

# The Asian Conference on Asian Studies Official Conference Proceedings

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# The Asian Conference on Asian Studies

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## The Asian Conference on Asian Studies

### Conference Proceedings 2012

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*The De/Construction of Heroes: A Case Study in an Atayal Village in Taiwan*

I-Chun Wang

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Durham University, United Kingdom

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## Introduction

In *Philosophy of History*, the philosopher Georg W. F. Hegel (1991) gives a description of the heroic role as the incarnation of a particular culture's values or spirits. The 'hero' lives vigorously in the epics and myths, giving out inspiration in great tragedies and adventures, is praised over thousands of years, and accordingly has a thousand faces that have embodied different cultural values celebrated in different places and times (Campbell 1993, Sanchez 1998). The 'hero' in many ways has been recognised as the great man who leads the development of history (Carlyle 2007), the reflection of culture (Campbell 1993, Klapp 1962, Hook 1943) and the innovative founder of new values and standards (Benes & Steinbrink 1998); the change in the perception of heroism does not merely mark the transition of cultural values, but also the economic, social and even religious structures of the time.

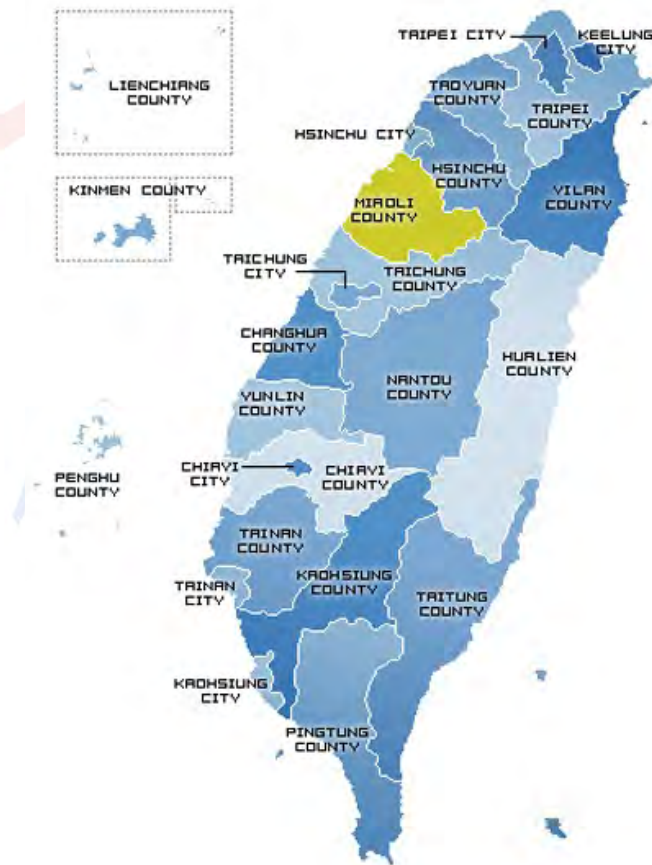
Religious transition and the cognition of heroes have a dialectic relationship. Cultural heroes, as the models of moral canons and the great founders throughout different civilisations (Bascom 1984), were usually mythologised through their appearance in myths, legends and folktales, which communicate the different ideas of religion and adaption to life and reflect the societal structures (Levi-Strauss 1969, Bascom 1984, Honko 1984). The transition of religious ideas would affect the cognition of heroes, and vice versa. Hence, the specific religious transitions in one culture would therefore reveal the shift of its cultural identity, as well as indicating the cultural ideas toward to life, merits, faith and moral orders that reflect on the ideas of cultural heroes which, today, are usually divorced from the religious mythologies: celebrities, athletes, or the image of a 'great man' that has its definitions in variously personal ways (Boorstin 1992, Detweiler & Taylor 2003). The trend of these 'secularised' heroes in modern world, therefore, can be believed to have accompanied with certain religious transition that resulted such phenomenon.

As the notions of secularisation begins with the observation of the falling of Christianity in Europe, and was predicted as going toward to a complete clash in the near future, the thriving of Christianity in the 'global South'<sup>1</sup> yet says contrary with the massive religious conversion amongst Asia, Latin America and Africa – where notably attracted numerous followers in especially the aboriginal groups (Jenkins 2002, 2006). The influences come after the conversion on the cultural values is

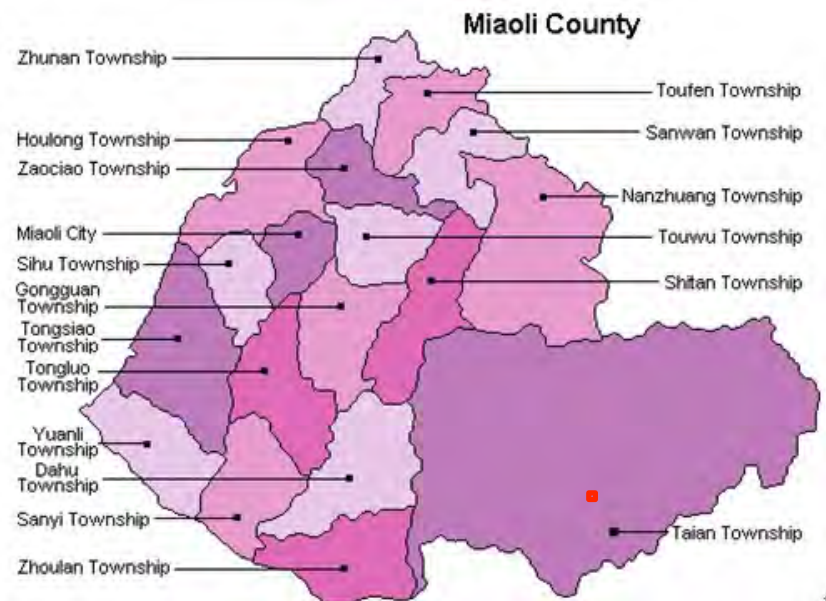
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<sup>1</sup> 'Global South' is a term opposite to the 'global North' – where usually being seen as the wealthy, secularised and developed countries that mostly located in the Northern Hemisphere; it is not merely a reference for geographical status, but also an economical and cultural indication to those regions where, rivalling the Churches of the East and West, Walbert Buhlmann (1976) calls the 'Third Church'.

foreseeable, and therefore, by interviews and participant observation, this study takes the aboriginal village, Jinshuei – where consisted of three Atayal tribes and all converted to Christianity – in Taiwan as the example, to analyse why and how these tribes made the conversion, and how their cultural identity and cultural values were shifted through such conversion by interpreting the transition of the heroes.



(Figure 1, the administrative map of Taiwan, marked in yellow is Miaoli, the county of the field taken in this study. Source: <http://movers-taiwan.com/Miaoli-County/>)



(Figure 2, the administrative map of Miaoli. Source: <http://mapsir.com/684/>)



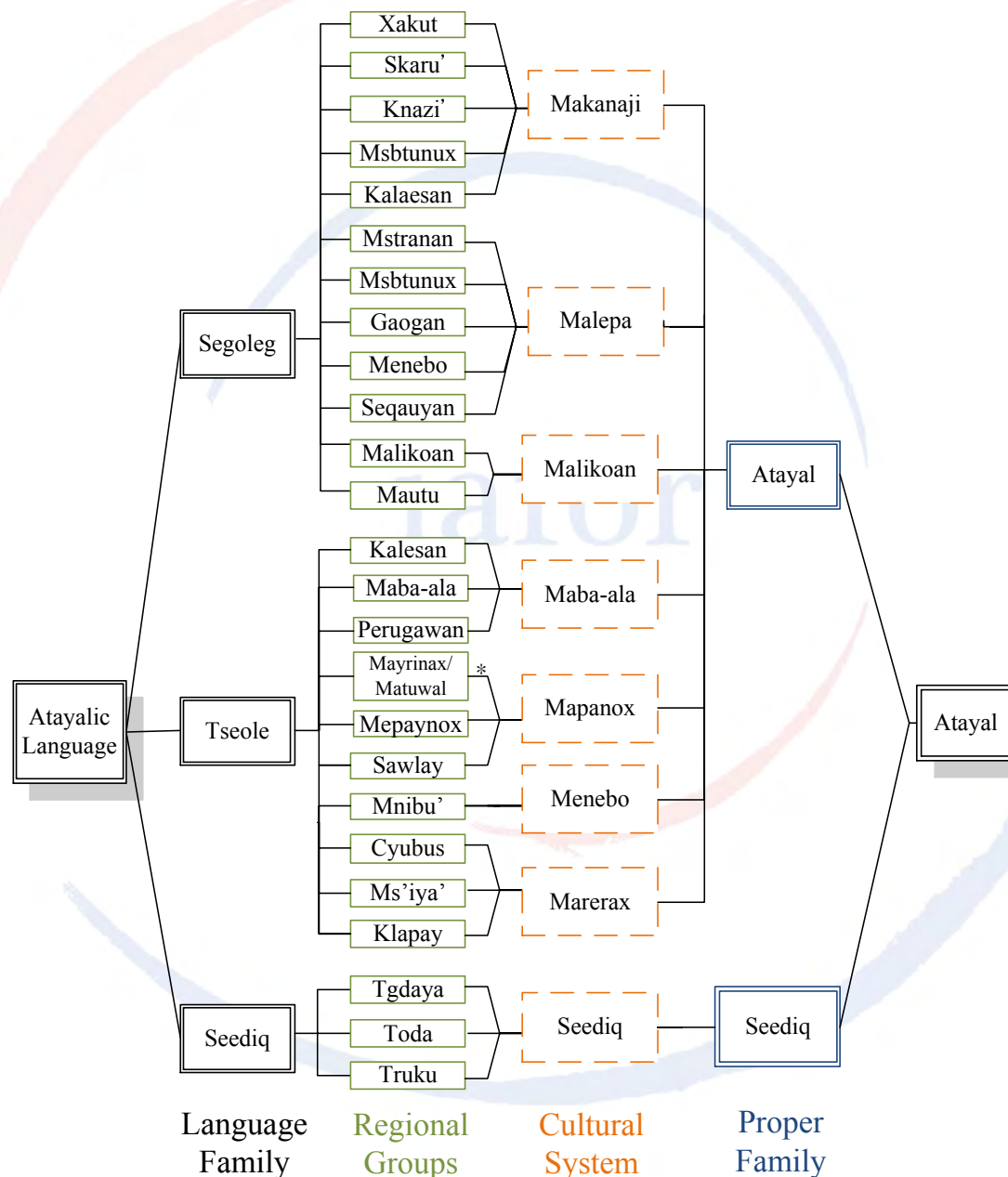
(Figure 3, revised administrative map of Taian Township.

