at the time of enrollment and the

other at the time of graduation, were compared in terms of the their personal epistemology at the dimensional levels. This comparison was an alternative to a longitudinal study, mainly for practical constraints. As far as the second issue is concerned, still only a very few number of studies investigated personal epistemology of Asian students (Chan & Elliott, 2000, 2002; Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). This study is an additional endeavor to examine cultural variations of personal epistemology, investigating Thai university students.

Purposes of the Study

This research investigates students' beliefs about knowledge and knowledge acquisition through questionnaire surveys to two different groups of undergraduate students in a Thai university: (a) first-year students who were about to begin studying in the university and (b) students who were to graduate from the university. First, the structure of students' personal epistemology was identified, and then the first-year students and the graduating students will be compared. The comparisons between the two groups enabled us to evaluate empirically how the students develop epistemologically during the undergraduate education in the university. It was ideal to measure the same group of students at two different times to examine this developmental aspect. In this research, however, these two groups were compared, mainly for practical reasons, considering the many characteristics shared by these groups of students.

To summarize, the objectives of this study were as follows:
(1) To examine the dimensional structure and nature of Thai university students' personal epistemology, that is, beliefs about knowledge and knowledge acquisition;
(2) To examine how these beliefs change (or not change) during a period of undergraduate university education.

Methods

Participants

A total of 3,050 students in a university in Thailand participated in this study. They were composed of two different groups of students: (a) 870 first-year students at the beginning of their first semester, and (b) 2,180 students who had just finished their 4- to 6-year undergraduate programs. They were all of Thai nationality, and they all indicated Thai as their native language. They enrolled in various undergraduate programs in different faculties in a large research university located in the greater Bangkok metropolitan area in Thailand.

The age of the majority of the first-year students (99.2 %) was between 17 and 20 years old, with the mean being 18.2 years old (SD = .803). The most dominant age group was 18 years old (70.4 %). This was followed by 19 years old (20.1 %). In the graduate group, the age was more varied, but the majority (91.8 %) was between 21 and 26 years old. The mean of the graduate group was 23.8 years old (SD = 3.800). The largest age groups was 22 years old (34.8 %), followed by 23 years old (27.2 %) and 24 years old (19.7 %).

Among all these participants, female students were nearly seventy percent. This female dominance was slightly more noticeable in the first-year student group. In terms of their subject major, measured by the faculties where the students were about to study (for the first-year students) and studied (for the graduating students), nursing was the largest group (21.1 %), followed by science (14.4 %), and two separate faculties of medicines (9.0 % and 8.5 %). Most of the students were from either medicine-related disciplines or other science fields. Very few students from humanities or social sciences were included among this group of participants.

Materials

A Thai language version of 39-item questionnaire was developed for this study from two versions of Schommer's epistemology questionnaire. The first one was the middle school version (Schommer-Aikins, Brookhart, & Hutter, 2000). From this middle school version, 29 items were obtained, evaluating the four hypothetical dimensions of personal epistemology: (a) Ability to Learn (ABI), (b) Speed of Learning (SPE), (c) Stability of Knowledge (STA), and (d) Structure of Knowledge (STR). In order for the questionnaire for this study to cover the fifth dimension, (e) Source of Knowledge (SOU), 10 items were retained from Schommer's original version questionnaire (Schommer, 1998)

Schommer's middle school version was selected as a base for several reasons, the main being that the language was simpler than in Schommer's original. The other reason is that this instrument has a fewer number of items than the original 63-item Schommer questionnaire. People in Thailand would generally consider filling out of a questionnaire rather a demanding task. With fewer items, we aimed to achieve a balance of asking enough questions to measure each dimension and not overloading the students.

After the expressions in each item were further simplified by the author, they were translated into Thai by Thai English bilingual speakers. The order of the 39 items was randomized. A total of 23 items were written so that less epistemologically developed students would agree, while the remaining 16 were written so that these students would disagree. The participants were asked to rate these 39 item sentences on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). In the second part of the questionnaire, demographic questions were also included.

Procedure

The questionnaire was administered in a gathering separately for the first-year and the graduating students. As for the first-year students, the questionnaire papers were distributed during a freshman orientation session that was held at the beginning of the academic year before the classes in the first semester began. Students were given several days before they were to return the filled-out questionnaire to the office of student affairs of the university. The graduating students were asked to fill in the questionnaire during a compulsory meeting prior to their commencement ceremony.

Results

Dimensional Structure

The data was analyzed by a principal component analysis with varimax rotation to investigate the dimensional structure of the participants' personal epistemology. Prior to the analysis, the scale was standardized by recoding (i.e., reversing) the responses so that higher scores always indicate a more epistemologically developed beliefs about knowledge and knowledge acquisition in all the cases. Following the procedures used in Wood and Kardash (2002), the internal consistency of the 39-item scale was computed in the next step. The coefficient alpha was .570, and the item-total correlations ranged from -.254 to .489. Nine statements with negative item-total correlations and seven with item-total correlations less than .100 were all eliminated. Using the remaining 23 items, the internal consistency was again calculated, producing a higher coefficient alpha of .790.

Through a principal component analysis with varimax rotation, using the remaining 23 items, five factors of personal epistemology were extracted. These five factors explained 44.6 percent of the total variance. Cronbach's coefficient alpha for each factor was .755, .519, .453, .446, and .433, respectively. All these five factors had an eignevalue higher than 1, and additional factors would make a relatively small contribution to improve the explanation of the total variance. An inspection of the screen-plot also confirmed this decision. Table 1 represents the five factors and the items constituting each of the five factors. The numbers in the table represent the factor loadings of the items.

Table 1
Dimensional Structure of Thai Students' Personal Epistemology

	Factor loadings				
Items	Factor 1: Nature of Successful Learning	Factor 2: Nature of Knowledge	Factor 3: Speed of Learning	Factor 4: Ability of Learning	Factor 5: Source of Knowledge
38. Successful students understand things quickly. **(SPE+)**	.703				
37. Good students memorize facts. **(STR+)**	.686				
33. Students who are average in school will remain average for the rest of their life. **(ABI+)**	.551				
32. To succeed in school, you should not ask too many questions. **(SOU+)**	.478				
35. You can believe almost everything written in books. **(SOU+)**	.473				
25. An expert is someone who is born smart in something. **(ABI+)**	.465				
21. Working hard on a difficult problem only helps the really	.427				

smart students. (ABI+)					
30. If I am going to understand something, I will understand it the first time I read it. (SPE+)	.671				
7. The best thing about a science course is that most problems have only one right answer. (STR+)		.657			
2. I can rely on the facts in my school textbooks for the rest of my life. (STA+)		.558			
11. Most words have one clear meaning. (STR+)		.530			
19. It is hard to learn from a textbook unless you start at the beginning and learn one chapter at a time. (STR+)		.442			
16. You have to accept an answer from a teacher even if it is confusing. (SOU+)		.420			
27. Reading the textbook twice will not help me learn more. (SPE+)			.724		
36. If I read a textbook chapter a second time, I understand it better. (SPE-)			-.667		
22. If I can not understand something quickly, I will never understand it. (SPE+)			.389		
13. Some people are born smart, and some people are born stupid. (ABI+)				.669	
9. The really smart students don't have to work hard to do well in school. (ABI+)				.614	
8. What you get from a lesson depends on the quality of the teacher. (SOU+)				.407	
15. You will get confused if you try to combine new ideas in a textbook with what you already know. (STR+)				.387	
29. Even advice from experts should be questioned. (SOU-)					.714
28. Thinking about what a textbook says is more important than memorizing what a textbook says. (STR-)					.668
6. If I can't understand something right away, I will keep trying. (SPE-)					.458

The factor structure was complicated. The identified factors all had a combination of items representing two or three different hypothetical dimensions, except the third factor. This made it difficult to label these identified factors. However, these five factors were named as described below, giving more importance to items with higher loadings than those with lower loadings.

Factor 1 was named "Nature of Successful Learning" noticing what was actually evaluated by the first two heavy-loaded item at .703 and .686, respectively. The sentences in these items appeared to describe necessary qualities for the academic success. In addition, the fourth item with a factor loading of .478 also described another characteristic required for the learners' success. Factor 2 was labeled as "Nature of Knowledge" considering that all the five items concerned the knowledge itself. Factor 3 was readily and easily named "Speed of Leaning" as all the three items originated from this dimension. Factor 4 was called as "Ability of Leaning" because of the two prominent items representing this dimension with factor loadings at .669 and .614, respectively. Factor 5 was named "Source of Knowledge" primarily because of the first item with a loading of .714. This decision was supported by the second item, as it also seemed to partially measure the respondents' beliefs about a source of knowledge.

Personal Epistemology and University Education

Overall comparison between first-year and graduates

Mean scores of each identified factor were compared between the first-year students and the graduating students. As explained earlier, the responses of the 24 items that less epistemologically developed students would agree with were recoded (i.e., their scores are reversed) so that all the responses always indicated that the higher the score, the more epistemologically developed the respondent was. This analysis included only participants who rated all the 23 statements covered by the five factors and also only those who indicated his or her gender. The mean scores are described in Table 2.

Table 2
Factor Variations of the Students with Different Periods of Study at the University

Type of students	Male Female Total	Factor 1: Nature of Successful Learning		Factor 2: Nature of Knowledge		Factor 3: Speed of Learning		Factor 4: Ability of Learning		Factor 5: Source of Knowledge	
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
First-year	(n = 218)	3.69	.609	3.23	.553	3.88	.714	3.32	.709	4.15	.551
	(n = 605)	3.78	.517	3.28	.557	4.00	.628	3.36	.606	4.04	.557
	(n = 823)	3.75	.543	3.26	.556	3.97	.654	3.34	.634	4.07	.557
Graduates	(n = 697)	3.62	.584	3.36	.625	3.87	.637	3.18	.633	3.98	.578
	(n = 1,360)	3.70	.499	3.30	.539	3.92	.593	3.31	.570	3.89	.562
	(n = 2,057)	3.67	.531	3.32	.571	3.90	.609	3.27	.595	3.92	.569
Total	(n = 915)	3.64	.591	3.33	.611	3.87	.656	3.21	.654	4.02	.575
	(n = 1,965)	3.72	.506	3.30	.545	3.95	.605	3.33	.581	3.94	.564
	(N = 2,880)	3.69	.535	3.31	.567	3.92	.623	3.29	.608	3.96	.569

Two-way between-participants ANOVA was used to investigate whether there was any difference between the two groups of students: first-year students versus graduates, and male students versus female students. In all the five factors except Factor 3 (Speed of Learning), the main effect of whether the student was a first-year or a graduate was significant (Factor 1, F (1, 2876) = 9.614, p = .002, partial η^2 = .003; Factor 2, F (1, 2876) = 9.364, p = .002, partial η^2 = .003; Factor 3, F (1, 2876) = 2.609, p = .106, partial η^2 = .001; Factor 4, F (1, 2876) = 10.628, p = .001, partial η^2 = .004; Factor 5, F (1, 2876) = 37.470, p < .0005, partial η^2 = .013).

There was also a significant main effect of the students' gender in all the factors except Factor 2, Nature of Knowledge (Factor 1, F (1, 2876) = 10.652, p = .001, partial η^2 = .004; Factor 2, F (1, 2876) = .039, p = .844, partial η^2 < .0005; Factor 3, F (1, 2876) = 9.760, p = .002, partial η^2 = .003; Factor 4, F (1, 2876) = 10.387, p = .001, partial η^2 = .004; Factor 5, F (1, 2876) = 15.375, p < .0005, partial η^2 = .005).

The interaction between these two variables (i.e., the students' status type and their gender) was significant only in Factor 2, Nature of Knowledge (Factor 1, F (1, 2876) = .004, p = .947, partial η^2 < .0005; Factor 2, F (1, 2876) = 3.996, p = .046, partial η^2 = .001; Factor 3, F (1, 2876) = 1.904, p = .168, partial η^2 = .001; Factor 4, F (1, 2876) = 3.165, p = .075, partial η^2 = .001; Factor 5, F (1, 2876) = .116, p = .734, partial η^2 < .0005).

