

MAHIDOL - UKM III

THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL MALAYSIA-THAILAND
CONFERENCE ON SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES



Defining Harmony in Southeast Asia: Competing discourses, challenges and interpretations

29 NOVEMBER – 1 DECEMBER 2007

PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACT BOOK

Venue:

Mahidol University International College (MUIC)
Salaya Campus, Nakhon Pathom
Thailand

Jointly organized by:

Mahidol University International College
Thailand

Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

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‘Defining Harmony in Southeast Asia: Competing Discourses, Challenges and Interpretations’

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the Third International Malaysia-Thailand Conference on Southeast Asian Studies. This conference is the fruit of an ongoing cooperative project between MUIC and the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and I am particularly pleased to welcome our colleagues from Malaysia here today: you have become our friends, and now are our honoured guests.

We gathered first just over four years ago in October 2003, here at Salaya, under the conference theme of 'Malaysia and Thailand in the 21st Century. Next, two years ago, we met again, in UKM's splendid campus at Bangi to discuss issues under the heading of 'Dialogue Across Borders: Cooperation Amidst Cries'. Today, you return to Salaya and the conference theme is 'Defining Harmony in Southeast Asia: Competing Discourses, Challenges and Interpretations'.

Let me express the hope that our discussions over the next few days will prove stimulating and illuminating, and that this developing partnership between our two institutions will go forward from strength to strength.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ch. Brockelman".

PROF. CHARIYA BROCKELMAN
Director
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE



MESSAGE FROM THE SOCIAL SCIENCE DIVISION CHAIRMAN

On behalf of all members of the Social Science Division at MUIC may I offer you all a most warm welcome to this Third International Malaysia-Thailand Conference on Southeast Asian Studies organized jointly with our friends and colleagues at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

When we last met, two years ago in Bangi, our friends at UKM provided us with a memorable few days for the thoughtful exchange of ideas as well as an introduction to the gracious hospitality of Malaysian culture. Now, it is our turn to reciprocate. So, let me say how pleased we are to see you here and I trust that our discussions together will prove to be as productive and enlightening as those at our last meeting.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Smith".

ASSOC. PROF. PETER SMITH
Social Science Division
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

DAY ONE: Thursday 29 November 2007

Time	Venue/Theme	Programme
8:00-9:00	Seminar Room (1210)	Registration
9:00-9:30		Welcome Coffee
9:30-10:00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcome speech by Director, Mahidol University International College, Professor Dr. Chariya Brockelman
10:00-11:00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcome speech by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Industry and Community Relations), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Professor Dr. Saran Kaur Gill
11:00-12:00	Seminar Room (1210) Chairperson: Dr. Peter Smith	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>FIRST PLENARY SESSION</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharifah Mastura Syed Abdullah (UKM) Transboundary Haze: The Role of Malaysia and ASEAN
12:00-13:00	Salaya Pavilion Hotel	LUNCH
13:00-14:00	Salaya Pavilion Hotel Chairperson: Dr. Peter Smith	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>SECOND PLENARY SESSION</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Saran Kaur Gill (UKM) The Complexities of Language Concerns in a Multi-Ethnic Nation
14:00-16:00	Salaya Pavilion Hotel Session 1: Education and Communication Chairperson: Dr. Peter Smith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kaewta Muangasame & Naphawan Chantradoan (MUIC) Crisis Communication Plan: A Case of the Negative Events in Thailand and Effects on Tourism Businesses - Tang Siew Mun (UKM) Searching for Security through the Haze: An Examination of the Complexities of Intra-ASEAN Cooperation - Nicholas Ferriman (MUIC) A Comparison of the Impact of the Home Literacy Environment on the L1 Reading Frequencies of Students from Two Different Universities: Implications for the Learning of an L2