Source: <http://www.taian.gov.tw/upload/file/201001050406513354540243.gif>)

### The Atayal people (Tayan) of the Jinshuei Village

The aborigines have resided in Taiwan long before the Han people become the majority ethnic group, and are part of the Austronesian (Malaypolenesian) families (Hill et al. 2007, Bird 2004). As one of the oldest Taiwanese aborigines, ‘Atayal’ was first being distinguished as an ethnic group by the Japanese ethnographer Ino Kanori, by classifying the similarities of language and customs (Blundell 2000). Although the origin of the Austronesians and the early history of immigration remain unclear, the major migration of the Atayal people are believed to begin from three or four hundred years ago from central Taiwan, and expanded toward to north and east Taiwan due to

the shortage of food and the growth of population, becoming the most widely distributed aborigine ethnic in Taiwan (Liao 1984, Li 1997). The migration not only speculated as the beginning of the inhabitation of the Atayal people in Taian, Miaoli – where the field taken in this study, establishing the majority of the inhabitants in this area (Taian Township Office 1994), but also resulted the varied presentation of the Atayal language and culture (see figure 4).



(Figure 4, diagram of the pan-Atayal systems, based on the classification of Ma's work in 1998. Seediq and Truku now are two official independent aborigines)

The Atayal people in Taian can be roughly categorised into five groups: Syakaro, Mayrinax/Matuwal, Mepaynox, Cyubus and Ms'iya', and the Jinshuei Village includes three of them (except Mepaynox and Ms'iya'), covering both the Segoleg and Tseole languages, and the Mekanaji, Mapanox and Marenax cultural systems. The Jinshuei Village is formed by three Atayal tribes: Swasig (Syakaro), Savulu (Cyubus) and Mayrinax (Matuwal), and each tribe are constituted from the union of different clans. The names of the tribes are actually the names of the places, therefore, instead of the Mayrinax – which has resided at the area more than a century, the people of the Swasig and part of Savulu usually are privately called by the local aborigines as the 'kilhaku'<sup>2</sup> – literally meaning 'leaf', and accordingly is because the Japanese colonial government<sup>3</sup> in the 1920s teased these people were 'so poor that can only eat the leaves', and called them 'the group of leaves' ('Ki-ha' in Japanese means the leaves of tree) – that often comes with a sense of contempt for their 'rudeness'. 'They are different from us'; this is the foremost impression toward to the two tribes of the Mayrinax people.

Few clans of the Mayrinax were once moved to nearby mountain areas to make their living, until the Japanese colonial government asked them back to the current address for sufficient management. The Japanese management policy<sup>4</sup> over the aborigines drew the Savulu area of the Mayrinax to the Masingaw clan from Hsinchu, with the consent of the Mayrinax tumux (chieftain) around 1928; later in 1946, another clan from Hsinchu came to the Mayrinax territory and asked to make over part of the lands to them, beginning the formation of the Swasig tribe. The term 'kilhaku' not only indicates the perception of the Mayrinax people to those 'outcomers', but also suggested that they 'have less culture' since 'they needed to move from time to time', and that they are different in every ways from language to personalities – even though they all called themselves 'Tayan' (people of Atayal)<sup>5</sup>, showing the latent fracture of identity that has long been existed in the Atayal culture.

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<sup>2</sup> Although most of the people do not know why these people are being called 'kilhaku', the locals would identify them by the language they use; an informant also suggested that 'kilhaku' means 'relocater' – indicating they are relocated to the current place from somewhere else.

<sup>3</sup> After the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), Taiwan was ceded to Japan by the Qing government in China according to the Treaty of Shimonoseki, and became a colony of Japan for the next 50 years.

<sup>4</sup> The ruling policy over the aborigines of the Japanese colonial government was by using military forces during the early period, not until the 1920s the ruling principle changed to pacification and started to relocate several aboriginal tribes into clustered village. These relocation activities, came with the widely setting of the 'savage' police stations (chuzaisho), not only made the controlling over the aborigines more sufficient and easier, but also changed the scattering living style of the aborigines into the communal we see today (Lin 2010).

<sup>5</sup> 'Tayan' in old Atayal language means 'human' in general.

## Hero and the traditional Atayal culture: Tumux, Utux and Gaga

### Tumux

An Atayal 'alang/qalang' (tribe) traditionally was led by the 'nbkis' (elder) – or maraho (leader), pasapung (pacificator) in different dialectics, a male position which was firstly elected and then inherited, and was being replaced by the term 'tumux' later during the Japanese rule. As a tribe was formed by one or more clans, and each clan has their own tumux, a chief tumux would be elected from the Tumux of the clans, and usually would be the one of the most powerful clan that leads the rest of the 'nbkis' – but anyone who is unwilling to obey the tumux can also choose to leave and establish his own tribe with his followers. Although the role of the chief tumux, more or less, involved certain political stance with the authority during the Japanese rule (for example, sometimes the Japanese government would favour the ones with good-looking, more 'intelligent', or political-friendly as the chief tumux, and give them a medal of tumux (see figure 5) as the official authentication) that arouse many arguments amongst different tribes, the qualities of being a 'tumux' traditionally require the following characters: brave, kind, fair and rhetorical.



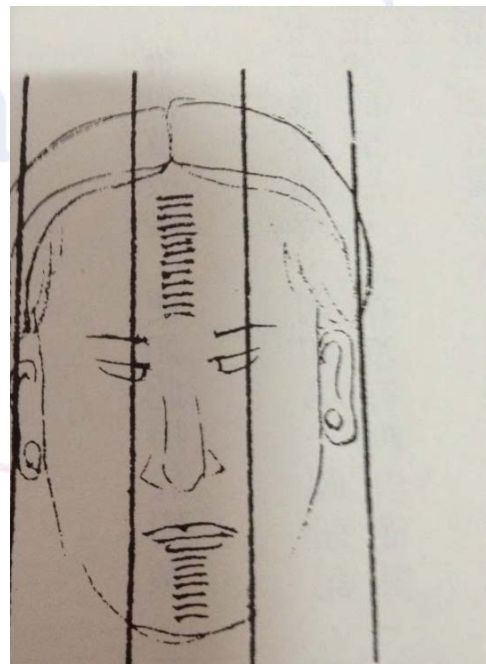
(Figure 5, a medal of tumux issued by the Japanese government in 1935. On the front says 'tumux medal', and back says 'Governor-General of Taiwan' with the issue number. Provided by the tumux of Da-Xing village, Yu Han-Zhang)

Being kind, fair and rhetorical was to be able to conciliate the matters within or outside the tribe, and be fluent when holding ceremonies or praying for blessings; but being brave was the necessary quality of a great male Tayan. Being brave in traditional Atayal culture means to be skilful in hunting and fighting, and normally

requires a fearless heart to do that. Brave in this sense was also the most valued virtue for Atayal men that, traditionally, men would hang the skulls of their retrieved game outside the house (see figure 6 for example) to manifest the householder's braveness<sup>6</sup>, whilst others would also judge the householder's success by the number of the skulls. The highest practice of braveness was the action of beheading (m'gaga), which was also the test of young men's initiation ceremony that only by passing this test, can a 'boy' become 'man' and be tattooed on the face to symbolise a 'true' Tayan (see figure 7)<sup>7</sup>. More 'brave' a Tayan is, more respect can the Tayan received from others. Hence, as a tumux should be produced hereditarily, one might also be unseated by the members of the tribe if he did not show enough 'braveness'; sometimes even though an Tayan does not own the title of tumux, nor old enough to be consulted to, he can still be involved in the decision-making meetings if he succeeded in many beheading actions.



(Figure 6, hanged animal skulls outside an Atayal house in the modern tribe Swasig)

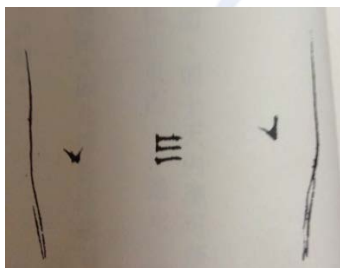


(Figure 7, a drawing of the facial tattoo pattern for young men's initiation from a Japanese official in 1902. Source: Taiwan Historica)

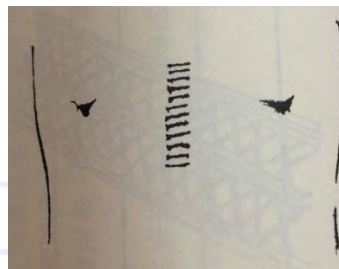
<sup>6</sup> By hanging the skulls, it is also said to bring luck on following hunting activities.