Breakdown comparison within the groups of the same subject major

The participants were divided into several categories in terms of their subject major. As a next step of the analysis, the mean scores of the five identified factors were compared between the first-year students and the graduates within each of these subject majors. Only the participants who rated all the 23 statements covered by the five factors and those who indicated his or her major were included in the analysis. In

addition, sport science and management science majors were not included in the analysis here, because there was no first-year student majoring in sports science and only eight first-year students in management science.

Similarly to the previous overall comparison, two-way between-participants ANOVA was used to investigate whether there is any difference between the two groups of students: first-year students versus graduates, and male students versus female students, within the group majoring in the same academic field. The mean scores are represented in Table 4.

The main effect of the student type (i.e., first-year vs. graduates) was rather limited and only significant in the following factors and majors. In terms of Factor 1, the main effect was significant only in two majors: Medicine S, F (1, 258) = 11.394, p = .001, partial η^2 = .042, and Dentistry, F (1, 91) = 4.735, p = .032, partial η^2 = .049. For Factor 2, only in Engineering it was significant, F (1, 207) = 5.409, p = .021, partial η^2 = .025. Factor 3 had a similar result, and it was only in Medicine S, F (1, 258) = 5.129, p = .024, partial η^2 = .019, where the main effect was significant. In Factor 4, the main effect was more observable and it was identified as significant in the four following majors: Medicine S, F (1, 258) = 11.516, p = .001, partial η^2 = .043, Medical Technology, F (1, 195) = 5.799, p = .017, partial η^2 = .029, Public Health, F (1, 192) = 6.142, p = .014, partial η^2 = .031, and Pharmacy, F (1, 99) = 5.947, p = .017, partial η^2 = .057. For Factor 5, it was in five majors where the main effect was significant: Science, F (1, 407) = 4.877, p = .028, partial η^2 = .012, Medicine S, F (1, 258) = 19.662, p < .0005, partial η^2 = .071, Medicine R, F (1, 236) = 10.158, p = .002, partial η^2 = .041, Medical Technology, F (1, 195) = 9.068, p = .003, partial η^2 = .044), and Pharmacy, F (1, 99) = 5.092, p = .026, partial η^2 = .049. In other words, the main effect of the student type was significant in the 13 cases: Science (Factor 5), Medicine S (Factors 1, 3, 4, and 5), Medicine R (Factor 5), Engineering (Factor 2), Medical Technology (Factors 4 and 5), Public Health (Factor 4), Pharmacy (Factors 4 and 5), and Dentistry (Factor 1).

Table 4
Factor Variations of the Students with Different Subject Major at the University

Intended or completed major	First-year Graduates Total	Factor 1: Nature of Successful Learning		Factor 2: Nature of Knowledge		Factor 3: Speed of Learning		Factor 4: Ability of Learning		Factor 5: Source of Knowledge	
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Nursing	(*n* = 119)	3.68	.498	3.16	.497	4.05	.574	3.40	.602	3.94	.559
	(*n* = 488)	3.67	.538	3.23	.538	3.90	.629	3.35	.564	3.96	.557
	(*n* = 607)	3.67	.530	3.22	.531	3.93	.621	3.36	.571	3.96	.557
Science	(*n* = 158)	3.80	.596	3.31	.595	3.92	.703	3.32	.634	4.08	.600
	(*n* = 253)	3.71	.568	3.30	.590	3.89	.627	3.30	.589	3.93	.568
	(*n* = 411)	3.74	.580	3.30	.591	3.90	.657	3.30	.606	3.99	.584
Medicine S	(*n* = 64)	3.97	.398	3.49	.487	4.16	.500	3.46	.575	4.21	.446
	(*n* = 198)	3.72	.476	3.51	.573	3.97	.521	3.19	.613	3.88	.580
	(*n* = 262)	3.78	.470	3.51	.552	4.02	.522	3.25	.615	3.96	.568
Medicine R	(*n* = 84)	3.68	.517	3.32	.568	4.01	.662	3.40	.660	4.04	.549
	(*n* = 156)	3.65	.524	3.47	.549	3.91	.556	3.15	.547	3.87	.557
	(*n* = 240)	3.66	.521	3.42	.560	3.94	.596	3.24	.600	3.93	.559
Engineering	(*n* = 79)	3.49	.684	3.06	.578	3.78	.847	3.09	.729	4.14	.553
	(*n* = 132)	3.67	.562	3.29	.602	3.93	.515	3.09	.636	4.03	.567
	(*n* = 211)	3.61	.615	3.20	.602	3.87	.661	3.09	.671	4.07	.563
Medical technology	(*n* = 60)	3.81	.499	3.25	.438	3.96	.583	3.53	.570	4.23	.457
	(*n* = 139)	3.77	.479	3.37	.548	3.90	.634	3.37	.616	3.99	.549
	(*n* = 199)	3.78	.484	3.34	.519	3.92	.618	3.42	.606	4.06	.533
Public health	(*n* = 32)	3.77	.466	3.28	.601	3.83	.672	3.23	.527	3.96	.597
	(*n* = 164)	3.67	.525	3.35	.533	3.95	.625	3.49	.607	3.86	.594
	(*n* = 196)	3.69	.516	3.34	.543	3.93	.633	3.45	.601	3.88	.594
Pharmacy	(*n* = 28)	3.93	.516	3.49	.537	4.06	.522	3.44	.484	4.17	.501
	(*n* = 75)	3.86	.334	3.50	.450	4.11	.515	3.03	.561	3.83	.552
	(*n* = 103)	3.88	.390	3.50	.473	4.10	.515	3.14	.568	3.92	.557
Dentistry	(*n* = 20)	3.86	.544	3.33	.596	4.08	.724	3.10	.681	4.08	.601
	(*n* = 75)	3.60	.451	3.35	.543	3.92	.553	3.14	.584	3.82	.552
	(*n* = 95)	3.65	.482	3.35	.551	3.95	.593	3.13	.602	3.87	.569
Physical therapy	(*n* = 30)	3.82	.569	3.17	.662	3.82	.598	3.35	.694	4.23	.473
	(*n* = 39)	3.68	.554	3.19	.681	3.91	.596	3.18	.633	3.90	.514
	(*n* = 69)	3.74	.561	3.18	.668	3.87	.594	3.25	.661	4.04	.521
Total	(*n* = 823)	3.75	.543	3.26	.556	3.97	.654	3.34	.634	4.07	.557
	(*n* = 2,057)	3.67	.531	3.32	.571	3.90	.609	3.27	.595	3.92	.569
	(*N* = 2,880)	3.69	.535	3.31	.567	3.92	.623	3.29	.608	3.96	.569

The main effect of the students' gender was more limited and only significant in the following majors and factors, totaling five cases all together. In Factor 1, the main effect was significant for Nursing, F (1, 603) = 5.410, p = .020, partial η^2 = .009), and Engineering, F (1, 207) = 4.560, p = .034, partial η^2 = .022. For Factor 2, a significant main effect was identified in Medicine R, F (1, 236) = 4.218, p = .041, partial η^2 = .018. In terms of Factor 3 and Factor 4, the main effect of the participants' sex was not significant in all the majors. Regarding Factor 5, in Medicine S, F (1, 258) = 9.556, p = .002, partial η^2 = .036, and Medicine R, F (1, 236) = 4.879, p

= .028, partial η^2 = .020, the main effect was significant. To summarize, the main effect of the students' gender was significant in the four faculties: Nursing (Factor 1), Medicine S (Factor 5), Medicine R (Factors 2 and 5), and Engineering (Factor 1).

The interaction between these two variables (i.e., the students' status type and their gender) was significant in three factors: Factor 2, Factor 4, and Factor 5. In terms of Factor 2, the interaction was significant in Physical Therapy, F (1, 65) = 4.255, p = .043, partial η^2 = .061. For Factor 4 in two majors the interaction was significant: Nursing, F (1, 603) = 5.006, p = .026, partial η^2 = .008, and Medical Technology, F (1, 195) = 6.736, p = .010, partial η^2 = .033. For Factor 5, it was in Physical Therapy that the interaction was significant, F (1, 65) = 4.128, p = .046, partial η^2 = .060. In other words, the interaction was significant in the following three majors: Nursing (Factor 4), Medical Technology (Factor 4), and Physical Therapy (Factors 2 and 5).

Discussions and Conclusions

Findings of the Study

A five-factor structure was identified for the personal epistemology of the Thai university students. The five factors were labeled as follows: Factor 1, Nature of Successful Learning; Factor 2, Nature of Knowledge; Factor 3, Speed of Learning; Factor 4, Ability of Learning; Factor 5, Source of Knowledge. In four out of these five factors, the first-year students were significantly different from the students who had just graduated. The differences between the male and female students were also significant in four out of the five factors. The discrepancies between the first-year students and the graduates were more noticeable in some majors than others. In other words, the gaps of the epistemological development between the first-year students and the graduates varied among students in different faculties. Differences between the male and female students within the same faculty were also significant for some faculties, but it was much more limited than the differences between the first-year students and the graduating students.

Dimensional Structure

The first finding appears to endorse Schommer's conceptual framework of a multidimensional system of personal epistemology. Yet the identified factor structure was complicated. Within one factor, items representing two or three different conceptual dimensions loaded together. Nevertheless, this identified dimensional structure provided a global picture of personal epistemology held by Thai university students.

The epistemology structure identified in this study, however, was different from what has been reported by the previous studies of Thai students in terms of both the number of factors and their compositions. Fujiwara and Phillips (2006a, 2006b) identified a four-factor structure and a three-factor structure, respectively, for Thai university students. However, this difference could be attributed to a methodological inconsistency. They used a different measurement instrument from this study. Their questionnaire had 29 items covering only four of the five hypothetical dimensions proposed by Schommer. Secondly, the items grouped in the factors were also different

from both of these two past works by Fujiwara and Phillips (2006a, 2006b). The compositions of each factor were also different from that of Schommer-Aikins, Brookhart, and Hutter (2000), that used the similar questionnaire, although the participants were middle school American students, not university students. These findings were difficult to compare with Chan and Elliott (2000, 2004), mainly because of the different questionnaires used in their studies.

Some methodological problems were also encountered concerning the measurement instrument. The most critical one is about the composition of the factors. As noted earlier, there was a convergence of the items representing different conceptual dimensions into the factors. This problem was encountered not only in Fujiwara and Phillips (2006a, 2006b) investigating Thai, but also in Chan and Elliott (2000) investigating Hong Kong Chinese students. The measurement instruments used in these three studies were different from this study. These results would imply inter-related rather than independent nature of the dimensions of personal epistemology. Additionally, they are likely to strengthen Chan and Elliott's (2002) claim that Schommer's questionnaire is not appropriate to measure participants in non-American cultural contexts.

Regarding the measurement instrument, another issue was also noticed in this study, as in Fujiwara and Phillips (2006a, 2006b). Among the items with statements worded from a more epistemologically developed point of view (e.g., "Studying means getting the big ideas from the textbook rather than the details."), only four out of 16 remained usable in the final analyses. Other 12 items in this category were all eliminated before the principal component analysis, due to their negative or very low item-total correlations. This problem seems to be persistent across different participants of Thai university students.

Considering that the questionnaire used in this study was translated into Thai from the items in Schommmer's two versions, it is plausible that the measurement instrument might have some deficiencies in itself. Some concerns regarding Schommer's instrument were already raised by Hofer and Pintrich (1997), claiming that expressions in some of the item statements are ambiguous and not clear about what they are to measure.

Epistemological Development

This study empirically observed the significant differences between the two groups of university students at different stages of their undergraduate student life in terms of their personal epistemological development, not as the holistic stage or position, but at the dimensional levels. All the participants were studying at the same university. The two groups were considered as comparable, sharing the similarities in various aspects, but differing only in terms of the period of time already spent in the university. Consequently, it is very likely that these differences are attributable to their university experiences. This result tends to indicate that university education could have an effect on some aspects of personal epistemological development.

However, these results are principally opposite from what has been expected. In the three out of the four factors where the differences between the first-year and the graduates were identified significant, the first-year scored higher than the graduates.