Time	Venue/Theme	Programme
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Takayoshi Fujiwara & Brian J. Phillips (MUIC) Personal Epistemological Development during the Undergraduate Education: Beliefs about Knowledge and Knowledge Acquisition of Thai University Students
16:00-16:30	Salaya Pavilion Hotel	Coffee Break
16:30-18:30	<p>Salaya Pavilion Hotel</p> <p>Session 2: Manifestations of Harmony</p> <p>Chairperson: Dr.Marja-Leena Heikkilä-Horn</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Noraini Md. Yusof (UKM) Trading Spaces: An Analysis of the Immigrant Communities and Their Compromise for Harmony in Selected K.S.Maniam's Fiction - Jamaluddin bin Aziz (UKM) Hybridity and Harmony: Lessons from Yasmin Ahmad's Films <i>Rabun</i> and <i>Sepet</i> - Kavithan Ganesan (UMS) Being Indian VS Being Malaysian in K.S. Maniam's Selected Works; A Portrayal of Struggle for Assimilation within Mainstream Society - Mala Rajo Sathian (UM) Thai-Malaysia Relations: Celebrating 50 Years of 'Harmonious' Co-Existence
19:00-21:00	Salaya Pavilion Hotel	RECEPTION DINNER

DAY TWO: Friday 30 November 2007

Time	Venue/Theme	Programme
9:00-10:00	Salaya Pavilion Hotel Chairperson: Dr. Wariya Chinwanno	<u>THIRD PLENARY SESSION</u> - Lalita Sinha (Universiti Sains Malaysia) Harmonious Echoes from the Past: An Esoteric Interpretation of Hang Tuah's Journey to India
10:00-12:00	Salaya Pavilion Hotel Session 3: Religion and Ethnicity Chairperson: Dr. Wariya Chinwanno	- Jayum A. Jawan, Zaid Ahmad & Mohd Mahadee Ismail (UPM) Religious Tolerance in Malaysia: A Case Study in the Peninsular - Marja-Leena Heikkilä-Horn (MUIC) Challenges to Ethnic Harmony in Burma: A Historical Overview - Thanida Boonwanuo (CU) Marginalization as a Result of Statelessness: A Case Study of the Thai Undocumented People from Rom Thai Village - Patise Chuaykunoopakan (MUIC) Historical Ethno-Symbolism and the Study of the Mon Ethnicity in Thailand
12:00-13:00	Salaya Pavilion Hotel	LUNCH
13:00-15:00	Salaya Pavilion Hotel Session 4: Policies and Politics Chairperson: Dr. Matthew Copeland	- Ismail Suardi Wekke & Sidratahta Mukhtar (UKM & UI) Students' Movement and Political Participation: Research on the Associations of Islamic Students in Indonesia - Suprajaka & Ratnawati Yuni Suryandari (University of Gadjah Mada & UKM) Inequitable Land Usage in East Java (1971-2005): Impact on the Socio-Cultural Livelihood of Farmers - Eugene Jones (MUIC) Southeast Asia in the New Cold War: A Socialist Analysis
15:00-15:30	Salaya Pavilion Hotel	Coffee Break
15:30-17:30	Salaya Pavilion Hotel Room 1 Session 5: Language in ASEAN Chairperson: Dr. Saran Kaur Gill	- Yuyun Wahyuningrum (MU) Searching Harmony in Asean Relationship with Civil Society - Umaiayah binti Haji Umar (UM) Language and Ethnic Relations –A Case study on Reverse Situations: Thais, a Minority in Kedah Malaysia and Malays a Minority in Pathum Thani in Thailand - Noraini Ibrahim (UKM) Maintaining Harmony at Work: The Role of the Judge in the Malaysian Courtroom

Time	Venue/Theme	Programme
15:30-17:30	<p>Salaya Pavilion Hotel Room 2</p> <p>Session 6: Education and Youth</p> <p>Chairperson: Dr. Lalita Sinha</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dale Rorex (MUIC) Pedagogical Thoughts: Education, Critical Literacy, and Cultural Identity in a Democratic Society - Tan Kim Hua (UKM) Maintaining Harmony in Online Chats - Lynken Ghose (MU) Competing Views of Higher Education - Ninja Weissinger (MUIC) Cultural Globalization: The Impact of the Farang on Thai Identity