<sup>7</sup> When an Atayal man came to age 12, he would usually be tattooed on the forehead and chin as his initiation ceremony; but strictly speaking, one cannot be facial tattooed if he did not get his first human skull by himself, and hence it usually would be his father or brother act for him.

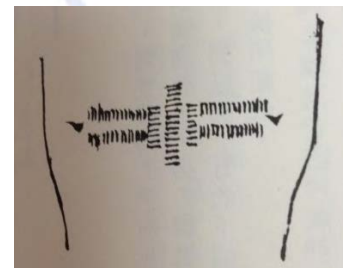
Such braveness – especially in beheading – was the standard of a traditional Atayal hero. As the word ‘hero’ may rise some bias during translation, most of the informants would be given some explanation about the definition of such figure before answering the question of their ‘heroes’ – a man (or woman) who practiced their cultural values and received respects from doing so, and may even serve as the moral standard (such as Yue Fei (岳飛) and Guan Yu (關羽) of loyalty in Chinese Han culture) as the role model to follow, whilst some informants also directly responded to the question without the explanation; these answers – though in different words – all refer to a quite similar idea: the ‘brave’ man. Of course, a traditional tumux must be ‘heroic’ to shoulder his title, but not necessarily a ‘hero’; and in order to represent the practices of the ‘braveness’ – meaning the numbers of heads one have had beheaded, the Atayal men would tattoo small stripes on their chest to manifest their deeds, to gain their reputation, and to attract future spouse (see figure 8, 9 and 10).



(Figure 8, a drawing of the chest tattoo of an Atayal elder from the Japanese period. Source: Taiwan Historica)



(Figure 9, a drawing of the chest tattoo of a tumux from the Japanese period. Source: Taiwan Historica)



(Figure 10, a drawing of the chest tattoo of a chief tumux from the Japanese period. Source: Taiwan Historica)

The horizontal stripes in the pictures above are the notation of heads – one stripe means one head; in figure ten was the chief tumux in the tribe P’qwalic in 1906 – Maay Gahu, who claimed to have had beheaded thirty heads, and decorated his tattoo with the vertical stripes (Taiwan Historica 2003). Such heroic figure for the elders of Mayrinax is called ‘kazahou na tsokoliag’ – meaning ‘the person who is brave and flawless in morality’ that usually ‘requires at least thirty heads’ to be able to called so – or ‘luax na tsokoliag’, which means ‘the real man’; ‘tsokoliag’ means ‘man’, whilst ‘kazahou’ refers to ‘sinless’, and ‘luax’ to ‘the core of stone or wood’. The ‘kilhaku’ people in Swasig and Savulu call this kind of heroic figure as ‘maotox’ – meaning ‘fearless fighter’, but only that the culture of chest tattoo for them is missing. These terms of a traditional Atayal ‘hero’, although can all be referred to a blurry figure of

whom has great strength physically and mentally, what noteworthy here is the ‘moral pureness’ that supported the heroism in Mayrinax, and omitted in kilhaku; and in order to understand the construction of morality of Atayal societies, it is necessary to know the two critical concepts in Atayal culture: *utux* and *gaga*.

### **Utux and Gaga**

In general, traditional Atayal culture is based on the two core ideas of *gaga* and *utux*<sup>8</sup>. ‘Gaga’, meaning in Atayal language ‘the words left from the ancestors’, is not only the guideline of Atayal life, including all the social and personal aspects that form the regulation of ethics, law, social culture and even personal behaviours, but also the foundation of social communities that can be used as the distinction between different social categories (such as hunting group, farming group, or any other social and family group),<sup>9</sup> which have multiple meanings in different contexts (Li 1964, Wang 1990/2003, Dai 2005). Therefore when seeing one who is being rude to others or walking without right posture, people would say this one ‘has no *gaga*’; when judging a *tumux* or talking about the cultural authorities, it is also evaluated by how well one knows about the *gaga*. On the other hand, ‘*utux*’, from the anthropological view, is the reference for all the ‘supernatural’ beings in the Atayal culture; it refers to both the entirety and the individuality of the supernatural, so that there is no distinction between the ideas used to identify the god or ghosts. It is the spirit that protects and punishes the Atayals from harm and guilt, and it is what the Tayan would become after their death (Li 1982).<sup>10</sup> As the *gaga* was ‘the words left from the ancestors’ that defined the Atayal life, Atayal people believed that, any violation to the *gaga* would be punished by the *utux*, whilst a Tayan following ‘the right way to live’ would be rewarded, and become part of the *utux* after death.

The faith in *gaga* and *utux* shows the characteristics of the traditional ‘heroic’ ideas of the Atayal people. In the Atayal oral stories – which are also part of *gaga* – most of the heroes were depicted as the models of how one should follow the guidance of, and how one should act for the good of, his/her group by strengthening and justifying the necessity of the *gaga* and *utux* (Chen 2009). The heroic images usually appeared in

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<sup>8</sup> Due to the language variety among the Atayal people, *gaga* may also be called *gaya*, and *utux* may be called *rutux*.

<sup>9</sup> When a group of people share the same set of *gaga* (the social norms), they become the community of the *gaga* (social category), meaning that every member of the community will have to partake in the results of any individual’s behaviour. For example, if any one of the hunting *gaga* (social category) were to violate the *gaga* of hunting (social norms), the whole group, it is believed, would be punished by the *utux*, which might lead to accidents or failure in hunting.

<sup>10</sup> Some explanations of the two ideas can also be found in the *Atayal-English dictionary* by Søren Egerod (1978).

the traditional Atayal cultural traits such as face tattooing, headhunting (m'gaga) and ritual practising to show the piety in utux; and in values such as personal honour and group interest to show the pursuance of gaga (Chen 2009, IOE 1996). Heroes in the Atayal oral stories are usually invincible and nameless, whilst all the successful hunting and fighting of individuals is believed to have been accomplished under the blessings of utux, and those who were injured or 'sacrificed' during their actions are deemed as not devout enough, meaning that they lost the protection from utux (Chen 2009)<sup>11</sup>, showing the sense of the sharing community in gaga and utux that values collectivity rather than individuality in heroism. Therefore, the key to the heroic lies in the faith in utux, but not the personal excellence of the hero himself.

However, such gaga were not universally adapted amongst all the Atayal tribes even they did share some basic grounds. Many differences can be found on handling the same matters over the Jinshuei village, but it was not only caused by the separation of living places of the people, but more importantly, by the production of new gaga. The timing of drawing up a new gaga was usually when something bad happened to the tribe (such as disease or natural disaster), and all those rituals and regulations in the traditional gaga had been practiced and seemed did not do any help, the tumux and the elders of the tribe would gather together to discuss a solution, and to see if such solution was permitted from the signs of the utux's will: the chief would go to a quiet place (usually on mountaintops) to seek apocalypses. The new gaga, therefore, would be inherited in the tribe as part of the traditions, and led to the various presentation of gaga amongst the Atayal people. In other words, gaga was not just religious articles which independent from the transition of the society, but a dynamic mechanism of the Atayal people that changes along with the transformation of the social norms and category, to cooperate with, and accommodate to the influences caused by external or natural forces. This belief in gaga and utux for the Atayal people, instead of calling it as a 'religion', they would say it is 'the way of life', whilst the being a Tayan was to follow such ways inherited for thousands of years.

## **The conversion**

### **The beginning of Christianity in Jinshuei Village**

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<sup>11</sup> In Chen Chi-Wen's (2009) study on the Atayal heroic images, several possible reasons were stated for the nameless phenomenon in the hero stories, such as the names being forgotten during the retelling of the stories; forsaken, because of the fact that Atayal culture usually gave the hero's name to newborns, meaning that too many people shared the same name; or omitted, since the function of the oral stories was education. Whichever it is, the nature of hero worship (if there is any) will also be the focus in exploring the relations between the nameless heroes and the belief in *utux*.

The first preacher first came to the village was in 1947, a Taiwanese from the Presbyterian Church, which has been rooted in Taiwan since 1865. The first conversion happened in 1948 with the first baptised family, and following with more and more converted disciples, the first local Presbyterian church was then founded in Savulu in 1949, marking the initial victory of the Church over the village. However, along with the Communism took over the regime in China that forced the KMT government transferred to Taiwan, many Catholic priests were also expelled from the mainland China and carried out their missionaries in Taiwan with the material aids from the U.S. Catholic Relief Service. Such aids not only helped the people in Taiwan with their material supply such as flour and dried milk, but also attracted many to actively involved in the church activities, and so as in the Jinshuei village. In 1955, a Catholic priest of the Maryknoll in the U.S. came to the village, with the promise of keeping the Atayal traditional culture and the material aids from the States, many people turned to the embrace of Catholicism Church from the Presbyterian one, and converted more from the spectators over the village.

Although the material support was tempting, and most of the time was also the reason to attract the people to go to the church that the members of the church gradually became less with the needs for these supports were reduced; however, according to the informants, the promise of keeping the Atayal culture was the main reason for the tumuxs to convert. In 1947, the Japanese administration system with the tumux in the area was officially abandoned and replaced with the KMT political settlement, the tribes were included altogether under the structure of the modern administrative system such as village and township, while the administrative matters were no longer in the hands of the tumux, but the elected head of the village. Such transition made the tumuxs started to aware the crisis of them losing both the authority and the culture, and 'with discussions and considerations of preserving the traditional culture', an informant who helped the missionary since the 1950s said, the tumuxs from the tribes in the neighbourhood decided to take their people to 'convert' to Catholicism.