Only in Factor 2 (Nature of Knowledge), the graduates recorded higher than the first-year students. Considering the possible effects that undergraduate education might produce, these results are surprising and very different from what the authors speculated before the analyses of the data.

One plausible explanation would be addressed to the measurement instrument developed and used for this current study. As it was already pointed above, it might be possible that the items in the questionnaire did not measure what they were to measure. Alternatively, it is still possible that the results could indicate the actual level of the students' epistemological development. The personal epistemology that Schommer's questionnaire is trying to measure is certainly reflections of American cultural values. These perspectives could be regarded in a different manner in Asian contexts.

Other important aspects necessary to consider is the supposition about the participants' characteristics. The first-year student participants in this study were considered "comparable" to the students graduating from the undergraduate programs at the university where these first-year students were going to study. This supposition was mainly and simply based on the fact that they were all accepted by the same faculty in the same university as undergraduate students possibly under the same admission policies and practices. However, this might not guarantee that the first-year and graduate samples were comparable. First, even if potentially the students in these two categories are comparable, the participants in this study might not. The first-year student sample was taken from only those who study in campuses in Bangkok metropolitan area only, but the graduate sample included the students graduating from the university not only in the metropolitan campuses, but also provincial campuses.

The results from the analyses conducted at faculty level might provide an additional evidence for this discussion. Among the 13 cases where the difference between the first-year and the graduates was significant, it was in only two cases that the graduates scored higher than the first-year students (one case in Factor 2, and one case in Factor 4). In short, the analyses by faculty produced similar results to the holistic group analyses. The results from the breakdown analyses seem to support the discussions above regarding the issues about the validity of the measurement instrument and the comparability of the two groups of the participants of the study.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

The research results provided a global picture of the dimensional structure of personal epistemology of Thai university students. In addition, they also suggested that undergraduate university education has an influence on the students in developing their epistemological viewpoints in certain aspects. Still, many issues remain to be addressed in the future studies of individuals' personal epistemology.

First, it is very crucial for any further empirical study to develop a valid and reliable measurement instrument with satisfactory psychometric properties, as Chan and Elliott's (2002) questionnaire for Hong Kong Chinese students. This research once again pointed some limitations of Schommer's epistemology questionnaire. Without doubt, this methodological issue is among the most urgent to be addressed. Certainly, longitudinal studies following the same group of students over a 4- to 6-

year undergraduate period will provide more accurate pictures of the epistemology development. They will also clarify the relationships between the students' subject major and their personal epistemology. Although it seems that epistemological development is varying among different majors, we know still little about their relations. They need further empirical exploration. Empirical research regarding Thai students with narrower scopes of study investigating more discipline-specific epistemology might also complement the domain-general studies, such as epistemological beliefs regarding mathematics, science, and foreign language. All these further endeavors of empirical discovery will undoubtedly lead to better understandings and clarification about how students epistemologically develop during their undergraduate study period at the dimensional levels.

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MAHIDOL-UKM 3

DIFINING HARMONY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: COMPETING DISCOURSES, CHALLENGES AND INTERPRETATIONS

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SESSION 2
MANIFESTATIONS OF HARMONY

Chairperson: Dr.Marja-Leena Heikkila-Horn

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Paper 1 Trading Spaces: An Analysis of The Immigrant Communities and Their Compromise for Harmony in Selected K.S. Maniam's Fiction

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"What better way to know the country than to hunt down a beast that knows it well?"

(Haunting the Tiger, 1996)

This paper examines the representations of the nation in selected short stories and novels by K.S. Maniam, a prominent writer of Malaysian Literature in English. The issues addressed in these texts reflect prevailing socio-political concerns implicated in identity construction among immigrant communities and their descendants in, not only the past, but also present-day Malaysia. This paper aims to unravel these concerns to reveal the politics of power and discourse in a multi-cultural society, which ultimately transforms the constructs of identity and nation, through the analysis of these literary texts. The quotation above is an illustration of the way Maniam has constructed the issue of an immigrant's search for a sense of belonging to an adopted land in his short story "Haunting the Tiger". In this instance, the 'beast', namely the tiger, is synonymous to the territory it roams. As a writer of Indian origin, Maniam's perspective is intricately carved by multiple worldviews, his own Hindu spirituality and mythology as well as those of the other inhabitants of Malaysia. For here, the said beast is significant to the people of his homeland, Malaysia, and to those of India, the land of his grandparents. Hence, in the said story, why does the protagonist, born of immigrant parents, have to choose between two 'beasts' to claim his place in the land? Can he not amalgamate both to remain in the land as one? But can a hybrid beast be acceptable to everyone? Or can two 'beasts' occupy one space and co-exist peacefully? Or does one have to compromise for the other? If so, then which? These are among the socio-political concerns of immigrant communities that contribute towards the construction of a 'harmonious' nationhood which K.S. Maniam addresses through his literariness.

INTRODUCTION

"Nation-building is a process of identity creation, of developing and nurturing a 'sense of a nation' which people can relate to, and which helps to distinguish them from other groups" (Hng Hung Yong, 1998: 22). What then is the role of narrative genres, specifically the short story and the novel, in shaping the imagined community that is called the nation? Can the narrative capture the essence of that nation? How does the writer articulate a sense of national identity? What determines the process of imaging and articulating of the nation? Does the imagining of a particular nation alter depending on the gender of the person whose voice we hear? Or is race a factor too? Are the concerns of members of the nation gender biased? Does a woman's voice play a role in this imagining or is it a purely male narrative project? Are compromises necessary for a multi-cultural society, such as Malaysia, to achieve unity and

harmony? These are several pertinent questions for an endeavor that seeks to examine a writer's attempt at imagining a nation through his literariness.

Literature is an important conduit for nation-building as literature in Malaysia is not just valued for its aesthetic qualities; it is also used as a tool for various pedagogical, political or ideological purposes. In Malaysia, literature has always been seen as purposeful. Muhammad Hj. Salleh (1998:8) asserts that literature has always been recognised and fully utilised as a medium of moral and religious instruction in this region – as it was a "powerful tool of education, secular or moral". Legends, folktales and even the *wayang kulit* have for many generations been utilised to educate and integrate the young into the community. This sense of 'educating' could also be discerned in the 'manifesto' of the ASAS 50 writers, which declared that art/literature is not for art's sake but for society/the people. The writers assert that they write with a purpose – to show, to entertain, to educate, to make the reader realise something about themselves or the society they live in, etc. During the pre-independence period, for example, literature was utilised by local journalists/writers to open the eyes of the Malay population, to show them what was not right with their society, and how backward they were compared to the other races in the country. Literature had also been used in anti-colonialist nationalism; it became an important tool in the fight to free the country from colonialists, to rally the people to the idea of an independent nation - its people free to chart their own destiny.

Malaysia is a country that is home to cultural diversity, the result of both international and intra-national migratory flows. These have brought about changes to the levels of mobility in the population, complexity in the spatial patterning and diversity of the groups involved (Hugo, 1996). The experiences of Malaysia are indeed shared by the other vast and diverse regions that make up Asia. In fact, it has been noted "migrations and mobilities in and out of Asia today often no longer take the form of permanent ruptures, uprooting and settlement, but are more likely to be transient and complex, ridden with disruptions, detours and multiple destinations" (Yeoh et al 2005: 1). With migration at the hub of the population growth, how does this then affect the sense of belonging that one has to the new community that he or she has learn to accept? There have been claims from certain sectors about the difficulties in carving out that nation called Malaysia out of the various cultural and religious traditions that exist in the country, notwithstanding the colonial heritage left behind by the British. This is what this paper aims to examine, namely the representations of the nation as reflected in selected short stories and novels by K.S. Maniam, a prominent writer of Malaysian Literature in English. The issues addressed in these texts reflect prevailing socio-political concerns implicated in identity construction among immigrant communities and their descendants in, not only the past, but also present-day Malaysia. This paper aims to unravel these concerns to reveal the politics of power and discourse in a multi-cultural society, which ultimately transforms the constructs of identity and nation. In focus will be the coping strategies employed by these immigrants their attempts to understand and accommodate themselves and others in a new land.

K.S. Maniam, born on 4 March 1942, was named Subramaniam Krisnan; this is an auspicious name indeed for they are names of the Indian gods. He received the Raja Rao Award for his Outstanding Contribution to the Literature of the South Indian Diaspora in New Delhi in 2000. The issue of identity in Malaysia's multi-

ethnic society is prevalent in many of his works. He explores the notion of Malaysianness; the question of cultural identity in an immigrant society prevails in his works. For example, his first novel, *The Return* (1981), said to be autobiographical, narrates the story of a third-generation Indian man attempting to make sense of life between cultures in Malaya. His anthologies include *Plot, The Aborting, Parables and Other Stories* (1989) as well as *Arriving and Other Stories* (1995). The two other novels are *In a Far Country* (1993) and *Between Lives* (2003). His most recent publication is an anthology of short stories, *Faced Out* (2004). The voices of his protagonists provide a Tamil Indian perspective on Malaysia. These voices represent the diasporic who find themselves at a crossroad where past rituals and beliefs handed down the generations meet with local cultures, beliefs and ways of life. There is then a need for survival. Does one have to turn one's back on one path in order to go down the other road? How does one choose? Or rather does one have to choose? Is there only one way to a destination? Can't there be more than one route towards a destiny? Because choosing one means having to turn away from another and that could create a heart wrenching sense of betrayal.

'Nation', 'nationhood' and 'nation building' are terms that are repeatedly used in this paper. What then is a nation? This is indeed a subjective concept that has more than one definition. In *Nation and Narration*, Homi Bhabha states that nations are like narration in that they should be read and explored through "textual strategies, metaphoric displacements, subtexts and figurative stratagems" (1992: 2). Bhabha defines "nation" as an imaginary, ambivalent construction, replete with cultural temporality that inevitably makes it an unstable social reality. Together with Anderson, he urges us to "encounter the nation as it is written" in the narrative culture of the realist novel (ibid: 2). For Anderson, the nation is defined as an "imagined community" that is socially constructed by people who "will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 1991: 6). He goes on to say that the nation is always "conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship; it has the ability to rouse unlike peoples in dramatically unlike conditions in an impassioned chorus of voluntary co-operation and sacrifice" (cited in Fernandez 2007: 9). Meanwhile, Abdul Rahman Embong (1999) is certain that a nation is not merely an aggregate of peoples sharing the same socio-political space, but rather it is one tied together by some fate of a shared destiny. A nation then is something subjectively imagined, desired and felt; it has to be "alive in the subjective realm of the people's psyche and passed down from one generation to the other" (cited in Fernandez 2007: 14).

THE INDIAN DIASPORA IN MALAYSIA

Shanthini Pillai (2007) affirms there are "threads of continuity between the pioneer Indian immigrant community that lived and worked in Malaya and the present Malaysian Indian community" (x). These threads are neither fragile nor inconsequential; in fact, it could be argued that "they are in many senses the very fibre of the politics of identity of the Indian community in Malaysia, as there was an enormity in the role that the early migrants played in carving the niche for an overseas Indian to exist on Malayan soil" (ibid, x). The presence of this group of migrant workers can be found in colonial narratives of Malaya, in which their representation have been subordinated to colonial ideological discourses. There they remain voiceless, nameless, meek and subdued; they have been constructed to remain perpetually indebted to the colonial master. However, a new perspective is given through K.S. Maniam's narratives; indeed he brings to life the concerns of the Indian community in Malaysia. His is indeed the voice to include as he emerges from the said Indian immigrant community of Malaya.

It is indeed natural for a writer to write about his own community. Maniam, too, consents to this perspective:

> Being of Malaysian Indian origin myself, it seems natural that I write about my own community. It is commonly accepted that a writer writes about what he knows best. That material would stem from his immediate family background, society outside his family & his educational background. (p263)

In his articulation of the Indian experience in Malaysia, he ends up having to confront the polemics of nationhood. Yet, Maniam has no answers available for questions that the migrants tend to ask themselves:

> The migrant consciousness registers loss; the dominant cultural consciousness celebrates its sense of supremacy. The migrant feels bereft only after he has gone through the journey of recollection and evaluation; the indigenous consciousness rests in the ritualistically recalled sense of assurance. (x).