DAY THREE: Saturday 1 December 2007

Time	Venue/Theme	Programme
9:00-10:30	Salaya Pavilion Hotel Session 7: Migrant Workers Chairperson: Dr. Tang Siew Mun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Azizah Kassim (UKM) Ethnic Diversity & Cross-Border Migration in Malaysia: Identifying Areas of Conflicts & Coalition - Ismail Suardi Wekke & Cholichul Hadu (UKM & U Airlangga) Migrant Worker and Cultural Identity: A Bridge between Cultures - Peichun Han (Waseda University) Hidden Inbetween-ness: An Exploration of Taiwanese Transnational Identity in Contemporary Japan - Jan Tahir Babar (Uppsala University) Legal Protection, Integration and Development for Migrant Worker in GMS
10:30-11:00	Salaya Pavilion Hotel	Coffee Break
11:00-13:00	Salaya Pavilion Hotel Room 1 Session 8: Gender Issues Chairperson: Dr. Eugene Jones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zaharah Hassan (UKM) Women's Leadership Styles in Promoting Community Development - Bahiyah Dato Hj Abdul Hamid et al. (UKM) Linguistic Sexism and Gender Role Stereotyping in Malaysian English Language Textbooks - Rashila Ramli & Saliha Hassan (UKM) Women and Political Development in Malaysia: New Millennium, New Politics - Sivapalan Selvadurai et al. (UKM) Harmonizing Personal and Social Perspectives: An Understanding of Women's Entrepreneurship in Malaysia
11:00-13:00	Salaya Pavilion Hotel Room 2 Session 9: Tradition and Family Chairperson: Dr. Dale Rorex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wariya Chinwanno (MU) The Beliefs in the Medical Treatment According to the Folk Rituals: A Case Study of the Folk Medical Doctors in the Utong District Suphanburi. - Fuziah Kartini Hassan Basri (UKM) What's Hip, What's Hop?: Disharmonized Representations of Gender in Music Videos - Delvi Wahyuni & Silfia Hanani (UKM) Economic Activities in a Matrilineal Culture: A Case Study of the Travelling Merchant in Minangkabau Villages in Indonesia - Matthew Copeland (MUIC) Demographic Representation and Thai Family Values

Time	Venue/Theme	Programme
13:00-14:00	Salaya Pavilion Hotel	LUNCH
14:00-15:00	Salaya Pavilion Hotel	Final Panel Discussion
15:00-15:30	Salaya Pavilion Hotel	Closing Ceremony
15:30		Free evening. Programme can be organized.

ABSTRACTS

PLENARY SESSION 1:

Transboundary Haze: The Role of Malaysia and ASEAN

*Sharifah Mastura Syed Abdullah
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

This paper provides a review of transboundary haze pollution. It defines the issues and traces the history of the episodic haze occurrences since late 1980's. The paper also examines the management responses to the challenges both for Malaysia and Indonesia and for all other affected ASEAN member countries. At present, Malaysia and other ASEAN countries are increasingly faced with air quality deterioration due to internal air pollution problems as well as transboundary haze pollution from neighboring countries. The main cause of the internal pollution is the process of economic development while the transboundary pollution, i.e. haze, is intentional land clearing attributed to commercial oil palm and timber plantations, forest fires, illegal logging practices and activities of local small holders. The haze pollution is episodic in nature. The level of pollution is measured by Air Pollution Index (API) which is derived based on five pollution contents of SO₂, O₃, CO, NO₂ and PM10. The 1997 haze episode has affected Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Indonesia (Southern Sumatra and Southwest Borneo). All these countries expressed unhealthy conditions for more than 50% of the time while Kuala Lumpur and most part of Southern Sumatra recorded hazardous level where API reading exceeded 301. Other haze episodes were recorded in April 1983, August 1990, September 1997, August 2005 and mid July 2006. Management responses on these episodes included setting up of various ASEAN initiatives such as the implementation of regional haze action plan; the Asean agreement on transboundary haze pollution; the Asean peatland management initiative; the zero-burning and controlled burning guidelines; and the activation of the panel of ASEAN experts on fire and haze assessment and coordination. It was estimated that 6 million acres of forest were burned while 70 million people were directly affected by the pollution. The economic cost of the 1997 haze episode was almost USD1.4 billion. Indonesia's losses were attributed to short term health cost while cost to Malaysia exceeded USD300 million mainly from the industrial production losses and lost revenues from big drop in tourism. Singapore lost USD60 million mainly from drop in tourist visits. Long term cost such as damage to health was not taken into account. Transboundary pollution is a multi-faceted problem affecting several ASEAN member countries. An integrated approach is needed to alleviate the problem, including the role of civil societies and the support of the NGOs. The effectiveness of ASEAN cooperation depends not only on full commitment of each member country but also their capacity to meet their respective obligations as stipulated in these agreements and regional plans.