It might be problematic to use 'convert' to describe their current belief in Christianity, since they do not consider themselves as believing in different religion. A majority of the informants described the times before the coming of Christianity as 'did not believe in any religion, but just make a living', whilst an informant also points that when they first heard about the 'principles' of Catholicism, they found it 'just like ours, especially the ten commandments', fit perfectly with many of the gaga: there is a 'god' above in the sky, looking over us, and tell us what to do. A Presbyterian Church pastor used an example from the Bible to explain their missionary approach, and how

the Atayal people accepted it:

*‘Men of Athens, I perceive in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you. God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.’ (Acts 17:22 – 25)*

### **The hero after Christianity**

As the custom of m’gaga was strictly forbade during the late Japanese rule, the hero image sometimes for few of the Atayal people became the reference for the people who went to war and safely back. This transition might resulted from the Japanese propaganda in the Second World War, whilst some saw joining the army as the proud to ‘serve the country’. Nevertheless, such heroic image was only being taken by few cases; when talking about heroes during the war time, most of the people would still see the people who stood up for the tribes, masculine and strictly following the gaga as heroic.

The traditional gaga was challenged with the ‘conversion’ to Christianity. Although the Atayal people chose Catholicism to protect their culture and maintain the gaga, however ironically, many of the gaga – which used to be part of their lives – were being seen as ‘superstitions’ and were abandoned – sometimes by the dissenting views of the priests, and sometimes by the people who thought were unnecessary to the religious belief, and hence to the life. As the authority of the gaga is disappearing, and the kind of ‘braveness’ in the Atayal tradition would never be encouraged in the churches, the traditional Atayal heroes – who were based on the successfulness in m’gaga by the blessing from the utux as the award for abiding the gaga – hence become a distant memory with the collapse of the gaga, with the apparent and thorough practices of Christian etiquettes of the life events over the Atayal people. The terms for the traditional heroes are now given with different connotations: kazahou is now the word for the saints in Catholicism, whilst maotox is also being used in the Presbyterian Church in Sunday preaches to indicate the fighter of God – although for some people, it may sometimes referred to as a ‘pariah’ – one who knows nothing but using physical strength. These variations of the traditional heroic ideas not only reflect what Andrew Walls (2001) describes Christianity as an

‘infinitely translatable’ religion, but also show the fading away of the gaga from the Atayal lives.

This fracture between the traditional gaga and the religious life marks the rift of the cultural values and cultural identity. Most of the informants find it difficult to address the heroic idea and the cultural values of modern Atayal culture – or rather, of the Atayal culture after ‘converted’ to Christianity – though they can quickly respond the vivid image of the traditional ones. As there is no need to prove oneself by the stipulation of the gaga, nor wars against different tribes or ethnics, they said, ‘there is no hero today’; since there is no gaga needs to be abide, they further stated, ‘there is no much differences amongst we the aborigines’, since ‘we are all the subjects of Jesus’. Being a ‘Tayan’, therefore, no longer requires the knowledge and practice of the gaga, but simply a term for the ties of blood.

## **Conclusion**

As hero embodies the values of a culture, the traditional Atayal hero was constructed by the heart of the Atayal culture – gaga. The gaga, as the ‘words left from the ancestors’, not only regulated the ways of the Atayal life, but also served as the religious spirit of Atayal culture that provided the values and moral standards of a ‘Tayan’. A traditional Atayal hero hence became the one who stands out of such values by following the gaga, which sees the communal interests and braveness above all the other personal qualities, and was believed to credit its sincere followers with blessings, braveness and wisdom. These credits would be shown especially in the m’gaga – beheading activities, for it requires the killing skills, courage and maybe a bit of luck that was believed to be gained by the grace of the utux through the strict practice of the gaga, the ways of life. The successfulness of the m’gaga therefore defined a Tayan’s sincerity to the gaga, and those who obtained a good quality of the beheaded heads – usually more than thirty – would be crowned as a ‘hero’ that not only received respects, but can also take part in the tribal decision makings if he is not the tumux or elders of the group, whilst such deeds – which can only be reached through the inner sincerity, would be expressed by the outer chest tattoos to manifest the heroic.

The terms of such heroic figure can be varied as the Atayal culture is variously presented from language to minor ritual practices, with the broad distribution and migration over the island Taiwan. Nevertheless, the two major terms collected in this study – maotox and kazahou – are all absorbed to the local missionary usage: the

former is extended as the fighter of God in Presbyterian Church, and more focus on the 'braveness' as the implement of God's usage; whilst the latter is translated to the Saints of Catholicism that values the purity of morality. Although the characters of the Atayal heroes in different groups can be seen from such absorption, however, it also marks the structural change of the relationship amongst the gaga, utux and Tayan.

Although the Atayal people replaced the concept of utux with the Christian God, however, the doctrine of Christianity on one hand limited the production of new gaga that resulted the consequence of it becoming merely a 'tradition' or 'superstition', whilst on the other, the conversion also deprived the religiosity of the gaga that leads the secularisation of the Atayal culture. With the modern political administration system, not only the laicisation of the tribal matters disfranchised the political power of the tumux, the conversion to Christianity further eliminated the possible divinity of the tumux that the media between the nature and super nature is now replaced with the clergies and, again, shattered the authority of gaga, and hence caused the loss of their cultural identity. Such loss is reflected in the deconstruction of the hero, in their failure of identifying a cultural hero and cultural values in present times, by the separation of life and religion, the secular and the religious.

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*Leadership Legacies in Asia: Behind Every Woman*

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## **Introduction**

This paper examines what five women of three different religions in four countries had in common over five decades. In the political history of four of eight South Asian countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka), there have been five females at the helm. In 1960, Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike (a Buddhist) became the world's first female prime minister. In 1960s-1970s, India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (a Hindu) rose to power. In 1980s, Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (a Muslim) held office. In 1990s-2000s, Bangladesh's Prime Ministers Khaleda Zia and Hasina Wajed (both Muslim) took turns leading. The paper discusses the common thread that propelled these women to the forefront, namely, that behind the rise of each, there stood a man--a father or a husband--who was a key politician. Four of these men were assassinated or executed. The paper briefly mentions similar leadership legacies in Southeast Asia.

While an element common to each woman is fame—celebrity status, eminent presence, illustrious leadership--in this paper, the notion of fame is “acronymed” to examine four facets that moved each woman forward: Family, Affluence, Male Relative, Education (FAME). The paper questions whether expectations that they should have facilitated the rise of other females to high-ranking positions or empowered the female populace en bloc are fair or even viable. The reality is that family members benefited from their unexpected debut into the political arena. The paper concludes that, while previously a combination of birthright and calamitous circumstances propelled these women into leadership roles, this phenomenon appears to be an Asian anomaly and the rewards of their political careers mostly remain within their families.

## **Discussion**

The world presently consists of 20 women who are presidents, prime ministers, or chancellors. This almost-10 percent of females at the helm of some 196 nations indicates that females have not “Come a Long Way, Baby” in political arenas where males dominate as Heads of Government. Nevertheless, this discussion focuses on five women who took charge of national politics on the coattails of a politically prominent, but deceased, husband or father.

### **Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Sri Lanka (1960s-2000s)**

As far back as 1902, the editor of a Ceylonese morning paper wrote,

The name of Bandaranaike is as a precious heritage to Ceylon. The Bandaranaike family have [sic] for centuries been distinguished for qualities which go towards the making of a great nation. Rich, benevolent, simple in their habits, select in their tastes, sincere and unselfish in all their undertakings, the Bandaranaike family have [sic] exerted an influence upon the Sinhalese nation and upon the diverse communities existing in this island which has made for goodness and progress (Gooneratne, 1986, p. 2).

This was the mantle Sirimavo Ratwatte, born 1916, inherited from her Oxford-trained husband Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike (SWRD) in 1960 and passed onto

daughter Chandrika Bandaranaike-Kumaratunga in the 1990s. But who and what paved the way for these women to hold onto power for four decades?

SWRD was Prime Minister from 1956-1959. His assassination in 1959 left his Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) leaderless. When called upon to accept her husband's mantle by other SLFP males, Sirimavo justified her capability to accept this calling by saying:

I was known as SWRD's wife, but I was also very well known in my own right. Where a previous Prime Minister's wife may not have been able to step into her husband's shoes as I did when the call came from the people, the fact remained I had gathered my own experiences in public life through several years, and in several ways, though I must emphasize that in those years active politics was furthest from my thoughts (Seneviratne, 1975, p. 105).

But active politics did become her way of life from 1960 until 2000 when she died while serving her third term as prime minister in an administration where her daughter Chandrika was President. This daughter-mother, president-prime minister combination was another landmark for the Bandaranaike dynasty that was without parallel in modern international politics (Wilson, 2005, p. 181).

Weerakoon (2010) writes that, during her husband's premiership, Sirimavo was viewed as,

the archetypal spouse of the committed and ever-busy political leader...the devoted mother of her three children...performing her role as hostess to a string of visiting world statesmen).....She played no visible role in his political activities but it was rumoured she had strong views on several current issues which she expressed around the family breakfast table with conviction (p. 139).

Weerakoon continues:

For a while the world wondered as to how this phenomenon of a woman being chosen to be prime minister, had occurred in Ceylon. Was it some peculiar provision of dynastic succession by which the wife succeeded to vacancy caused by the death of a husband? Could such a thing only occur in an Asian country?....a consequence of the enormous wave of sympathy that followed close on the tragic death of a popular leader? Was the phenomenon connected with the 'primacy of motherhood' (matha)—so central a part of the culture of the Indian sub-continent? (p. 140).

What is telling about the expectations for roles women in Sri Lanka should play in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century is Sirimavo's mother's initial response to her daughter's appointment as the world's first prime minister: "I would never have wished a burden such as this for you....Not in a thousand births would I have wished this for you. But it has come in the course of events and circumstances and what control, after all, have we mortals over these factors." (Seneviratne, 1975, p. 201).