Here, what come to mind is the term *transculturation*, which was coined in the 1940s by a sociologist called Fernando Oritz, illustrates the course by which the colonised choose and select aspects of the dominant culture that they will assume (Pratt 1999). Transculturation distinguishes the supremacy of the subordinate culture to create its own account of the dominant culture (ibid). In postcolonial theory, the term is used to refer to the means by which subordinated or marginalized groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant culture. The Indians and other immigrant communities in Malaysia have been subordinated by the dominant presence of the Malays. Hence, in this instance, transcultural productions result in a changed identity in the individual, creating new cultural experiences for these individuals, experiences that differ from the experiences they encounter in their homeland.

The Indian community in Malaysia has sometimes been unfairly marginalized. For example, in the Introduction to *Imperial Policy and Southeast Asian Nationalism 1930-1957*, the editors talked about nationalism in Malaysia as the "emergence of an ethnic Malay nationalism that, through an alliance of convenience with the Chinese community, has dominated the country since" (Antlov and Tonnesson 1995: 13). No mention is made about the contributions of the Indian community to the struggle for national independence; in this instance, the existence of the Indian community has been erased from any significance at all. Maniam believes that the articulation of the Indian voice can prevent marginalization of the concerns of the community:

> In a multiracial country, the chances are that the ignored realities will remain ignored if the writer does not probe deeper into its cultures and the interfaces of cultures. ...There is the risk of treading on cultural sensitivities; there is the risk of political persecution if he so much as criticizes the establishment. The greatest risk of all is being coerced into presenting a jaundiced view of society and the quality of life it embraces or supports. The coercion can come from political image-makers, communal purists and cultural loyalists. When faced with such as situation he has to have the courage to accept the view that 'writers among the most intellectually anarchic, most representative, most probing of artists.'" (xi) – Toni Morrison, Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992, 15).

In a multi-racial society such as the one in Malaysia, it is not feasible or safe to encourage communal isolation and development. For Maniam, this is "denying the facts of existence and a writer cannot, if he is to be faithful to his vocation, speak from a false, culturally biased viewpoint" (Quayum, 265).

In 1990, there were 1.5 million ethnic Indians in Malaysia, some 8 percent of the country's population. The immigrant generation had come for a better future and, as the rest of the other citizens the descendants aspire to be members of the Malaysian nation. A nation is one that has been defined as "a historically consolidated community of people, with a common territory, sharing a common economic activity, with a common political will, name and identity" ( ). As of today, there is still no one definition that has been accepted for use to define the Malaysian nationhood; it is still a polemic agenda with many sides contributing to the argument. To achieve harmony and prosperity for all in the country, to bring together all the different people in Malaysia, the ruling government designed a framework for nation building by formulating the RUKUNEGARA to build unity in Malaysia's multicultural society. Officially introduced on 31 August 1970, which is more than a year after the racial riots of 13 May 1969, when tensions were high, insurrections were breaking out intermittently, cars were set afire and shops were looted. The five principles enshrined in the 'National Ideology' of the RUKUNEGARA aims to strengthen national unity:

> We, her people, pledge our united efforts to attain these ends guided by these principles:
>
> - Belief in God
> - Loyalty to King & Country
> - Supremacy of the Constitution

- Rule of Law
- Mutual Respect & Morality

This is the first nation-building framework to have been constructed by the National Coalition policy-makers in Malaysia. Clearly here, what A.B. Shamsul (1996) claims as the three main pillars of Malayness, namely language (*bahasa*), religion (*agama*) and royalty (*raja*), have been adopted as the framework for instilling unity among the many races in Malaysia.

Literary texts are cultural artifacts that present "the interplay of discourses, the web of social meanings, operating in the time and place in which the text was written" (Tyson 1999: 288). In his Preface to his anthology, Maniam claims his writing is the result of his contemplations of living in Malaysia:

> "Writing the first story is an exciting encounter with the primeval energies of creativity. As the stories continue to come from you, the questioning, even skeptical, consciousness is awakened. The heady experience of floundering about in the darkness of uncertainty is replaced, perhaps not completely, by a more disciplined attitude. ... It put me in touch with my creative fires and, more importantly, it revealed to me the enormous responsibility a writer is burdened with when producing a piece of fiction. ...These inner workings of the writer's self, I grasped, were necessary in realizing the infinite variations of the relationships the intuitive imagination can have with the world it is compelled to contemplate."
>
> (1996: ix).

Maniam advocates the crucial role literature plays in articulating new strategies, perspectives and approaches to living in a multicultural national setting. He is well-recognized as the leading voice of the Indian diaspora in Malaysia. His works suggest that national and cultural identity is not fixed but always evolving; it has to in order to adapt to its people and society. His themes are expressed in language rich in imagery and symbolism. In fact, his works are imbued with a search for self and a longing for a sense of rootedness to the land. Insights for his protagonists come from the past experiences, especially from immigrant forefathers or foremothers. For example, in the short story "The Kling-Kling Woman", to be someone new and lead a new way of life Sumathi, a fourth generation immigrant descendant, makes a pact with herself:

> She would never be like her mother! She would never wear the *pottu* dot on her forehead. She wouldn't sit in that dumb way, waiting for *her* husband to come back; sit there hoping he would come back to her, and finally praying he would come back to the family. ... Instead for the rest of her life, she would follow her mother about. Working or resting, to taunt her away from subservience. (2003: 120)

Sumathi instead gets inspiration from her great-grandmother, the matriarch of the family, "one of those rare young women who, country-born and country-bred, suddenly realized there was more to life than following the time-honored tradition of

being given in marriage to some young man, bearing children, serving her lord and master, bringing up her children, worrying about sickness and death, and receiving in return for the fulfillment of her last days on earth, the tidings of the marriages of her grandsons and granddaughters" (ibid: 120). Hence, this female Abraham leaves her homeland to come to Malaya as a railroad worker.

Maniam's protagonists are portrayed as alienated selves faced with the complexities of life as they attempt to make sense of the adopted lands of their fathers. Their stories are always central to the concerns of Maniam's narratives. There is always that inchoate need for rootedness which is stemmed by the conflicts in identity between first-generation and second-generation immigrants. Their individuality is nonetheless compromised by the repressive social system of their forefathers not necessarily left behind in India. He attempts also to evaluate ethnic traditions and redefine inherited social and psychological backgrounds in the multicultural and pluralistic postmodern Malaysian context. His is a culture that is vital and hybrid.

Maniam's short stories are "deeply informed by the dynamics of diaspora experience" (http://www.samvadindia.com/si-award2000.htm). They depict the trauma and losses that besiege the individual undergoing cultural, linguistic, geographic and temporal displacement. Critics have written about his early stories, "Ratnamuni", "The Third Child" and "Removal in Pasir Panjang" as having succeeded in capturing "the nuances of disaporic Indian life, replete with its fears, failures and feelings of betrayal as its members cling desperately to familiar, long-ago rituals that are fast losing their currency in the new cultural location" (ibid). This paper explores the manner in which the migrant protagonist negotiates with an evolving identity and a sense of self under transcultural circumstances in the new land, which is usually bound up with the homeland of forefathers; the journey in the new land and the struggle to establish a sense of belonging to the adopted country.

The complexity of migration is that it cuts across class, ethnicity and gender. Many of Maniam's protagonists are female. Why is this so? What is crucial, however, is the fact that in migration, one has to reconsider the conceptual relations between 'mobility' and 'space', socio-political and economic impacts of "thickening translocal interconnections between places, as well as the implications for identity, citizenship and notions of 'home' (Yeoh et al 2005: 1). For example, in his short story, "The Kling-Kling Woman", the protagonist is a female railroad worker who has to toil together with the other male workers. Clearing the jungle is only part of the challenges she and other female workers have had to face; more come from having to fend off unwanted attention from not only the other workers but also the white superiors. Disparaging remarks, sexual advances and less pay are among the discriminating gender biases that she and her sisters have had to receive.

MIGRANTHOOD AND THE SEARCH FOR HOME

In *Writing Diaspora*, Hall proposes two questions regarding the notion of migranthood that every migrant will have to face at some point in his or her life:

> The classic question which every migrant faces are two-fold: "Why are you here?" and "When are you going home?" No migrant ever knows the answer to the second question until asked. Only then does she or he know that, really, in the deep sense, she/he's never going back. Migration is a one-way trip. There's no "home" to go back to. There never was.
>
> (Chow 1993: 142)

For the hundreds of thousands of immigrants to the many imperial shores, the answer to the second question would inevitably be the quest for a better life. In another paper on a study on the protagonist's search for self in Maniam's *The Return* (1981), this writer focuses on the exodus that "deals with the diaspora of the people from the lower Gangetic Plains of sub-continent India which began massively after the British-claimed founding of Penang in 1786" (Noraini Md. Yusof 2000: 169). The journey of immigration involves embarkation and disembarkation at ports from the point of departure to the point of arrival. There is also the "coolie contract, that transcript that was to govern their lives for many years" in Malaya (Pillai 2007: xi). The document defines the confining structures that framed the livelihood of these workers. These indentured laborers then had to undertake long voyages to reach a destiny that involves hard labour in roadwork or plantation. Besides pushed away from their homeland by natural factors, including famine and drought, unnatural factors such as a rigid social hierarchy that disadvantaged their forefathers, themselves and their future generations, these workers were also pulled by colonial incentives and organized immigration strategies. The dangled carrot was the promise of prosperity. Chow asserts the "migranthood has a deterritorialized mode, a form of 'interference' – the crossing of borders and obstacles" (1993).

Migranthood and its socio-political consequences are one of the issues addressed by Maniam. In the short story, "Arriving", immigration issues become pertinent to a society that distinguishes between 'immigrant' and 'son of the soil'; this raises the all important question of when such labeling will end. After how many generations will the 'immigrant' stain absolve itself? Or is the stain perpetually inherited from one generation to the next? Krishnan, the protagonist in the story, is traumatized when a good friend, Mat, calls him *pendatang*, an immigrant:

> He didn't mean that, he told himself. We've known each other for too long. *Pendatang*! Only politicians campaigning for votes used that word. Not always. Some ministers had gone up to the platform to discourage its use. These people are not *pendatangs*. Their great grandfathers were *pendatangs*. Some of their grandfathers were *pendatangs*. Their fathers were not *pendatangs*. They're not *pendatangs*. The minister has spoken angrily, heatedly. (2003: 122)

The context of the story implicates the consequences of colonial immigrant policies. It involves conflicting definitions to notions of 'arriving' and 'belonging' – of coming to terms with a sense of nationhood, of belonging to the land and its people. It also depicts the difference in perspectives between the two men on who is *pendatang* and who is not. Krishnan regards himself as belonging to the land and almost equal to the natives even though he is the descendant of immigrants from India. Unfortunately, in the eyes of Mat, there is an invisible gap that still distinguishes between native and non-native.