PLENARY SESSION 2:

The Complexities of Language Concerns in a Multi-Ethnic Nation

*Saran Kaur Gill
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

This paper will highlight aspects of language complexities that concern both the majority and minority communities in Malaysia's multi-ethnic and multi-lingual landscape. These are challenges that resonate with the concerns of most citizenry in many other multi-lingual and multi-ethnic nations. These are linguistic complexities coloured by the needs of nation building at varying points in time and which can lead to both harmony and disharmony amongst varying ethnic groups.

In the Malaysian context, this begins with the post-independence period of the post-colonial shift in language policy from English to Bahasa Malaysia. This raises the need for developing a symbol of national identity and unity, which posed great challenges for the institution and modernization of Bahasa Malaysia as national language and language of education. In the wake of the 21st century, Malaysia has faced once again one of the greatest challenges in language policy in planning – this is the shift in language of education from Bahasa Malaysia to English for science and technology. The paper will unravel the macro-reasons that have led to this drastic situation and give voice to the former Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed, who was instrumental for this change. Against this backdrop arises one of the present challenges faced by many nations across the globe – this is the challenge of maintaining and sustaining both national collective and ethnic community linguistic identities in the face of both international and national linguistic dominance.

SESSION 1: EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION

Paper 1 Crisis Communication Plan: A Case of the Negative Events in Thailand and Effects on Tourism Businesses

*Kaewta Muangasame & Naphawan Chantradoan
Mahidol University International College*

Crisis management strategy has recently become a very critical business concern, particularly when the organizations need to cope with impulsive circumstances such as the natural disasters, the unstable economy, and the acts of terrorism, etc. It is clearly essential to apply the preparedness strategy which leads to effective solutions for the problems arose. This article is centred on how Crisis Communication upon negative events could harmonize the related organisation and generate the impacts to the tourism businesses in case of negative events in Thailand. The tourist purchasing decision was investigated and analysed to see how much media influences the behaviour of the customers in their decision making.

This paper has covered the tourist decision making behavior and its implication. Tourism is a demand-driven industry, and the crises and disasters determine strong fluctuations in the tourism demand. However when digging further into its root, demand was not only affected by the external determinants, the internal determinants also play a very important role. It was found that the number of tourists visiting Phuket after the Tsunami crisis has increased enormously, and this was because the personal determinants of the tourists. Numbers of the tourists who visit Phuket after the Tsunami said that they wanted to come back because they feel related, and connected to the destinations, hotels, and local people. They would like to help and maintain good relationship with people who helped them.

The focus of this research is upon the problems of communication planning and the implementation of the plan before, during, and after a crisis. It was found that large hotels and international chain hotels are well prepared with the Crisis Communication. It was integrated into the firm's marketing strategies using the basic instruments namely product (destination) policy, price policy and distribution policy. The thorough crisis communication plan is more systematic and very well functioned proven by the previous Tsunami Crisis in Phuket in the year 2004. The immediate internal and external crisis communication policies and plans are based on security management and risk management theories. The flow of information within the firm is a significant factor towards the successful of immediate crisis communication management. It could summarise that a good preparation such as training with any crises need to be developed and measured frequently.

Paper 2 Searching for Security through the Haze: An Examination of the Complexities of Intra-ASEAN Cooperation

*Tang Siew Mun
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

Open burning and traditional agriculture practices in Sumatra, Indonesia have brought to the fore environment degradation as a security threat. Air-borne particles –set off intentionally or otherwise – were blown hundreds of miles by monsoon winds to Malaysia and Singapore. In 1997 and 2005, haze caused millions of dollars in lost tourism dollars and imperiled the health of Malaysians and Singaporeans. These states, along with Indonesia, endeavored to find a lasting solution to the problem. What seemed to a simple case of inter-state cooperation turned out to be anything but. Drawing on the theoretical concepts of collaboration and coordination and using the haze issue as a case study, this paper addresses the larger question of the complexities of intra-ASEAN cooperation. It argues that cooperation is hampered by differing priorities and perceptions of security held by Indonesia and other ASEAN states. Indonesia, which holds the key to the problem appears to be dragging its feet and is less amendable to a multilateral approach to resolve the issue. When self-interest takes priority over communal interest, cooperation is problematic and this seems to be the case with efforts to combating the haze threat in Southeast Asia.