Sirimavo herself articulated on her role by saying, "I feel most strongly the home is a woman's foremost place of work and influence, and, looking after her children and husband,

duties of the highest importance. But women also have their vital role in civic life, they owe a duty to their country, a duty which cannot, must not be shirked (Weerakoon, 2010, p. 141).

Sirimavo's daughter Chandrika, now in her sixties, may well reenter the political arena. The political aspirations of her granddaughter Yasodhara and grandson Vimukthi are unclear.

### **Indira Gandhi, India (1960s-1980s)**

Indira Gandhi could have been Prime Minister of India 19 months before she was actually sworn in on January 24, 1966, if she had chosen to accept her Nehruian inheritance upon the death of her father in May 1964. Abbas (1966) writes, "To accept the highest office in the land with such an innuendo attached to it would have not only hurt her sensibility and self-respect, it would have also irretrievably handicapped her in the charge of her duties as Prime Minister," adding that Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru "took elaborate pains never to use his influence to push his daughter forward into a position of power...he had a proud father's confidence in Indira's capacity to rise to the occasion if and when she would be called upon to do so in her own right (pp. 11-13).

Indira, born 1917, had first-hand exposure to the world's first female premier when, shortly after she assumed the premiership in 1960, Sirimavo traveled to Delhi where she was hosted by Nehru and his daughter. Wilson (2005) writes:

Ideological synergy, plus a history of family service to their country had drawn the political dynasties of Sri Lanka and India together. The extraordinary parallels between the Bandaranaiques of Sri Lanka and the Nehru-Gandhi Dynasty, a cycle of power and tragedy, were already becoming abundantly clear.....Gandhi's father, not unlike Solomon Bandaranaike, had been one of the leaders who had taken his country to independence from Britain (p. 132).

When Indira was selected to lead India in 1966, the world was shocked, fascinated, and puzzled to learn that India had chosen a woman as the Prime Minister. In no western country had a woman risen to such a position as yet. And the general expectation was that Asian women would remain in the background. There was what was then viewed as the anomaly of Sirimavo being chosen as a symbolic reaffirmation of the love and loyalty of the masses to her assassinated husband SWRD in a small nation called Ceylon. But India was the world's largest democracy and there was concern and fascination that a mere woman may not be up to tackling the many difficult problems facing the nation in a predominantly masculine environment (Abbas, 1966).

But Indira did rule several terms with an iron fist until her assassination by her bodyguards in 1984. In the political wings today are her granddaughter Priyanka, touted to be a future female leader, and her grandson Rahul (both children of her son Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who coincidentally was assassinated in 1991). Oddly, it is her Italian-born daughter-in-law Sonia who has taken a lead in keeping Indian politics all in the family by serving as head of the Indian National Congress, Nehru's legacy party, for over a decade. Another generation of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty is without question well established in Indian politics.

### **Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan (1980s-2000s)**

Following lifting of martial law in 1986 by General Zia-ul Haq, 33-year-old Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan from London to be greeted with an “unprecedented and an almost hysterical welcome at the Lahore airport” (Zakaria, 1989, p. 4). Followers of her executed father’s Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) father had come from all over the country, traveling “by wagons, buses, trucks, trains and cars” to welcome their “angel of hope” (Zakaria, 1989, p. 4). Her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Prime Minister, had been ousted, jailed, and eventually hung in April 1979 by Zia’s government.

Bhutto gave Benazir, born 1953, “the best modern education both at Harvard in America and at Oxford in England. Being the favourite among his two sons and two daughters, Benazir received special attention of her father. He saw a spark in her; he felt she had the makings of a leader. Thus she was trained in politics” (Zakaria, 1989, p. 3). Benazir herself initially did not find politics interesting. She expressed interest in being a diplomat or a civil servant. However, her determination to avenge her father is what drew her into the strictly male-dominated political arena—an unusual role for a woman in a Muslim world. The untimely 1988 accidental death of Zia in a plane crash catapulted Benazir to center stage and, with the PPP winning a majority in ongoing elections, she was invited to serve as Prime Minister.

Benazir herself had never wanted to be in politics confiding to friends that she was “scared of politics....politics was fearful, politics was bad, politics could lead to death” (Zakaria, 1989, pp.8-9). Ironically, politics led not only to her father’s execution but also to her assassination in December 2007. But who and what paved Benazir’s political pathway?

As with the Bandaranaike and Gandhi clans, she too originated from an affluent influential family with a father educated in the USA and in England. Like Sirimavo, she too was schooled in convents from an early age. And she shared Gandhi’s first-hand experience of being continuously exposed to the political activism and several imprisonments of her father. Following her father’s execution, she was placed under house arrest but eventually permitted to travel to the UK, where she assumed the role of leader-in-exile of the PPP. In the early 2000s, she again found herself in exile, this time in the UAE. But, after almost eight years in exile, she made the decision to return to Pakistan in 2007 to run for national elections but, shortly after her return, she was assassinated. Since 2008, her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, has served as President of Pakistan. Her young daughters Bakhtawar and Asifa and her son Bilawal are touted as future contenders for political office.

### **Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina Wajed, Bangladesh (1990s-2000s)**

The politics of Bangladesh continue to be intertwined in the lives of both Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina Wajed. Hasina, daughter of Bangladesh’s founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, emerged in politics to avenge the assassination of her father in 1975. Khaleda claims she did not pursue politics as revenge for her husband President Ziaur Rahman’s assassination, but for the betterment of her country.

Hasina’s father originated from a renowned family in South Bengal, India, was active in student politics and anti-colonial movements, and was a member of the Awami Muslim League from its inception in 1949. He called for East Pakistan to become autonomous from West Pakistan and became its first elected Prime Minister in 1971, after it was renamed

Bangladesh. In 1975, Mujibur, his wife and other family members were gunned down in their home by army officers. Hasina and her sister Rehana were in West Germany and the only survivors of this tragedy. In 1981, she was elected the Awami League's President-in-exile, by 1991 was Opposition Leader, and, in 1996, became the second female prime minister of Bangladesh.

Hasina, born 1947, was raised mostly in the presence of her mother and her grandparents because her father was a political prisoner throughout much of her childhood. But, whenever she was with her father, he discussed politics with her and she was influenced by his political philosophy. She was conferred a Degree of Doctor of Law by the Boston University in the USA as well as a string of honorary degrees from numerous universities worldwide. She took her second oath as Prime Minister in January 2009 and is currently serving in office.

Begum Khaleda Zia was initially viewed as just a housewife. Hakim (1992) writes:

Yes, though she was the First Lady during her husband Late President Ziaur Rahman's rule, she was not much known. At that time she was only a devoted, loyal housewife always maintaining a low profile. She was seldom seen in public. ....As a First Lady, Begum Zia had more or less a secluded life (pp. 3-4).

Khaleda was born in 1945 in what was then an undivided India to a privileged family. She married Captain Ziaur Rahman in the 1960s and followed him to his posting in Pakistan in 1965. Ziaur played a key role in the Freedom Fighters movement for the autonomy of East Pakistan, the establishment of Bangladesh as a nation, and was declared President in 1977, and established a broad based political party, the Bangladesh National Party (BNP), in 1978. By 1981, he was killed by disgruntled army officers setting the stage for his wife to enter the political fray to unite the BNP and stand as opposition not only to the Awami League. Her beginnings in politics resemble Sirimavo's. Hakim (1992) writes:

Frustrated by the inability of the worn-out old leadership, BNP leaders and workers then cajoled Begum Zia to take over the leadership of the moribund party to save it, to make it survive, to make it stronger....She was very disappointed to see the party, founded by her husband in such a sorry plight....She decided to come forward and join politics actively. There were some in the BNP who were hesitant about her capacity, but they were in the minority. The majority wanted her to take over the mantle of the leadership of the party, so that the party could get a new life and the differing factions in the party could be united (p. 10).

In 1984, she was elected the uncontested Chairperson of the BNP. In 1991, Khaleda was declared the first female prime minister of Bangladesh.

Without question, Bangladesh's recent political history has mostly centered on the BNP and the Awami League and on Khaleda and Hasina. Given a taste of political power, both women, now in their sixties, appear unwilling to relinquish the reins of leadership. Each woman has come to stay in the political arena and most likely will take turns waning and waxing politically. It is unclear what high-ranking roles their children (Hasina's son Joy and daughter Putul and Khaleda's two sons, Tareq and Arafat) will play in future politics but,

given the nature of South Asian politics, it is quite likely that future political reins will be well within the reach of these family members.

### **Five Women with FAME in Common**

What did these five women of three different religions who attained sovereign roles in four countries in the past five decades have in common? If the most recent figures are anything to go by, especially in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, how did they overcome appalling statistics vis-à-vis female empowerment in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s?. For example, India's majority Hindu population is approximately 1,205,073,612 with a literacy rate (with literacy defined at age 15 or over can read and write) of 61 percent (male literacy 73.4 percent; female literacy 47.8 percent). Pakistan, with a majority Muslim population of 190,291,129 has a literacy rate of 49.9 percent (males 63 percent; female 36 percent). Bangladesh with a majority Muslim population of 161,083,804 has a literacy rate of 47.9 percent (male 54 percent; female 41.4 percent). In contrast, Sri Lanka with a majority Buddhist population of 21,481,334 million has a literacy rate of 90.7 percent (male 92.3 percent; female 89.1 percent) (World Factbook, 2012). With the exception of Sri Lanka, the literacy rate for females in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is quite abysmal. Yet, in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, these were the nations where five women attained high offices.