The story also triggers a sense of discontent; the question is what the source of the discontent is. Can a resolution lead to an understanding of a self? For example, find answers to these questions: Who am I? What am I? What is my relationship with this land? Or the people? The protagonist questions the definition of the word *pendatang*, "Arrivals? Illegals?" (ibid, 123). In his mind, everyone is a *pendatang* at one time:

> Then, suddenly, their minds cannot repel anything, not the shadows, not the countries that come hurtling at them through time. The fear they have held on to leaves them. The boundary of their self-centered consciousness, breaks, and releases them into the continuum of a new awareness. And the people come through the centuries, their clothes patchy with history but their faces aglow with abstraction, aglow with enigmatic wholeness. Krishnan and Mat are specks of fascination in the tide of wholeness.
>
> And as specks of unenclosed awareness they flow along the banks of time, recognizing here a primeval adventurer, there an Alexander outdistancing their native lands; there is Buddha in his bubble of meditation and further down the Greek sages wrapped up in their own wisdom. Riding the time cells, they go past the cataclysm of nations at war, cultures in conflict and come to their own histories and see the conquistadors bringing their ships and their ways of living to the country's shores. There is no stopping time and soon Mr. Cuthbert come into their vision, puny and defeated, his personal history in tatters but his spirit shining through to the future. Then Mat and Krishnan come face-to-face with the figure of a man, historyless, moving on the current of discovery and when they look behind him there is nothing; when they look where he is looking there is a swirling mist of everything. (130)

The discontent, or rather disenchantment, is that which is referred to as the result of the 'myth' of the nation. It is the consequence of marginalization – when the minority feels they are to be sidelined from the mainstream. Krishnan's parents felt it and now he too feels it:

> Of late, he has been forced into thought by his disgruntled parents: they want to return to the country from which they came.
> "They can give up this land for a life they've known,' he thinks. "But what do I have to give up?"
>
> (p110)

Cheah Boon Kheng (2002: 235) asserts that nation building in Malaysia is based on the theme of making and sharing of the Malaysian nation among its multi-ethnic citizens. He claims that the willingness of the Malays and other *bumiputeras* (sons of the soil, or indigenous peoples) to share their notion and membership of their "Malay land" and "native lands" in the Malay peninsula and in the Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak, respectively with each other and with other ethnic communities who have migrated from India, China, the Middle East and the countries of Southeast Asia is the starting point of nation building in Malaysia. The significance of land and having possession of it are addressed in all three of Maniam's novels – *The Return*, *In A Far Country* (1993) and *Between Lives* (2003) – though in various ways.

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AMONG IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

> *"What better way to know the country than to hunt down a beast that knows it well?"*
>
> ("Haunting the Tiger", 1996)

The quotation above is an illustration of the way Maniam has constructed the issue of an immigrant's search for a sense of belonging to an adopted land in his short story "Haunting the Tiger". In this instance, the 'beast', namely the tiger, is synonymous to the territory it roams. As a writer of Indian origin, Maniam's perspective is intricately carved by multiple worldviews, his own Hindu spirituality and mythology as well as those of the other inhabitants of Malaysia. For here, the said beast is significant to the people of his homeland, Malaysia, and to those of India, the land of his grandparents. Hence, in the said story, why does the protagonist, born of immigrant parents, have to choose between two 'beasts' to claim his place in the land? Can he not amalgamate both to remain in the land as one? But can a hybrid beast be acceptable to everyone? Or can two 'beasts' occupy one space and co-exist peacefully? Or does one have to compromise for the other? If so, then which? These are among the socio-political concerns of immigrant communities that contribute towards the construction of a 'harmonious' nationhood which K.S. Maniam addresses through his literariness.

When talking about his story, "Haunting the Tiger", Maniam claims it "landscapes the interface between a dominant and a migrant culture. What is the relationship between these two cultures? What does it feel to give up one's own cultural heritage for the sake of being assimilated into the society of the adopted country?" (xi). His use of the tiger metaphor raises the question of whether a sense of belonging can be nurtured. Or is the bond naturally inherent in the people? Of concern here is the issue of national politics; to enforce social order and camaraderie among the different people, imposition of 'selected' will upon others has had to be recourse. Assimilation is necessary in nation building. For the protagonist, Muthu, he faces a choice of either identifying with the land in the way of the tiger or the chameleon. He is faced with a diasporic dilemma. To follow the tiger is the way that is continual and ritualistic immersion into the spirit of the land. The way of the chameleon is the blending into whatever economic, intellectual and social landscapes that are available. Faced with such a crossroad, which can Muthu choose?

The nation needs to be crafted through conscious planning and effort; this is the foundation for development of the Malaysian National Agenda that is to homogenize society. The identity construction of the nation involves exploration and experimentation. Maniam's protagonists question themselves consciously or otherwise; questions such as "Who are we?" and "Where do we belong?", can sometimes persist in haunting some people. What is the nature of the human spirit when it is conditioned by diaspora, migration, displacement and exile? To belong to a nation means to be connected to a community's way of life, their traditions and social practices, including their rituals and myths. Members of the community have to believe in these aspects. Notions of the other, however, can hamper the unity of the community, especially when the way of life, tradition, rituals and myths are diverse. In "Haunting the Tiger", the beast comes to symbolize the cultural elements of the land; to 'know' the tiger is to know the land and be one with it:

> ...Zulkifli seems to blend into the landscape. 'I'm the chameleon!' Muthu protests within himself. He is more than determined now to wrest the sight of the tiger out of the man.
> "I know what's wrong," Zulkifli says. "There's something foreign to the tiger's nose. He won't show himself until the smells are gone."
> Zulkifli fixes Muthu with a surveying stare. Muthu becomes nervous.
> "What smells?" he says.
> "Mind and body smells," Zulkifli says.
> Muthu is offended and turns away from him. Not in the way you can't go near a person," Zulkifli says confronting Muthu. "The clothes you wear, the thoughts you think. Where do they come from?"
> "They are just clothes and ideas," Muthu says.
> "They must fit into the place where the tiger lives."
> "Why must they fit in?" Muthu says. "I only want to break out from my father's hold on me."
> "So you brought a purpose with you?" Zulkifli says. "And a way of thinking. How can you get into the tiger's stripes and spirit?"
>
> (119-120)

In the extract above, the issue of assimilating to the 'local' (hence, recognizable by the tiger) is addressed by Maniam. It raises the issue to having to 'fit into the pace where the tiger lives' that is the land in order to belong. For Zulkifli, the

solution is easy: Muthu will have to shed his clothes and way of thinking so as to claim to be one with the tiger. But for Muthu, shedding his clothes means more than that. It means having to shed his own identity. That is the price of his assimilation.

Relevant also to the question of identity in a multi-cultural land is a post-modernist concept where "different worlds, cultures and ontologies are juxtaposed, superimposed, fragmented, restructured and wrought together in an impossible space," which Foucault calls "heteropoia" (Sardar 1998: 152). In such a space an implosion of different worlds occurs, where immigrants encounter the indigenous of the land. Immigrants are viewed as the Other, and in such an unrealizable space "the historical or contemporary reality of the Other becomes meaningless, a sense of location disappears, issues of identity evaporate and the Other is presented as an empty vessel into which can be poured the desires and concerns of the west" (ibid).

MULTI-ETHNIC COMMUNITIES AND A HARMONIOUS NATIONHOOD

Can a pluralistic society achieve unity? Fernandez (2004) believes that "harmony, amity and fraternity in a multi-racial society can be experienced not through mutual exclusive views, religious stubbornness, and forced assimilation of races, but through tolerance, sensitivity, and intended appreciation of the values of all races" (5). Understanding, love, mutual respect, integration of races are contributing elements to harmony while extremism, ultra-radical, racial and religious views are not. Different views have to be accommodated for the sake of promoting fellowship and peace. Achieving harmony means resisting ideals that are dehumanizing and despiritualizing; each ethnic group has to be willing to accommodate each other so as to foster a harmonious relationship with one another.

What is vital for nation building is the elements of 'adaptation' and 'adjustment', not just for the Indian immigrant community and their descendants but also all the other races living in Malaysia. Maniam has this to say regarding the matter of the diasporic concern:

> Just as the migrant has continually to adopt an accommodative sense and hybridize his approach to life in the new country, so too the exile-at-home. The latter, somewhat like the chameleon, seeks to inhabit, simultaneously, different intellectual, cultural and imaginative spaces. He is not only aware of his own culture but also of the cultures around him and of those inherited through his education and reading. He therefore occupies several cultural spaces just as he does several imaginative spaces; and add to this his tendency to expose himself to and assimilate various forms of philosophical and literary discourses and you have an almost complete profile of what I would like to call the new diasporic man.

The concept of nationalism is the expression of the unity commonly held by ties of race, religion, language and tradition; it also refers to the consciousness in individuals or groups of membership in a nation, or of a desire to forward the strength, liberty or prosperity of a nation, whether one's own or another (Kautsky 1968: 112). This definition is clearly an ideology and a movement that aims to unite

all who speak a single language and share a broadly common cultural heritage. For example in Malaysia, a similar concept of nationalism was one that was mooted by UMNO (United Malays National Organisation) as stated in *The Basis of UMNO's Struggle (Dasar Perjuangan UMNO): "Malay Political Parties and the Concept of Malay Nationalism"* (1971: 19-20):

> The theory of nationalism pursued by UMNO is a broad concept, in accordance with the method of democratic government and international acceptance, that is, while striving for the privileges, sovereignty, and priority of the owners of this country, UMNO also acknowledged that members of other races who have become citizens, those who have severed all connections and loyalty to their countries of origin, shall also receive specific rights as citizens of Malaya.

Attention is given to this condition given for members of other races to receive "receive specific rights as citizens of Malaya", they would first have to "become citizens, those who have severed all connections and loyalty to their countries of origin". For Malaysia, it is a society that is politically united but made up of communities divided by race, language, religion and historical experience. For nationalism to exist in a plural society the question of tolerance is thus pertinent in ensuring the acceptance of the new members by the existing nation. This is why in the Malaysian framework for nation-building, tolerance is encouraged. After 1969, Malaysia instated public policies, strategies and programs that sought to achieve national integration and unity. Even until today, one only needs to check the mass media nearing the National Day celebration and a barrage of nationalist slogans come through: Unity in Diversity; Muhibbah; etc.

For the immigrant community to belong to the new land, integration is an essential process that has to take place. But the question is in what way the integration should take place. Jayum A. Jawan (2003: 161) claims integration and unity are commonly used interchangeably. Thus, for a united Malaysian society to be manifested, the integration of the many ethnic groups has to be the framework of the nation building process. There are several types of integration, namely through assimilation, amalgamation and pluralism. Assimilation refers to "a process of interaction that in the end results in minority groups being assimilated by the majority group" where the minority adopts cultural characteristics of the dominant group, whether it is language, culture or religion (ibid: 162). This one way process can be cultural assimilation or acculturation and structural assimilation. In acculturation, minority groups acquire cultural characteristics from the host or dominant group, but they still retain their own socio-cultural identities. Structural assimilation refers to the success of minority groups in penetrating and participating in major institutions of the dominant group. Since independence, the Malaysian government has been encouraging the participation of all communities in its political and socio-economic agenda. Meanwhile, amalgamation is a process of biological integration; it can happen only through biology, namely the marriage between two individuals from different ethnic or racial background. The birth of a new identity is the amalgam that inherits the uniting traits. Lastly, pluralism simply refers to a number that is at least two (ibid: 164). The assumption is that all ethnic (and racial) groups are entitled to their socio-cultural, psychological and biological heritages. No group has the ultimate authority, moral or otherwise, to tell others that they should lose their identities and

adopt those of the host/dominant group. Differences are also natural and unavoidable among human groups; it is these diversities that are seen as strength for the nation.