Paper 3 A Comparison of the Impact of the Home Literacy Environment on the L1 Reading Frequencies of Students from Two Different Thai Universities: Implications for the Learning of an L2.

*Nicholas Ferriman
Mahidol University International College*

Reading is a critical skill for accessing and analyzing the vast quantities of information available via the Internet or in print. Those who are unable or unwilling to read extensively in their free time will not be able to participate effectively in the new knowledge economy, or take advantage of the new opportunities on offer. Thus, reluctant readership has implications for personal as well as national development, and may condemn individuals and societies to live on the fringes of the global economy, with all the negative potential this has for self-determination and basic human rights.

An unwillingness to read extensively in one's own first language (L1) also has repercussions for the acquisition of a second language (L2) such as English. Those with poor reading habits and attitudes in their L1 are unlikely to read extensively in an L2. Reading is widely recognized as a key facilitator in promoting vocabulary development, and for improving grammatical range and accuracy. Therefore, those who do not read in an L2 will reduce their rate of L2 development. A lack of fluency in an L2 such as English will also have major economic implications for individuals and societies in the global economy.

This paper will investigate the phenomenon of reluctant readership in the Thai context by reporting on the findings of two studies which investigated the rates of extensive reading in L1 of two different student populations. Results indicate that Thai university students may have daily reading rates half that of high school students in some parts of the developed world, and that to some extent this may be due to students' home background. Though the size effects were small, parental reading to children, book ownership in the home, and past reading rates of parents, were all found to have significant associations with students' present day reading frequencies and attitudes in L1. Implications for reading strategies in the L2 classroom will be discussed, as will the role of schools in promoting literacy.

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

*Takayoshi Fujiwara & Brian J. Phillips
Mahidol University International College*

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

SESSION 2: MANIFESTATIONS OF HARMONY

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

Noraini Md. Yusof

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

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

(Haunting the Tiger, 1996)

This paper examines the representations of the nations 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 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 methodology as well as those of the other inhabitants of Malaysia. Fore here, the said east 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? 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.

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

*Jamaluddin bin Aziz
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

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 film finally arrive at harmonious endings; thus, reflecting Yasmin's vision of a harmonious society.

**Paper 3 Being Indian Vs Being Malaysian in K.S. Maniam's Selected Works:
A Portrayal of Struggle for Assimilation within Mainstream Society**

*Kavithan Ganesan
Universiti Malaysia Sabah*

The diasporic scene of Malaysia as multiethnic society is a heritage of rich historical and cultural blend. As most Malaysians especially in the Peninsula live alongside each other as Malays, Chinese and Indians, the distinctive paradox of *unity in diversity* becomes intensified. The process of assimilation and adaptation which is still far from its goal falls under the scrutiny of both local and foreign media to the extent where some even consider it to be an overrated issue. Despite these, as well as all changes in the Malaysian political arena and socio-structural policy making, fiction writers have frequently highlighted the foundation that makes Malaysians, Malaysians. One such writer of Indian origin is K.S. Maniam. Maniam, a second generation migrant Indian was born during the pre-independent era (1942) where people of the nation were struggling for survival whilst coming to terms with their neighbours of different ethnicity especially since the prolonged practice of divide and rule (different ethnic groups were placed at different parts of a state such as Malays by riverside villages, Chinese in town areas and Indians in plantations) by the English. Since he was exposed to his native language (Tamil) and English from a very tender age, the lives of migrant minorities (i.e. Indian), effects of colonialism on them, and most importantly their effort in trying to assimilate with the mainstream society is duly portrayed in the thematic concerns of his novels, plays and short stories. Henceforth, the aim of this paper is to use K.S. Maniam's selected works (*The Return*, 1981 and *In A Far Country*, 1993; *The Cord*, 1983 and *The Sandpit*, 1990; *Plot, The Aborting, Parablames & Other Stories*, 1989 and *Sensuous Horizons*, 1983) as a tool to examine the changes in the lives and struggle of migrant Indian minorities, the decree of their assimilation into the mainstream society, and most importantly, to what extent Indians have successfully overcome the taboo of being migrants in becoming Malaysians. For this purpose, the paper will be divided into two sections of immediate pre and post independent setting, as well as modern era that have contributed to the struggle and harmony of Malaysians in general.