What occurred in each instance was that male party leaders--fully aware that the magnitude of each woman's symbolism would garner direly-needed sympathy votes for the party--persuaded and permitted these women to take charge of their deceased spouse or father's political party. Then, upon the party winning national elections, she was offered the role of prime minister with male counterparts once again assuming she would play mostly a symbolic role. Once in office, however, each woman displayed her staying power and proved herself much more than a mere motif. Not one of them receded from politics and remained the glue that held the party together.

To further a discussion centered on the question of what unique attributes these women possessed that made their male counterparts willing to overlook long-engrained cultural and religious barriers experienced by most other females, the author has coined the term FAME (Family, Affluence, Male Relative, Education) as commonalities that brought about the rise of each woman. Albeit to different degrees, each woman had aspects of FAME to her credit as she was propelled to the forefront of the political arena. For starters, the families into which each woman was born or married set the stage for what was to follow. Behind every woman were well-known or powerful families with strong political connections. Their prominent family names, with all of its prestige, trappings, and affluence that accompanied it, often were already engraved in the annals of each nation's post-colonial political history prior to their appearance on the front stage.

Sirimavo, with a maternal grandfather who was a Chieftain in the Kandyan Province with close ties to the British colonialists, was born into a wealthy, well-known, and well-respected Ratwatte family. And when family elders arranged the 1940 betrothal of SWRD to Sirimavo, it was dubbed "the 'wedding of the century,'...for it was an alliance between two of the most powerful and respected families in the land" (Seneviratne, 1975, p. 76). Seneviratne compares the ancestral home to which Sirimavo was exposed as "corresponding to the Manor Houses of Old England, the classic chateaux of France, the haciendas of Mexico and the noble mansions of the Americas" (p. 14). In addition to parents who may have descended

from the old Kandyan ruling aristocracy, her father-in-law, Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranaike, had been an advisor to a succession of British governors and his family had long been a part of the upper echelons of Ceylonese society.

Indira, too, belonged to a wealthy and influential family who belonged to the elite Brahman caste of Hindus. Her grandfather's wealth was legendary and his Allahabad home luxurious. The daughter of a man who had been educated in England, she grew up a privileged child in a palatial setting. She attended a special university called Shantiniketan, where she studied Indian arts and nature, and also had the opportunity, as a child, to live in Switzerland. She later studied modern history at Somerville College in Oxford, England. Benazir, who descended from a renowned Sindh lineage and belonged to a feudal family, had a father who was educated in the USA and in England, and was herself schooled abroad at Harvard University and then at Oxford.

While Sirimavo may not have studied abroad, all her schooling was carefully selected from nursery to 11 years of boarding school days at Sri Lanka's prestigious St. Bridget's Convent. Likewise, both Khaleda and Hasina, unlike many females in their nation, were college educated, with Hasina being conferred a US university degree. Both women came from well-to-do families. Khaleda's family originated from "the famous Mazumdar family of village Fulgazi of Sripur Upazilla of the then Noakhali district (now Feni)" (Hakim, 1992, p. 5) in what was then India before partition. The Sheikh family was a renowned family of South Bengal and "related to the important families of Faridpur and Barisal" (Ahmed, 1998, p. 3). Both families had members with ties to the "freedom fighters," who fought for East Pakistan's independence from West Pakistan, and who helped bring about the birth of a new nation, Bangladesh, in 1971.

Their family pedigree, affluence, and education aside, not one of these women would have risen to head her nation without that pivotal political push each received from the men around them upon the demise of the Male Relative who mattered the most in their lives, their husbands or their fathers. For instance, about Sirimavo, Seneviratne (1975) writes:

Had a woman anywhere in the world been called upon to lead a major Political Party and further, to lead her country itself in the capacity of Chief Executive....It was because of these things, they told her, she was needed. Because the men who had worked with her husband, strived with him, thought and agreed and co-operated with him were suddenly left bereft; rudderless, leaderless. Among themselves there was seemingly no-one to take the place of the one who had been so monstrously snatched away from them....Who could hold them together at this time of crisis....Incredibly, it seemed they were, all of them to a man, ready to give it to her....To her; a Woman" (p. xii).

Indian Congress Party bosses who surrounded Indira also pushed her forward assuming she would be easy to control, mere clay in their hands, a puppet whose strings could be pulled, even going so far as to characterize her as a "silly little girl without an idea in her head" (Abbas, 1966, p. 144). These males assumed she harbored no political ambitions of her own and thrust her to the center of power because of the memory of her eminent father and because of numerous divisions among the Congress Party politicians who survived him.

In her mid-twenties when her father was executed, Benazir collaborated with her mother, Nusrat Bhutto, to avenge her father's death. She stood by her mother as the latter took control of her spouse's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and she suffered alongside her mother as they both were imprisoned and exiled several times following the execution. By the time she returned to Pakistan in 1986, Benazir clearly had become the PPP's choice to be the lead player in the uphill battle to regain political control of Pakistan's governance. But Zakaria (1990) writes: "The people were with her, but some of her own party leaders, most of the opposition stalwarts, and nearly every powerbroker was suspicious of her. The main reason for their hostility was her sex" (p. 7). But Benazir continued to mobilize the support of the younger generation of males in her party, stand her ground against vehement religious opposition to her gender, and vindicated her father's death when she was finally invited, upon the PPP winning national elections, to take the oath of office as Prime Minister.

Following the assassination of her husband in 1981, Khaleda mostly maintained a low profile for several years until

BNP leaders and workers then cajoled Begum Zia to take over the leadership of the moribund party to save it, to make it survive, to make it stronger. She decided to salvage the party and to invigorate it in order to realize the dream of her husband...to preserve and propagate the spirit of nationalism....She decided to come forward and join politics actively. There were some in the BNP who were hesitant about her capacity, but they were in the minority. The majority wanted her to take over the mantle of the leadership of the party, so that the party could get a new life and the differing factions in the party could be united" (Hakim, 1992, p. 10).

Hasina was unanimously elected President of her father's Awami League even while still living in exile in India in 1981. About a million and a half people lined the streets of Dhaka to welcome her back to her homeland when she finally returned in 1981 after being in exile for six years following the assassination of her father, mother, and siblings. Ahmed (1998) writes, "Millions of people accepted her as a savior of the nation. Seeing her popularity and attendance of a large number of people in the public meetings, the international media addressed her as 'the queen of the masses'" (p. 85).

### **Snapshot of Leadership Legacies in Southeast Asia**

In Southeast Asia, the rise to high-ranking political roles of a wife, a sister, and two daughters closely resemble the fate of these South Asian women. In the Philippines, Corazon Aquino, the wife of opposition politician Benigno Simeon Aquino, who was assassinated in 1983, became president in 1986. She was born into a wealthy, politically prominent family and college-educated in New York City. In Indonesia, Megawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of the nation's first president, Sukarno, found herself president of this archipelago in 2001. Her father, ousted by a coup in 1967, remained under house arrest until his death in 1970. In Thailand, the youngest sister of ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was sworn in as the first woman in the country to hold that office in 2011. In Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of assassinated national hero of the independence era, General Aung San, spent most of her political life under house arrest. She is currently a member of the parliament and the leader of the opposition party. Behind each woman was not only a male relative, but much of the FAME experienced by her South Asian female counterparts.

## Conclusion

In South Asia, this spilling over of dynasties and clans and wives and daughters into the political arena was not just a domino-effect earmark of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but may well be dubbed in the chronicles of political history as “All in the Family.” These nations in the subcontinent gained their democratic freedom from the clutches of British colonialism with East and West Pakistan first partitioning from India and then East Pakistan going on to gain its separate freedom from West Pakistan to become the sovereign nation of Bangladesh. Each male relative behind these women was a national hero—a man who helped free or found his country. With the exception of Nehru, each male politician had met an untimely and brutal death, leaving in his wake a torrent of sympathy votes. The immediate or eventual beneficiaries of these sympathy votes were their affluent and educated wives and daughters. But with this new-found female autonomy, what has come to stay is an underlying sheath of nepotism.

With each woman’s assumption of high office, clichés about breaking the glass ceiling and leaving the ladder down so others can climb up have been liberally brandished about. There have been initial expectations that female hands on the helm of governance would and should result in a broader empowerment for the female sector of the population in these various nations. There have been an expectation that doors had been opened for other females from all walks of life to follow in the wake of these women and to rise to similar high positions. In retrospect, it appears that none of these women assumed office to better the status of the females in their countries.

Weiner (1995) writes that changes have been cosmetic. If women’s rights activities assumed the plight of females in each country would improve, critics say this has not been the case. Discriminatory laws against women prevail. Women continue to be exploited, receive less education than their male counterparts, often are harassed, sometimes murdered over dowry disputes, and rarely rise to the top of their professions and earn less than male counterparts (p. 2). The reality is that all of these women took office, held onto office, and eventually was the key to keeping governance all in the family. And, perhaps, rightly so, because none of these expectations are so naively delineated or demanded of men who assume high offices on behalf of the male populace. As Indira, who made it a point to distance herself from women’s causes, often told reporters, “I am not a woman prime minister. I am a prime minister” (Weiner, 1995, p. 2).

Despite the glut of South Asian female prime ministers over five decades, there currently is a dearth of females in the cabinets of these nations. Continuing the practice of an almost all-male cabinet appears to be the norm. Even odder is that, presently, in Bangladesh, Prime Minister Hasina is holding onto six cabinet portfolios when one would assume she has the opportunity to bring more females into the rank of cabinet officials, should she choose to do so. In the end, several individuals—males and females--loitering in the wings of future governance, do remain poised to claim their birthright. These several individuals are the descendants, in Sri Lanka, of the Bandaranaike-Kumarantunga clan; in India, of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty; in Pakistan, of the Bhutto-Zardari family; and, in Bangladesh, they are the children of Khaleda and Hasina.