National aspirations are also expected to be accomplished through the various Malaysian Plans:

- To achieve greater unity for 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 distributed
- To ensure a liberal approach to her rich & diverse cultural traditions
- To build a progressive society which shall be orientated to modern science & technology

Today, Malaysia has already completed eight Malaysian Plans and is currently in its Ninth. Different leaders contribute their framework to the nation building process. In 1991, the then Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamed implemented the Vision 2020 framework that aims to turn Malaysia into a fully developed country. Nine central strategic challenges were identified in order to achieve developed status:

- establishing a united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny
- creating a psychologically liberated, secure, and developed Malaysian Society with faith and confidence in itself
- fostering and developing a mature democratic society
- establishing a fully moral and ethical society
- establishing a matured, liberal and tolerant society in which Malaysians of all colours and creeds are free to practise and profess their customs,cultures and religious beliefs and yet feeling that they belong to one nation
- establishing a scientific and progressive society, a society that is innovative and forward-looking
- establishing a fully caring society and a caring culture, a social system in which society will come before self
- ensuring an economically just society – fair and equitable distribution of the wealth of the nation
- establishing a prosperous society, with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient

In 2004, the current Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, proposed the Islam Hadhari framework toward nation building. It was introduced in the Ninth Malaysia Plan as a "comprehensive and universal framework for the nation" to promote "a progressive developmental outlook" and "a moral society with strong religious and spiritual values". Islam Hadhari, or Civilisational Islam, is a theory of government based upon the principles of Islam as derived from the Holy Quran that seeks to emphasise development consistent with the central tenets of Islam. In particular, ten fundamental principles have been outlined and this includes faith and piety in Allah, a just and trustworthy government, and freedom and independence to the people

All these strategies are nation building projects that aim towards the process of shaping a 'national' culture through political means. Assimilation is the chief aim – that is process of bringing heterogeneous people into mainstream national culture – a homogenizing project that seeks to forge national consciousness and culture. Of national concern is that the needs of community is over and above the needs of individuality, and to achieve this there is the need for the selection of ONE culture over others. Even if it means the inclusion or exclusion of a particular culture, or even several cultures. This of course raises the issue of rights, individual and community. In "Arriving", this concern for ethnic and minority rights is addressed:

> Beneath Francis Lim's Christian sense of charity, Krishnan remembered seeing a violent self-possessiveness. They had been talking about the individual rights of the citizens in the country.
> "What individual rights?" he had almost thundered. "You take what you can and don't let go. Those are the only rights you have."
> "Chop-chop," Teng had said. "You fist, you knife, you gun. That give you what you want. You stand up somebody kick you down some more."
> And he had laughed, saying, "You know who that somebody." He was looking at Mat. But they had all laughed, including Mat, as if they all accepted the deceptions they practised on each other.
>
> (128)

CONCLUSION

The presence of the Indian diaspora in Malaysia since the late 19th century "has seen many changes to the constitution of a community that transplanted itself in new surroundings, equipped with a certain amount of cultural paraphernalia of the ancestral land, India" (Pillai, 2000). For K.S. Maniam, a writer of that descent, the "borders of his imagination do not taper inwards into that ethnic community that he grew up amongst...[at] certain junctures, they edge out of the perimeters of the compound of the Indo-Malaysian world, into the territories of the other communities sharing the same soil" (ibid). Maniam states:

> Something there is in the affairs of the world that resents the near complete expression of the self in its many and complex manifestations. The writer is therefore compelled to distort the familiar in order to reveal its transience; he is compelled to make accessible the strange in order to reveal an ignored reality. (x-xi).

Maniam's literary perspectives are testaments of his explorations of past, present psychology, conflicts & ambitions of the Indian community in Malaysia. His works attempt to "bring the precision of the English language to the versatility and depth of Hindu mythology and spirituality" (264). His perspective has an idiosyncratic 'Malaysian' quality that addresses, among others, emotions and experiences of a nation in growth, issues of identity, hybridity, sense of belonging and

identity, themes of alienation, and issues of identity, finding oneself. His narration has no parochial or communally chauvinistic attitude to it.

For Maniam, the Malaysian society is a heterogeneous one; there is non-availability of common source of collective images, symbols, myths as a system of references. Hence, the forging of a national consciousness of being one nation has many challenges and is an on-going process. There are no short cuts towards achieving harmony in society. Reconstruction and contestations are natural in the route toward the foundation of a new nation.

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Paper 2 **Hybridity and Harmony: Lessons from Yasmin Ahmad's Films *Rabun* and *Sepet***

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> I don't really get it when people say my films are Utopian. In "Rabun" a loving old couple get cheated by their own relatives whom they trusted, in "Sepet" the love of my heroine's life gets into a terrible accident, in "Gubra" nice people get beaten to death, and in "Mukhsin" a beautiful friendship is shattered by innocent love. I think my stories are actually quite dark. However they are always peppered with humour and moments of levity. Jack Lemmon once said, "It is hard enough to write a good drama, it's harder still to write a good comedy, and it's hardest of all to write a good drama with comedy. Which is what life is."[1]
>
> Yasmin Ahmad

Abstract

Yasmin Ahmad's films entitled *Rabun* (translated as blurred vision) and *Sepet* (translated as Slitty/Chinese eyes) have received positive reviews from the film industry (both locally and abroad) as well as the general audience. While *Rabun* generally touches on the issue of rural/urban divide, *Sepet* explores an inter-racial love story. Having originated from the Indie film scene, Yasmin's films are among the first to penetrate the mass market. Indeed, both films received several Best Film awards at local and international film competitions. One of the many major attractions of these films lies in their use of multi-racial actors to depict multicultural Malaysia. This depiction consequently attracts viewers from all ethnic backgrounds, breaking the elusive audience's racial demarcation. There is no denying that both films have been explored by many film critics and reviewers alike, especially on their depiction of interracial relationship. This paper, however, will look at Yasmin's depiction of hybridity, i.e. on how she creates narrative conflicts by hybridizing the characters. I would also argue that it is through the use of hybridity that the films finally arrive at harmonious endings; thus, reflecting Yasmin's vision of a harmonious society.

[1] This is taken from Yasmin Ahmad's blogspot.
(http://yasminthestoryteller.blogspot.com/search?q=sepet)

INTRODUCTION

Hybridity has been theorised in social sciences in order to cope with the growing awareness of social changes that are taking place in society. Generally speaking, it can come in three important forms: political, cultural and linguistics. One example of linguistic hybridity is the creation of a crealo language, which is the mixture of the native and the colonial language. Originating from biology and "referring to a selective breeding of plants to produce new varieties with specific qualities, its initial use in wider discourse was as a stigma in association with colonial ideas about racial purity and a horror of miscegenation".[2] With that in mind, the concept of hybridity in social sciences is often associated with negativity – with the idea of inquality and marginalization – that stems, more prominently, from xenophobia. This comes as no surprise as the "the idea of nation is often based on naturised myths of racial or cultural origin".[3] What this also tells us is that a hybrid subject, at least in social sciences, is seen as a sub-standard product.

The negative view surrounding the concept of hybridity especially as a sub-standard product of miscegenation has been perpetuated in the literary tradition. In the novel like Jean Rhy's *Wide Sargasso Sea,* for instance, the female character's hybridised subjectivity is portrayed as negative. The idea that "in the book [...] the dangers of such hybrids inevitably reverting to their 'primitive' traditions is highlighted throughout the novel."[4] However, this is eventually viewed as a myth by the more contemporary theorists on social development, especially with regards to transnationalism and diaspora. The more current view of hybridity perceives "hybridity [as] a fundamental feature of what is now commonly termed "the postmodern condition",[5] evoking the ironic sense of "balance".[6] This is indeed an ontological aspect of hybridity that reminds us of its apparent nature, that is, its "plurality".

The issue of plurality often hacks back to one important key concept in the theorisation of hybridity which is identity. Indeed, "hybridity is central to the way our popular culture is changing, as well as our sense of identity, both national and personal".[7] The question of identity has been at the forefront in the debate on the sense of belonging or 'home' (what is home?) of a the hybrid subject. The hybrid subject usually experiences the sense of being "neither here nor there"; thus reflecting its continuous struggle to define its spatial and temporal locations. It is within this struggle that a hybrid subject, to think as a postmodern irony, finds its strength to counter homogeny. What this does is that it creates an awareness in itself to create a space that not only questions but also celebrates difference, jettisoning its 'otherness'.

At the level of ideological symbolism, this 'positioning' of a hybrid subject within a 'in-between-space' – a hybrid space - has modulated its metaphoric status into a metonymic one. In effect, it can no longer be considered merely as the 'other', and that its status is real and has to be dealt with. Homi Bhabha, similarly, argues that

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[2] "Globalisation and Hybridity", p.11 (http://www.mediaed.org.uk/posted_documents/Hybridty.pdf)
[3] In "Hybridity" (http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEnglish/imperial/key-concepts/Hybridity.htm)
[4] Ibid.
[5] "Globalisation and Hybridity", p.11 (http://www.mediaed.org.uk/posted_documents/Hybridty.pdf)
[6] Brian McHale, p.2
[7] Globalisation and Hybridity, p. 11

"this space in an effort to open up the notion of an inter national culture "not based on exoticism or multi-culturalism of the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. "[8] Therefore, in my opinion, a hybrid subject is not only in the outside, it is also in the inside of the social structure. In a way, this 'in-between-space' can also be seen as 'trans-space'; thus evinces the hybrid subject's social mobility and fluidity.[9] This notion of 'trans-space', that is, a temporal-spatial indicator of a hybrid subject's mobility, is central to Yasmin Ahmad's narratives in *Rabun* and *Sepet*. In it lies the conflict that, as as result, illuminates Yasmin's strategy of constructing a harmonious society.

REVISIONING HYBRIDITY: OPTICAL OR MENTAL SIGHT IN *RABUN*?

Rabun is Yasmin Ahmad's first feature length movie. It tells the story of one elderly couple – Pak Atan and Mak Inom - who plans to move back to their own village after the husband's retirement. Therefore, these two characters inhibit the 'trans-space', that is, the space between their house in town and the one in the village. To survive the nature of their mobility, they have to rely on each other. Pak Atan suffers from 'rabun' or blurred vision due to old age. On the other hand, Mak Inom has the inexplainable ability to throw at something and hit her target while being blindfolded. It is via this opposing depiction that the narrative conflict is unravelled.

So, in what way are they a hybrid? I would argue that their hybridity is manifested in two ways. One, linguistic hybridity. The two characters communicate in two languages, Malay and English, to each other and to their daughter, Orked. Two, their excessive expression of romantic love. This excessiveness is so bizzarre that even their future son-in-law is also stunned by show of affection and intimacy. This is not to say that their 'otherness' is foregrounded here by Yasmin to highlight their hybridity. Instead, this 'otherness' in the eye of the other characters is a signal of their ability to mobilize beyond their spatial boundary. In my opinion, this is Yasmin's strategy to not only challenge one's perception of her hybrid main characters, but it is also used as an impetus for the narrative conflict. Hassan Mutalib aptly observes that these two characters are portrayed in such a way that they are good at "maintaining calmness amidst chaos and turbulence - this perfectly describes Mak Inom and Pak Atan."[10]

[8] Cited in "Hybridity", (http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEnglish/imperial/key-concepts/Hybridity.htm)

[9] Perhaps this is quite similar to what Homi Bhabha calls "The third space of Enunciation". In "Hybridity", ibid.

[10] *Rabun*, Criticine (http://www.criticine.com/review_article.php?id=12)

Picture One: Pak Atan and Mak Inom talking about the challenge that they are facing in an effort to make the village house their new home.

By the same token, Pak Atan's blurring vision or 'rabun' and Mak Inom's ability to hit a target while being blindfolded can be interpreted in three ways. First, they can be interpreted as a metaphor for their myiopic view of life, reflecting, ironically, their innocence and vulnerability. Second, they can be seen as a strategy of survival, and their inter-dependence on each other. Indeed, through Mak Inom, Yasmin is saying that optical vision is not an issue if one has a strong faith in oneself. Throughout the story, Mak Inom's voice can be heard loud and clear, making her an active character. In effect, she not only drives her husband around but also bathes him, a romantic scene that further strengthens the idea that they are complementing each other. Third, their characterisation can be seen to function as a mirror of the society that they are in. Their status as a hybrid allows them to have both enemy and friends. In a nutshell, all of the three interpretations can be concatenated and therefore viewed as the conflict that a hybrid subject has to encounter and fit into.

The issue of trying to fit in is manipulated by Yasmin to function as a dramatic irony. The two main characters initially are indeed blasé of their 'new' surrounding that they are not aware of being cheated by their own relatives, Yem. Yem is supposed to help Pak Atan and Mak Inom to settle down in the village. His job is to maintain the village house so that it will be comfortable for them to move into. Yem, an unemployed, lives with his stepmother. Mak Inom fully trusts him due to the fact that they are related. However, through the character Elvis, a constractor to work on the lawn of the house, that Mak Inom, to her chagrin, learns about Yem's dishonesty. The kind of relationship and trust that Mak Inom and Elvis are experiencing harks back to their similar position. Elvis is also a hybrid, a chinese guy with an English name. His ability to speak Malay and English to Mak Inom also points to their similarity as a hybrid subject. This similarity allows them to communicate well and to trust each other.