Paper 4 Thai-Malaysia Relations: Celebrating 50 Years of ‘Harmonious’ Co-Existence

Mala Rajo Sathian
University of Malaya

This 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 neighborhood 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.

PLENARY SESSION 3:

Harmonious Echoes from the Past: An Esoteric Interpretation of Hang Tuah's Journey to India

Lalita Sinha
Universiti Sains Malaysia

Classics of the world typically portray great warriors who literally and metaphorically “sail the seven seas” in quest of Enlightenment. This centrifugal motion engaging the protagonist with new, or alien, experiences not only involves plunder and dominance, but often epitomizes a spontaneous reaching out that results in harmonious encounters that enrich and deepen not only their own, but also the other, cultures. This element abounds in the Greek *Odyssey*, and the *Ramayana* of India, to name just a few. From Southeast Asia, the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (The Story of Hang Tuah) is little known outside the Malay world. Extolling the exploits of Hang Tuah the Malay warrior par excellence, the text is of no means stature in comparison to the great classics.

Beyond interest in *Hikayat Hang Tuah* as a historical, political, social, or literary model of distinction, the traditional worldview reflected in the text has an added dimension: it embraces a sacred universe. From this arcane dimension, mythical and metaphysical shared “secrets” of harmony between different religious and cultural traditions shine forth. If only one cares to delve into an esoteric or essential interpretation of the text, one finds harmony in an innate, artless and spontaneous character (Sk. *sahajja*, natural), so distinct from the often necessarily contrived, and agenda-driven religious “tolerance” prevailing today.

Based on a Hermeneutical reading of the text, and informed by a perspective of Traditionalism, the essay will attempt to bring to light the esoteric meaning of the experiences of Hang Tuah on a particular journey to India, and to argue that the wisdom of the past, and the traditional realities embodied in the character of Hang Tuah have much to show us of the way to unity and accord that has been forgotten, and to sound a clarion call to reclaim it.

SESSION 3: RELIGION AND ETHNICITY

Paper 1 Religious Tolerance in Malaysia: A Case Study in the Peninsular

Jayum A. Jawan, Zaid Ahmad & Mohd Mahadee Ismail
Universiti Putra Malaysia

This paper is based on a preliminary report of a study on Religious Tolerance in a Multi-Ethnic Malaysia, a two years, nationally-funded research project. The research project sought to determine the state of religious tolerance in a multi-ethnic Malaysian society that has generally been known for its harmonious inter-religious and inter-ethnic relations. Among some of the more specific objectives of the research project were: (a) to determine the level of religious tolerance in Malaysia; (b) to understand factors that contribute to the state of inter-religious harmony; (c) to compare the level of religious tolerance between the various ethnic groups; and finally (d) to suggest ways by which better inter-religious relations may be promoted.

A sample of about 1000 multi-ethnic respondents comprising the Malays, Chinese and Indians in the Peninsula are targeted for the research. Reactions and responses of these respondents were collected by using an instrument specially devised to gather information that addressed the four objectives mentioned earlier.

This paper is based on preliminary result of the research project and is based on results from about 75% of the randomly selected respondents. The preliminary analysis will provide answers as to the state of inter-ethnic tolerance in Malaysia as well as factors contributing to this level of tolerance. Preliminary analysis will also compare the level of religious tolerance between the major ethnic groups in the country. Finally, the preliminary result of the study will make suggestions on how the state of inter-religious and inter-ethnic relations can be further promoted or enhanced.

Paper 2 Challenges to Ethnic Harmony in Burma: A Historical Overview

*Marja-Leena Heikkilä-Horn
Mahidol University International College*

Burma faced independence in 1948 as a deeply divided country. The British had ruled the area, which now was declared as “Union of Burma” in two entirely different administrative systems. The southern parts of the country were taken over gradually after the wars in 1824-1826 and 1852, and became the main geo-body of “Burma Proper” or “Ministerial Burma”. The rest of the country was taken over in a war in 1885-1886, and much of this area was administered indirectly through the local Shan and Kachin chiefs as an administrative entity known simply as “Frontier Areas” or “Scheduled Areas”. Like in the Indian Subcontinent and in the Malayan Peninsula the British administrative arrangements created a serious challenge to the leaders of the new independent country.