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### Appendix: Profiles of Five South Asian Female Leaders

Female Leader	Sirimavo Bandaranaike	Indira Gandhi	Benazir Bhutto	Begum Khaleda Zia	Sheikh Hasina
Country	Sri Lanka	India	Pakistan	Bangladesh	Bangladesh
Date of Birth	17 April 1916	19 Nov 1917	21 June 1953	15 Aug 1945	28 Sep 1947
Title of Office	Prime Minister	Prime Minister	Prime Minister	Prime Minister	Prime Minister
Years in Office	1960-65 1970-77 1994-2000	1966-77 1980-84	1988-90 1993-96	1991-96 1996 2001-06	1996-2001 2009-present
Education	High School	College	College	College	College
Early Aspirations	Homemaker	Writer Researcher Anthropologist	Diplomat Civil Service	Homemaker	Doctor Teacher
Previous Political Experience	None	Yes	None	None	None
Male Relative	Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike	Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru	Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto	President Ziaur Rahman	Prime Minister/President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
Relationship	Spouse	Father	Father	Spouse	Father
Male's Cause of Death	Assassinated 1959	Heart Attack 1984	Executed 1979	Assassinated 1981	Assassinated 1975

*Quest for National Identity: Metaphors of Japan's Normalization*

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0076

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## Introduction

Writing about Japan has always been difficult. A country unknown, with different customs and governed by different rules – at least that is what the average western perception may be. Indeed so. Apart from a couple of “Japan hands“, understanding and interpreting Japan’s politics, economy or society has usually been done by those of Japanese origin, thereby recreating the foreignness of the country for outsiders.

Should foreigners, however, try to analyze Japan? Are these ‘outside’ analyzes useful for better understanding of the ‘inside’ uniqueness? Definitely so. Outside perspectives are necessary to broaden our horizons and even though using western concepts on non-western realities is often dangerous and misleading, new and more discursively based methods of research in social sciences provide us with stable ground for interpreting different societies while not disregarding their uniqueness.

Outside perspectives are even more important when we are dealing with Japan’s international relations. The 20<sup>th</sup> century has indeed been turbulent for Japan. The Second World War dramatically shifted its international role, from the ‘homogeneous warrior’ state towards a ‘peaceful and open merchant’ country, which based its identity exactly around a pacifist ideology. Or at least that is what seemed to be a general consensus, especially within domestic discourse.

But how and by whom was this identity created? And can this identity be changed? Japanese position within international relations in last 20 years has undergone some serious development. Japan has been accepting more of its international duties, has become keener on cooperation with the United States and even went as far as to send Self-Defense Forces (SDF) abroad to help American armies in Iran or Afghanistan. Japanese international role has clearly been developing and recent discourse changes indicate that the identity has been complementing the policy shifts.

The aim of this article is to interpret these changes that Japanese identity has undergone during 20<sup>th</sup> century using critical constructivist theoretical approach and the analysis of metaphors. I will try to reverse the traditional identity-driven policy explanations (See Van Wolferen 1990, Shibuichi 2005, Berger 1998, 2007; Katzenstein 1993, 1996, Nishi 2006, Samuels 2007, Ashizawa 2008 etc.), by overcoming the identity/policy and militaristic/antimilitaristic distinctions and illustrating, how foreign policy discourse helps to create and re-create the national identity.

While trying to fully understand how identity is (re)produced, one must not disregard the context of the identity locales. Arguing, that identity is based within discourse, I will illustrate its creation through the analysis of an influential metaphor of “normality,” which I have extrapolated from recent constitutional revision debate, especially under Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro (2001-2006).

The most influential metaphor of Japan as a “normal” country (*futsu no kokka ni mukau*) is a good example of policy means of identity creation. Articulated by political leaders Ozawa

Ichiro and Koizumi Junichiro (and heavily reproduced by media), this metaphor frames the constitutional revision discourse while referring to Japan's post-war development in order to reformulate national identity to suit foreign policy needs.

### **Few remarks on theory and methodology**

International relations theory has paid little attention to domestic non-material factors such as national identity and culture during most parts of 20<sup>th</sup> century. As R.B.J. Walker has put it (Walker 1984 in Bukh 2010), the study of international relations absorbed the "premises of professionalism and scientific method" which came to dominate American social science in the mid twentieth century, embracing such scientific paradigms as the notion of objective analysis and dichotomous separation of facts from values. Kenneth Waltz's Theory of International Politics (1979) became the symbol of this tradition, deriving the attributes of a state and state interest from the anarchy outside.

That said, the concept of national identity, which negates uniformity of nation states, is not new in international relations. This concept was present within academic debates reaching as far back as to the 1940's and 1960's to the figures of Karl Deutsch, Hedley Bull or Ernst Haas. Even the study of ideational, such as cultural factors within the creation of foreign politics, has begun long before the end of the Cold war (see Doyle, Ikenberry 1997; Lapid, Kratochwil 1996).

It wasn't until the 1980's when the hegemony of rationalist approaches and "economic modes of analysis" was breached. The advent of social constructivism, propagated by Nicholas Onuf's ground-breaking book *The World of Our Making* (1989) shook positivist ontology of rationalist theories. Constructivist scholarship heavily criticized rational choice orthodoxy for being unable of understanding the change that the international system has undergone with the dissolution of the Soviet Union (see Ruggie 1993, Katzenstein 1996).

Constructivists<sup>1</sup> disagreed with positivist ontology, which defined the reality as objectively given, with strict distinction between the researcher and the matter. On the other hand, they saw the reality as socially constructed, through perceptions and interactions (See Hopf 1998). By doing so, they dismissed material explanations of international relations based on the terms of interest or power in favor of more ideational factors such as identity of culture.

However, apart from a general insistence on socially created reality, constructivism is better understood as a general theoretical umbrella, encompassing a broad array of ontological and epistemological paradigms about the nature of international relations, the place of identities, ideas, and culture in world politics (see Onuf 1989, 1997 and 1998, Wendt 1992, 1994, Ruggie 1993, Katzenstein 1996, Hopf 1998, Drulák 2010, Bukh 2010).

As the exact nature of the inter-constructivist arguments is far beyond the scope of this survey, for the sake of this article, we can divide constructivist authors into two groups. Those, who use ideational concepts such as culture or identity as variables to be incorporated into causal

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<sup>1</sup> As well as other theorists, who recognized the reality as socially constructed such as post-modernists or post-structuralists (See Der Derian 1989, 1995, Hansen 2006)

analysis (called thin, liberal or conventional, see Hopf 1998: 172); and those influenced by more radical, post-structuralist brand of post-positivist IR theories, who abandon positivism in favor of discourse analysis and deny the validity of ideas/material forces dichotomy (called critical or post-structural, see Hopf 1998: 172-3; Bukh 2010: 4).

Major differences between these two schools when it comes down to identity formation is the role of difference. Conventional constructivists (See Ashizawa 2008) draw from the perspective of social interactionism, focus on social structures, norms and collective meanings, and thus trying to explain policies with regard to socially constructed identities. Critical constructivists on the other hand disregard social structures and focus on the notion of difference between the outside and inside of a certain group as a central point in the constructions of meanings and identities (Bukh 2010: 3-6).

Constructivist scholarship on Japan has been almost exclusively coming from the liberal theoretical strand and almost exclusively concerned with security policy. Namely, with the puzzle of Japan's post-war (*sengo*) shift from militaristic to pacifist country, trying to answer the question "Why has Japan been reluctant to use military force?". Though using different words, most of these scholars come with the same conclusion, that Japan's pacifist identity has been informed/created through ideational, domestic social structures, such as norms or culture (See Katzenstein and Okawara 1993, Katzenstein 1996, Berger 1996, Ashizawa 2008) and therefore these structures have shaped and constrained even the national security agenda.

Saying so, Katzenstein argues that it were exactly these norms<sup>2</sup> that "condition the definition of interest that inform Japan's security policy" (Katzenstein 1993: 18), and thus constitute a stable normative structure of antimilitarism, which, since the end of the World War II, has shaped Japan's security policy (Katzenstein 1996: 116-118 in Bukh 2010: 5-6).

The role of shared norms and values is a valuable mean of understanding Japan's post-war identity. However, the militarist/antimilitarist dichotomy in the formation of Japan's post-war identity has been losing its explanatory power. First, treating pre-war Japan as strictly militarist disregards modernization and Westernization, as these processes were intertwined with Japan's imperialist policies. More importantly, there have been many occasions during the post-war era, on which Japanese public sentiments and policies were far from strictly antimilitarist, as Japan has not ruled out military power per se.

Consider the post-war pacifist switch, for example. Norms-based theories and interpretations stress the role of culture or shared norms, which became internalized within the society, therefore creating national identity. However, a pacifist constitution, that is the ground stone for Japan's antimilitarist stance, was written by the Americans, using western terms. Furthermore, Oguma's (2002) post-war discourse analysis points out that Japanese public did not renounce the war per se. Instead, they renounced the war on Japan's homeland. In the same fashion, Japan's anti-military posture in the 1950's is more of a Japanese opposition towards its troops "collaborating with the *enemy* (The United States)," than collectively shared pacifist belief.

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<sup>2</sup> Institutionalized norms expressed by public opinion and the legal norms to be exact.

Another insufficiency of norms-based interpretation of Japanese antimilitarism comes with the politics of the Koizumi administration (2001-2006). Forced by outside pressures<sup>3</sup>, Koizumi skillfully used Japanese sentiments and 'defense consciousness' (*aikokushin* and *boei ishiki*) in order to enhance Japan's political and military role (See Berger 2007: 180).