On the other hand, Yem is not a hybrid. Even though he is related to Pak Atan and Mak Inom, he sees the latter as his vulnerable target. He can see their vulnerability due to their position 'in-between-space', a position that he thought he could take advantage of. This causes a conflict of the story and it is therefore the result of Pak Atan and Mak Inom's hybridity. The climax of the conflict is when Yem, one night, eventually goes to their house and throws dead animal at the house. Realizing that there is an intruder in the vicinity of his house, Pak Itam goes after him. However, his eye-sight fails him and he becomes the victim of the intruder. On the other hand, Mak Inom who is left behind, is quite reluctant to follow suit. She, however, decides to throw a wooden stick to the intruder. This she does by closing her eyes, and expectedly, it hits him.

In solving the conflict that both Pak Atan and Mak Inom are facing, Yasmin chooses a surrealistic approach to the film ending. As a result, there is a sense of ambiguity in how the film ends, or to a great extent, begins. In the final scene, Yasmin shows Pak Atan and Mak Inom playing a game together with other characters in the story. They seem to be happy together and there seems to be any inherent animosity among them. This kind of ending can be perplexing to certain audience; however, this is one of the best ways for Yasmin to end a story. Without moralising the issue, she

opts to show that if differences are celebrated, people can live harmoniously with each other. In doing so, she also highlights the idea that through her hybrid characters, this is even more possible if they also learn to celebrate themselves.

WHAT HAS LOVE AT THE FIRST SIGHT GOT TO DO WITH IT? SEPET'S BEYOND THE MERE LOVE STORY

Sepet is Yasmin Ahmad's first commercial success. It is undeniable that it is this film that puts Yasmin on the map of the (Malaysian) film industry. Winning several awards locally and internationally, *Sepet* allows for an encounter with the uniqueness of Malaysians. Indeed, one reviewer comments on the film by saying that:

> "But what REALLY sets this movie aside from all the other Malaysian movies out there today, is that *Sepet* isn't just a deep love story with bright characters, it's a painfully realistic outlook into the world of city life in Malaysia"[11]

The reviewer is correct in pointing out the realistic depiction of Malaysia in the film as this has a lot to do with the way the film is shot. In effect, *Sepet* is shot in semi-documentary style, allowing her characters to inhibit the space that they want. Yasmin Ahmad, in her own blog, admits that:

> The film's opening moves from Sam Hui's yearning Cantopop song to Jason reading Indian poet Tagore's work in Chinese translation to his Peranakan (mixed Malay-Chinese descendant) mother, concisely framing the multi-Asian strands of Malaysian society and the film -- tradition and modernity, the Malay-Chinese-Indian pyramid, the purity and impurity of culture -- all set within a classic maternal metaphor.[12]

What Yasmin herself suggests by the 'purity and the impurity of culture" is the existence of a hybrid reality that moves between the two spaces.

The film evolves around, Orked, a 16-year-old Malay, and Jason or Ah Long, an 18-year-old, a pirated-vcd seller. Orked is of the Malay descent, and Jason is of the Chinese descent. They met when Orked went to buy her favourite Wong Kar-Wai's movie from Jason. That is the beginning of what seem to be a tragic love story. This scene is important because it highlights the idea that the two characters fall in love which other because they can identify with each other's similarity, despite the physical differences that the audience are likely to notice. This is the main motivation for the film to move beyond its love storyline.

[11] *Sepet*, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0433692/
[12] This is taken from Yasmin Ahmad's blog:
http://yasminthestoryteller.blogspot.com/2005_04_01_archive.html

Picture two: Interracial love story is used as the backdrop for the hybrid subject to 'know' each other in *Sepet*.

In the film, the love story is used as a platform for the representation of the hybrid subject to take place and how that hybridity becomes a narrative conflict. In effect, both Orked and Jason are hybrid subjects. Orked's father is a pan-Asian, played by Harith Iskandar. The family also uses two prodiminant languages, Malay and English, in the household. Jason's relationship with his mother also highlights his hybridity. He usually speaks to his mother in Cantonese; however, his mother always responds in Malay. This is because his mother, being a Peranakan Chinese, is a hybrid. Jason also speaks English to Orked, making them hybrid subjects. In addition to that, although Jason's real name is Ah Long, he wants Orked to know him as Jason, an anglo-name that further reinforces the idea of him being a hybrid subject. Consequently, their inherent hybridity helps them to immediately recognise each other's difference and similarity. What this shows is that a hybrid subject is more accepting of each other than others due to their position in-between-spaces.

Picture Three: Jason's (Ah Long) family having dinner together. Although Jason speaks Cantonese to his mother, her mother will respond in Malay.

Yasmin uses both characters to represent the conflict that a hybrid subject encounters. Orked, being a hybrid, finds it very difficult to fit in with her school friends. This is due to the fact that the space that she occupies is the 'trans-space', a spatial location that reflects her fluidity and difference. For that reason, Orked has to

learn to cope with the space that she inhabits, finding comfort in the company of Jason, who also inhabits the same 'trans-space'. For Orked, the 'trans-space' that she inhabits takes her away from the typical teenagers sexual fantasy. She refuses to be the sexual object of her male friends. She insists on her own fantasy; thus, having a "Chinese-eyed" boyfriend instead of Leonardo De Caprio's cheap immitation is what she desires most. Jason provides the space for that fantasy to take place and the failure for him to continually be her fantasy becomes the conflict of the story. Orked's fantasy is of a "pure" Jason - asian and virginal. However, upon knowing that Jason has made his Chinese girlfriend pregnant, her dreams shattered.

The conflict between Orked's fantasy that derives from her hybridity and Jason's own struggle to recognise his hybridity finds its point of confluence in the way the story ends. Orked decided to sever her relationship with Jason who steadfastly tries to keep the relationship intact. Upon knowing that it was only an allegation, Orked tries to find Jason, but to no avail. This is the time when Orked's realisation that Jason's existence as a hybrid can provide the platform that she needs to feel happy. On the way the airport to further her studies abroad, Orked cries her eyes out, regretting her action towards Jason. However, it is her mother, who is a hybrid subject, who wants her to take action that she will not regret. The ending of the film is rather ambiguous. In my opinion, this reflects Yasmin's reluctance to provide a narrative closure to the story. What Yasmin is trying to say is that the hybrid subject also needs to recognise its difference to learn to embrace who they are. In this case, Orked's refusal to accept Jason's hybridity is the course of the inharmounious ending.

CONCLUSION

Yasmin Ahmad's effort to focus on the hybridity of her characters and the fluidity of the social settings that they are in allows for the eventual celebration of differences. This sense of celebrating the difference results in the production of a harmonious society that lives together peacefully. In the case of *Rabun*, the hybrid nature of the main characters may be the cause of their initial alienation; nonetheless, it is in that very nature that the film finds its strength and comic relief, pointing to the ironic nature of the postmodern condition. The fact that Yasmin chooses to end the film in such a playful way, that is, by gathering all the characters to play a game together, highlights the idea that their initial misunderstanding and animosity are fugacious and can be countered if they are willing to accept their hybridity. On the contrary, the ambiguous ending of *Sepet* may provide an example of a tragic ending of a society that denies the inevitable arrival and existence of a hybrid subject. Yet, it also points to the solution of the problem, that is, only through the celebration of hybridity and not the profligation of the other party – with the eventual acceptance of another's difference – that hybridity can be seen as progressive.

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Paper 3 Thai-Malaysia Relations: Celebrating 50 years of "Harmonious" Co-Existence

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Abstract

The paper will examine Thai-Malaysia relations in the last 50 years, focusing on the aspect of geo-political security. Geopolitical security, a main area of concern in Thai-Malaysia relations, has direct implications on the social and political harmony of both these countries. This is especially so since both countries share a common border and a long history of diplomatic relations. While both Malaysia and Thailand have maintained neighborly harmony, and in the spirit of alliance and friendship, have ensured peaceful co-existence, there have been intermittent periods of tension. This situation of "*neither in complete harmony nor in total conflict*" is most clearly seen in the case of the insurgency in southern Thailand, centering on Muslim minorities' agitation for separation or autonomy from the Thai state. On the one hand, Malaysia is "accused" of being partisan to the Muslim cause, while on the other, the Thai Muslims are "frustrated" by the lack of support from Kuala Lumpur towards their plight. Yet, officially, Kuala Lumpur claims a neutral stand towards the problem. This situation has tended to create a divide between the two countries. Thailand is generally seen as being pro-west (i.e. US), while Malaysia is anti-west and less liberal. Bangkok is also perceived as being less-tolerant of Islam while Malaysia is projected as an Islamic state. The scenario tends to indicate that Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur adopt different strategies in dealing with security concerns; and if the southern insurgency continues unabated, Kuala Lumpur-Bangkok relations may be harmed in the long run. Contrary to this assumption, I argue in this paper, that the Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok governments operate on a similar premise/framework. Both governments, led by a dominant party (i.e. UMNO/Malaysia, Democrat, TRT etc /Thailand) are "secular" in approach and are "cautious" of religious fundamentalism. This trend is dictated by the domain in which both nations operate, namely plural societies, and in the context of increasing regionalization and globalization. Citing a few issues in Thai-Malaysia bilateral relations in more recent times, this paper will demonstrate that the basis for the "harmonious" co-existence of both countries is to a large extent negotiated and determined by the predominant political parties which form the governments.

Introduction

Early Thai-Malay relations can be traced back to the time of the oldest Malay state, Kedah. During this period, Kedah and other states such as Temasek (old Singapura) sought the patronage and protection of the militarily powerful Siamese state. The ornamental gold and silver tree is perhaps the most known and illustrative aspect of traditional Thai-Malay relations. While the Siamese claim that the offering was a symbol of tribute in recognition of Siamese overlordship, the Malay states viewed the offering as a token of friendship and alliance. Thus the Siamese tended to view its relations with the Malay states as one between states of unequal status, while the Malay states tended to view their diplomatic relations with the Thai state as one among friends.[1] The contrasting views tended to contribute to a period of "defensive" co-existence with intermittent periods of friendship, alliance and war. Nonetheless, there was a free and fluid movement of people and exchange of goods between Thai and Malay states throughout this period.

However, the signing of the Anglo- Siamese Treaty of 1909, and the consequent demarcation between Thai and Malayan territories made the borders between the territories less porous. Thereafter issues of security, smuggling of goods and lawlessness along the border regions became a matter of prime concern in Thai-Malay diplomatic relations. Other issues too began to surface, for instance, heightened sense of Malay consciousness, activities of separatist movements in the predominantly Malay provinces in the southern Thai border as well as the presence of communist hideouts in the jungles along the border. These issues had serious security implications for both sides and have at times caused a strain in neighborly relations.

Roots of Co-operation: Fighting Separatism and Communism (1940-1960s)

In the mid-1940s, as WW II came close to an end, British policy makers began to discuss the need for an international security system in the Siamese-Malayan border region, stretching from the Kra Isthmus to the northern Malay states. The Thai government, on the other hand, had to deal with the activities of pro-independence movements in the southern Malay provinces during this period. Across the border, in Malaya, a heightened sense of Malay nationalism following the proposal by the British administrators to provide equal citizenship to all races in the country provoked Malay anger and triggered a mass movement of patriotism focusing on the issue of the sovereignty of the Malay Rajas, the Malay land and Malay rights. Events in Malaya inspired the Malays of south Thailand to defend the sovereignty of their territory against Thai rule. This was a period of intense Malay consciousness and posed a problem for both the British government in Malaya as well as the Thai state. In the post WW II days, resistance and separatist activities began to gain momentum with the founding of organizations such as the *Gabungan Melayu Patani Raya* (GEMPAR), founded in 1948 with the aim of uniting the Malays of south Thailand and to seek separation from Siam. In response, Bangkok began a crackdown on suspected Malay separatist leaders, who in turn fled to British Malaya seeking refuge.