Burma Proper was basically populated by the ethnic Burmans, Arakanese, Mons and Delta Karens, whereas the Frontier Areas were populated by the Shan people, Salween Karens, Kachins, Karenis, Chins and various subgroups of the aforementioned. The same year, as the independence was granted, the Union of Burma plunged into a civil war, which continues until today.

This paper discusses the ethnic categories created by the colonial authorities and it looks into how these ethnic categories have been – and continue to be - imagined, invented, manipulated and politicised for economic purposes. The paper is mainly a historical overview but points out a few continuities to the present time. The paper looks into how the Burmese authorities dealt with these issues in the first constitution of 1947 by dividing the country into ethnically based “states” and “divisions”, and how the international community of today continues supporting these ethnic categories.

**Paper 3 Marginalization as a Result of Statelessness: A Case Study of the
Thai Undocumented People from Rom Thai Village**

*Thanida Boonwanno
Chulalongkorn University*

A Thai citizen is a person with Thai nationality and with the basic civil rights required for a livelihood and access to national resources, whereas a non-Thai citizen is a person without Thai nationality and without the right to access government services. Nationality is a powerful instrument to determine who is an appropriate person to get public services and to exclude others from Thai society. If the excluded people are migrants, the problem of exclusion through nationality is not so severe. But if the excluded are Thai people born on Thai soil of Thai parents, the use of nationality to deny them Thai identification cards and Thai house registration may violate their rights.

Undocumented Thai people, meaning those people born in Thailand with no Thai documents, constitute a problem for the Thai state because there is an absence of any concrete policy or solution. The case of the undocumented Thai people in Rom Thai village, Thaton Subdistrict, Mae Ai district, Chiang Mai province, waits for the state's response to rectify their status from aliens to Thais in their legal documents such as identification cards and house registration certificates. The main reason the villagers became undocumented is that in the past they left Thaton to earn their living in agriculture at Sobyawn. The villagers perceived or imagined Sobyawn as part of the 'Thai nation' and other nationalities, particularly Burmese, did not appear there. However, Sobyawn has historically been a place of border drawing disputes and is now officially part of the Burmese state. Starting about twenty years ago, the villagers were forced to return from Sobyawn to Thaton by several confrontations between the Burmese military and ethnic minority groups. Because they left Rom Thai village before the Thai state started issuing identity cards and house registrations and because they returned at the same time as an influx of Burmese refugees, the Mae Ai district administration may have been confused or uncertain about their identity. Therefore, they issued them identity cards as displaced Burmese.

The undocumented Thai people holding cards for displaced Burmese nationals therefore face marginalization. They are marginal people not only in a geo-political dimension, in the sense that they are remote from central state power or at the margin of the country, but also because they are denied access to government social services and rights such as the right to free medical care, the right to education and scholarships and the right to practice professions. Even people born on Thai soil of Thai parents can be excluded as the 'others' in Thai society unless they are formally recognized through documents such as Thai identification cards and Thai house registration certificates.

Paper 4 Historical Ethno-Symbolism and the Study of the Mon Ethnicity in Thailand

*Patise Chaykunoopakan
Mahidol University International College*

In the world today, there has been a growing awareness that the so-called 'nation-state' is rarely a true appellation. In fact, only a few states comprise of ethnically homogeneous population, and many of them are diversely multiethnic in composition. Coincided with this evidence, there have been various forms of ethnic rivalries and conflicts as well as ethnic movements. This reveals that ethnic minority groups are active in re-creating and reinventing the meanings and practices associated with the representativeness of their ethnicities or ethnic identities. Consequently, ethnicity has reappeared as a crucial social and political force for the construction of reality. Therefore, it is important to find appropriate method(s) which helps to deal with the issue regarding ethnicity.

In an attempt to understand ethnicity or ethnic identity, historical ethno-symbolic approach was applied with a case study of the ethnic Mon in Thailand. The focus area was set in the three old Mon communities, namely Kung Phayom, Ban Muang and Nakhon Chum communities in Ban Pong, Ratchaburi, Thailand. By developing this idea, two major elements of historical ethno-symbolism were used, including the myth of ethnic nation and the invention of the national symbols (comprises of language, religion and symbolism of nationhood). The study attempts to answer the sociological questions of why, how and which types of identities are constructed, contested, transformed and institutionalized. This would further help to better understand the politics of ethnicity.