It was amidst this political milieu that both Thailand and Malaya began to work together to ensure peace in the region. Co-operation at this stage included the sharing of intelligence between both countries, mainly to suppress anti-state organizations such as GEMPAR. Furthermore, the communist threat in the region in the post WW II days, particularly in the 1950s, pushed both sides to join hands to contain the activities of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) and the spread of the communist ideology. By early 1949, both governments signed the Thailand-Malayan Frontier Agreement on CPM (1949); it was the first in a series of numerous other bilateral agreements between the Thai and Malayan authorities.[2]

Even after the end of the emergency, the border areas remained under threat from defeated/exiled members of the CPM who were operating in the deep jungles and mountains of south Thailand. Troubled by CPM's alleged instigation and recruitment of people living in the border areas for guerrilla activities, the Thai and Malayan governments, acknowledging mutual-dependency in maintaining security along their common borders, established the Thai-Malayan Border Committee. The Committee founded in 1965 aimed to facilitate Thai-Malaysia military actions against communist activities and for general policing of the frontier areas.

Separatist Movements: Thorn in Thai-Malay Relations (1970s)

In the 1970s, the Thai government stepped up its efforts at containing separatist movements largely as a result of the activities of organizations such as the National Liberation Front of the Pattani Republic (NLF). This was a period of mutual suspicion between the Thai and Malaysian governments and a general sense of mistrust prevailed. The activities of the CPM in Thailand and the alleged support for dissenting groups in south Thailand from individuals and groups in Malaysia were the root causes of the bilateral disputes. [3]

Malaysia accused Thailand of harboring ex-CPM members and showing a lack of commitment towards eliminating this guerrilla group. Thailand, on the other hand, named the support given by political parties such as PAS (Parti Islam Malaysia) towards the secessionist movement in Thailand and the constant aid received by this group from Muslim countries as a threat to its internal security. The rise in religious fundamentalism and Islamic militancy particularly in the northern Malaysian state of Kelantan alarmed the Malaysian government which feared serious political repercussions domestically. The Malaysian government was walking a political tightrope at home; Kuala Lumpur therefore steered clear from the southern Thai issue by declaring that it was Thailand's internal problem. [4]

The situation described above is illustrative of the both the Malaysian and Thai government's stand on the issue of insurgency in the predominantly Muslim area of south Thailand. Fearing political backlash in the country, Malaysia refrained from interfering or providing assistance to the Thai Muslims. There are two possible reasons for this; first, Bangkok is an immediate neighbor with whom Malaysia shares a border and the matter is

clearly within Thai jurisdiction. Second and more importantly, the security threats that the situation presented namely the activities of Islamic groupings and their ultra-religious stance could upset the local social fabric of multi-ethnic, multi-religious Malaysia. Thailand too faced a similar situation; Malaysia's involvement would underscore Malay-Muslim solidarity and inspire religious-ethnic based movements to step up their demand for autonomy and separation. The primary aim of the power elites of Malaysia and Thailand was to maintain stability as well as regime security. In other words, maintaining the power, authority and legitimacy of the respective governments (or ruling party/monarch) is the priority of Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok. For Kuala Lumpur, regime refers to the ruling government, in particular UMNO, as opposed to opposition parties such as the PAS, whereas, for Bangkok, it refers to the coalition government led by the predominant party, while also mindful of the interests of the Thai monarchy.

By the 1980s, Thai military crack down on militants had disposed most of the NLF members. Most of the leaders fled Siam and lived in exile in foreign countries, creating a period of relative peace in the border region. Relations between Thailand and Malaysia too improved. From working together on security matters, both governments moved on to work closely on economic matters. The rationale was that through mutual economic development, security along the borders of the two nations could be enhanced. But on the issue of the southern insurgency, Malaysia from being a neutral observer began to lend-a-hand to the Thai government, thus acknowledging the problem and the possible spill-over of trouble into Malaysia.

Bridging Trust: Thai-Malaysia Relations (1980s-1990s)

The repatriation of Thai-Malay dissidents who had sought refuge in Malaysia back to Thailand by Malaysian Premier Mahathir Mohammad was a crucial turning point in the history of Thai-Malaysia relations. It was clear that Malaysia showed little tolerance for run-away dissidents and refugees. In 1982, during a visit to Thailand, Prime Minister Mahathir stressed that:

> "the Malaysian government is not supporting the insurgency in south Thailand, but that some other people in Malaysia might be. My government is not going to tolerate anything that would sour relations between Thailand and Malaysia".[5]

From treating the matter as a Thai internal problem, Malaysia openly addressed the sensitive issue of the insurgency in south Thailand, and indicated its willingness to support Thai efforts to quell the disturbances there. Mahathir's forthright approach put Malaysia- Thai relations on a better, less distrusting, platform.

In the last two decades, Mahathir consistently advocated a policy of non-intervention in the affairs of its neighbors. The Premier vehemently speaks against separatist movements in the region. Visiting Thailand again in 1993, Mahathir reiterated Malaysia's stand against the insurgency and pledged to "co-operate with Thai security

forces to suppress criminal activity along the border".[6]. As if to prove his stand, in 1997, the government of Malaysia handed over to Thai authorities three members of the militant-PULO who were captured in Kuala Kangsar, Malaysia after detaining them under Malaysian law for nine days. The handing over of the captured members to the Thai authorities via the Rantau Panjang-Sungai Golok Friendship Bridge was widely reported in local dailies.

While Mahathir's non-interventionist policies were based on the idea of the inviolability of political borders and state systems and were responsible for the repatriation of several dissident Thai-Malays to Thailand, his later policies advanced the importance of prospering together through economic growth. Through its five-year plans and joint economic groupings with neighbors such as Thailand (IMT-GT), Singapore and Indonesia (IMT-GT and SIJORI), Malaysia advanced the notion of maintaining security through development.[7]

This was also a period when regional security was no longer defined in ideological terms as was the case during the cold-war period. The change directed the focus of governments from traditional to non-traditional or soft approaches in security policies. Focusing on economic development belonged to the latter category. Also, given the rise in religious fundamentalism and terrorism, the change in the policy and attitude towards maintaining security was seen as necessary. The need to jointly combat threats to regime maintenance, stability and economic prosperity became imperative. Thus, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok adopted similar strategies.

In terms of security cooperation, the Regional Border Committee Office (RBCO), based in Songkhla and staffed by members of the armed and police forces of both countries was set up. The aim of RBCO is to work together to counter security threats to the respective nations as well as to share intelligence on the situation along the borders of both countries. On the Thai side, the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) was set up in 1989 by then PM Prem Tinsulanond. The SBPAC was intended to act as a crisis management institution, and to some extent has been instrumental in maintaining peace in the southern Thai areas.

Southern Insurgency: Renewed Tensions (2000-2006)

The recent unrest and turmoil in the southern Thai states of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, escalating since Jan 2004, has put a damper on Thai-Malaysia relations. While Malaysia's official stand on the issue is non-interference considering the matter is Thailand's s domestic problem, numerous events and exchanges between the leaders of the countries have sparked tension. Although overtly it appears that both parties are on the opposite side of the coin, a closer look at some of the issues relating to the state of insurgency and lawlessness in the southern Thai border provinces indicate that KL and Bangkok are in fact operating on a similar premise/framework and both are concerned with regime survival. The incidents/issues highlighted below underscore this point.

(I) Issue of Dual-citizenship and Asylum Seekers

Both the Thai and Malaysian governments have had to deal with the problematic issue of dual citizenship. Allegations of southern Thai Muslims holding both Thai and Malaysian citizenship has been cited as one of the problems in identifying and arresting persons involved in the southern conflict. There is a tendency among suspected insurgents to cross over the border asserting Malaysian citizenship in order to avoid arrest by the Thai authorities. Malaysia's open admission of the existence of the problem of dual citizenship and its subsequent stand to cooperate with Thai authorities in addressing the issue is indeed a positive development in Thai-Malaysia bilateral relations.

Both parties generally adopt negotiation and informal diplomatic strategies to overcome problems or strained relations due to certain events or incidents. The incident in Sept 2005 in which 131 Thai Muslims fled across the southern Thai border seeking refuge in Malaysia's northern state of Kelantan is a case in point. Although initially refusing to return these "asylum seekers", stating that the 131 people were refugees on Malaysian territory, Kuala Lumpur eventually sought the help of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission on Refugees) to help in mediating or resolving the issue. This is in fact a departure from the norm in Malaysia-Thai bilateral relations. Instead of negotiating with the Thai authorities or "repatriating" the refugees, Malaysia sought to internationalize the matter by calling in the UN agency. In fact, according to Suhrke and Noble, in the earlier decades of the conflict in the south, "the commanding governmental power- the Malays in Malaysia- did their best to ensure that the conflict would not be internationalized".[8]

Malaysia's decision therefore reflects a change in the hitherto "harmonious" Thai Malaysia relations, pointing to possible tensions in their bilateral relations. The decision is also indicative of the contemporary "domestic threats" faced by Malaysia's central decision makers (i.e. the Malay elites of the ruling UMNO) on the maintenance of its authority and core values that the party espouses. The refugees sought hostage in the northern Malay state of Kelantan where the ruling government is led by the Islamic based PAS. UMNO's direct involvement would have had two impacts: supporting the 131 Malay (Muslim) refugees to remain in Kelantan would have won approval from PAS and conversely repatriating them would have won criticisms of UMNO being unsympathetic to fellow Muslims and therefore the party branded "un-Islamic". Meanwhile, supporting the refugees on the basis of their ethnicity and religion would indicate to non-Muslims in Malaysia, UMNO's "Islamic" slant and create possible political and economic instability at home. This is not to imply that UMNO is unsympathetic to fellow Muslims but it has always been led by moderate Malays who have sustained the interests of the Malays through the concept of *ketuanan Melayu* (Malay "moderate" hegemony). The current regime's approach to Islam, otherwise known as *Islam Hadhari* as advocated by PM Abdullah Badawi is reminiscent of this moderate approach; it accepts universal core values of Islam and rejects radicalism. The more fundamentalist Islamic groupings are by far less moderate in their approach and UMNO is mindful of the threat this creates to maintaining multiracial peace and stability in Malaysia. Thus by calling in the UNHCR, UMNO has remained secular in its approach to regime security while at the same time

avoid being branded as Islamic or un-Islamic, for these "categories" have serious repercussions when Malaysians go to the polls.

The Bangkok government is also confronted by a similar situation. Bangkok has always been seen as extending Buddhist hegemony by its Malay Muslim population; a factor which has caused the long unresolved conflict between the Malay Muslims and the Thai state. The situation has made Bangkok susceptible to criticisms at home (from its citizens) as well as from international organizations such as Amnesty International. Like Malaysia, maintaining regime security for Bangkok is determined by its ruling elites namely the elites of the ruling political parties.[9] Thai governments have traditionally held a secular approach to security issues, for they have long had to deal with ethnic minority grievances from among the northeasterners/Lao, tribal groups (Karen), religious minorities (Malay Muslim) and Buddhist groups. The Thai governments are no strangers to the volatile issues of ethnicity and religion vis-à-vis stability and regime security. Furthermore, Malaysia's direct involvement in the case would also impinge on the "sovereignty" of Thailand- namely its ability to handle what it claims "domestic matters". Essentially, the core values espoused by the power elites of both governments are similar, thus their approaches to regime security also seems to indicate much similarities.

(II) Malaysia's attempts to mediate peace

Domestic politics apart, external events taking place on the international stage have forced Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok to review their approach to national and regional security. In particular, the events of the last four years (2004-2007) have also prompted a phase of renewed understanding and greater cooperation among Thai and Malaysian governments. Both are committed to maintaining peace considering the prevailing threat of separatist movements, transnational crime and the larger global terror network. Apart from sharing intelligence, Thailand and Malaysia have co-operated in fighting terrorism and terrorist-network cells belonging to militant groups such as the Jemaah Islamiyah and Al-Qaeda.

In addition, Malaysia's role in facilitating the peace process between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) clearly indicates Malaysia's efforts at promoting peace in the region. To quote S.P Harish of the Asia Times:

> it is not in Malaysia's interest to support the militants, backing the rebels would inevitably mean an increase in violence and economic repercussions on both sides of the border.[10]

More recently, in advancing the spirit of good neighborliness through the ASEAN Way, Malaysia offered to train Malay youths from south Thailand in religious and vocational training. In reciprocation, Thailand has shown keen interest in seeking Malaysia's help to mediate between the Thai government and the southern separatists. These developments have accelerated cooperation within the framework of security as well as the JDA (economic) and related areas under the rubric of functional co-operation.