'The political leadership', according to Samuels (2007: 105), was determined to elevate Japan's role in the alliance and enhance its military capability. The Koizumi administration swiftly reacted to the United States "enunciation of war on terror, sending Self defense forces to Afghanistan and Iraq. The Koizumi administration also mounted a substantial agenda setting program. It announced a review of defense capabilities in late 2003 and then set up a Council on Security and Defense Capabilities, which led to the Araki Report of mid-2004 (see Bōeichō 2005; Envall 2008), which stressed the diverse nature of security threats and need for 'flexible and effective defense forces,' that would be highly ready, mobile, adaptable and multi-purpose in nature" (Bōeichō 2004: 465, Envall 2008).

Doing so, Koizumi proved that the reluctance to resort to military force cannot be simply traced towards deeply rooted cultural or ideational structures, since such an approach presupposes them to be relatively stable with a static effect (Katzenstein 1997). Moreover, Japan's (and Koizumi's in particular) security discourse has been far from antimilitaristic. Koizumi worked hard to sell military enhancements to the public, using terms such as "normalization" (*futsu no kokka ni mukau*), "patriotism" (*aikokushin*), or "human contribution (to global security)" (*hitoteki kouken*) to stir nationalistic movements in order to transform national identity to suit his foreign policy visions<sup>4</sup>.

A norms based approach, therefore, cannot fully understand the complexity of identity creation and its insistence on identity/policy and national/international dichotomies, which clouds our holistic perception of Japan's changing self-perception. I intend to use more critical approach and base my views within the context of 'critical constructivism' or 'post-structuralism' (Hopf 1998, Der Derian 1989, 1995).

Critical constructivists shift the interest from internalized norms and culture towards "difference" or "othering." Broadly speaking, they disregard static views of national identity for a more dynamic process, where "boundaries of the self are defined by the others" (Rumelili 2004: 31 in Bukh 2010). This framework presupposes identity to be a continuous, open-ended process created and re-created through discourse. That does not necessarily mean that all identities are infinitely malleable and always changing. Identities can be exclusive – constructed around subjectively perceived inherent and unchangeable characteristic such as religion or culture. However, identity is always a result of relation between two human

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<sup>3</sup> Rise of China and North Korea's confrontational approach to the US as well as its admissions concerning the abduction Japanese citizens.

<sup>4</sup> And not only discursively. Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni shrine, where souls of two and half million of dead Japanese soldiers lie, rose tensions over history issues and raised nationalistic debates within Japan and abroad. Diplomatic relations among Beijing, Seoul and Tokyo have been seriously damaged, paralyzing efforts at forging regional institutions and turning what ought to be manageable territorial disputes into the foci of national passions and potentially at least, military conflict. (Berger 2007: 179)

collectives, that is, identity resides between the collective self and its others<sup>5</sup> (Der Derian 1997: 54-76).

Accepting identity as continuously recreated through relation and interaction, we can easily overcome the causal identity/policy dichotomy as ontological basis for post-positivist research, which disregards the “chase” for causal mechanisms in favor of discursive interpretation. That is, both identity and policy are created through the same discursive means, where one influences the other. Knowing that, we can disregard the question “why,” which is typically connected with positivist research in favor of a question “how,” which points to the analysis in the direction of historicizing meanings, towards uncovering their social production (Doty 1993 in Bukh 2010).

An analysis of metaphors is a valuable discursively-based technique, which helps us to understand this “how” question – by referring to conscious or unconscious use of phrases in political discourse. Doing so, we can discover underlying motives and subconsciously shared images of the given metaphorically stated topic; that is, we can find out not only motives and intentions of individuals, but also shared discursive and political structures, within which actors operate (see Drulak 2008). This article shall concentrate on the first target, i.e. analyze Koizumi’s metaphorical means of shaping discourse and by extent, identity<sup>6</sup>.

### History and Identity creation

Japanese “self” construction has undergone dramatic shifts through most parts of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most obvious was the Second World War, which reversed Japan’s image from “militaristic multi-national state” into “peace-loving homogeneous state.” To say that Japan was exclusively militaristic is a grave simplification, as it disregards Japan’s undergoing modernization. Eiji Oguma’s (1995/2002) book *Tan’itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen* (in English also as *A Genealogy of Japanese Self-Images*) provides sound, discursively based interpretation of the evolution of Japan’s self images.

Pre-war Japan was stuck between two others – East and West – in a desperate need for its own locale. Simple acceptance of Western enlightenment would mean an infinite state of inferiority towards the West, yet East implied backwardness and stagnation. Japan, therefore, set for a new goal: Incorporating Japan’s uniqueness into Western frame of technological success (*wakon yosai*). This creation of Japan’s *Orient* inherited all aspects of Asian culture into enlightened Western prospect (Oguma 2002: xx). Japan was created as a modern state (West), spatially and mentally connected with Asia (East), ruled by virtues such as cohesion, cooperation and loyalty, instead of Western individualism, greed or conflict.

Analyzing intellectuals, historians, and even folklore authors, Oguma provides probably the best critical analysis of Japanese national identity. He focuses his work on deconstructing the

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<sup>5</sup> For good insights into policy/identity related writing, see David Campbell’s innovative book *Writing Security* (1998). Although Campbell gives great insights into the creation of American national identity, his sole focus on security disregards other locales for identity construction.

<sup>6</sup> In spite of insufficient space, I chose to omit secondary discourse (even textbook issue), even though its analysis is useful for identity creation process, as it influences the primary one.

myth of homogeneous Japan, by analyzing pre-war and post-war discourse<sup>7</sup>. Oguma (2002: 322-349) analyzes two theories that lead Japan's self perception since the Meiji era. Pre-war Japan has been guided by "mixed-nation theory," created in order to end the dominance of Western perception of Japan as a nation conquering minorities<sup>8</sup>. Rather, this nationalistic "revolution" transferred "conquered" into "Japanese" status. Upon conquering Korea and Taiwan, Japan could no longer rely on "pure-blood" origin, yet needed to encompass newly acquired territories under the imperial hood. By defining Japan as unique within East, former "others" (Ryukyans, Taiwanese, Chinese and Koreans) were transferred to "superior" status, that is, under common Japanese flag<sup>9</sup> to form a basis for Orient-based identity. This theory was primarily used to legitimize Japan's territorial claims, assimilation policies and conscription of Koreans and Taiwanese into imperial army (Oguma 2002: 291).

Gruesome war brought a radical shift towards both of Japan's positions within international relations. The loss of colonies and the memories of a "multi-national, militaristic" empire recreated Japan's uniqueness through what Oguma (2002: 175-203) calls "homogeneous nation theory" – a term that can be most easily described when connected to the quest for Japanese uniqueness – *nihonjinron* (See Clammer 2001, Hanneman 2001, Beuchamp 2002).

*Nihonjinron* (theory of Japanese person), *nihonbunkaron* (theory of Japanese culture) or broadly *nihonron* (theory of Japan) are principal means of post-war identity creation. Broadly defined, *nihonjinron* is a sum of both academic and non-academic texts reaching to most areas of social and even exact sciences with a soul objective: create and defend the idea of Japanese uniqueness. *Nihonjinron* is a fascinating topic worth years of research, yet unable of providing so, this article will rest with the explanation of Peter Dale (1986: *introduction*, also Bukh 2010). Dale defined three basic principles connecting theoretical dots within *nihonjinron*<sup>10</sup> discourse: 1) The social and cultural homogeneity of Japanese racial entity and its historical continuity 2) A radical difference between Japanese and other peoples and 3) nationalistic hostility to any mode of analysis that can be seen as coming from non-Japanese sources.

A major article in creating Japanese post-war identity, therefore, was the general insistence on the 'interdisciplinary' relation with "others," and especially the West. Geo-ecological and cultural factors played an important role in this process. The violent forms of Western culture were seen as coming out of West being a continent, dominated by pastures, where man prevails over poor nature. Japan, on the other hand, is an island covered with lakes, paddies and forests, where nature is rich and dominates the men (Bukh 2010: 20). In racial terms, the West was seen as "miscegenation of races," while Japan as a "one race," possessing "pure blood." The nomadic-pastoral West was attributed qualities such as individualism, greed, materialism, instability or masculinity, while settled agricultural Japan was feminine, peaceful,

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<sup>7</sup> Oguma provides valuable interpretation. However, his main interest lies within pre-war Japan, therefore, he does not interpret much of post-war history.

<sup>8</sup> Or, as Oguma put it (2002: 3-15) an attempt to end Western monopoly on defining Japanese and their origins.

<sup>9</sup> Epitomized within the well-known imperial flag with red sun and sunbeams on a white background.

<sup>10</sup> Probably the most famous explanation of *nihonjinron* gives us Aoki Tamotsu (1999)

polytheistic, tolerant or spiritual. While the West is rational and talkative, Japan is shy and emotive (Bukh 2010: 20-22).

While this does not represent exactly foreign policy, *nihonjinron* gives us great insights into overcoming the national/international dichotomy, as Japanese identity is clearly an outcome of dialectical processes between domestic discourse and broadly defined “international.” This interpretation also shows us some continuity within locales for Japan’s identity creation. The unifying symbol in Japan’s “self” construction is the ever-present “West.” Throughout most of Japan’s modern history, the West has played a most significant role of an “other” in creating Japanese self-images and identity.

### **Koizumi’s era of normalization**

Even though *nihonjinron* has been a factor affecting Japanese post-war identity creation, foreign policy discourse and its actors played a key role in producing and reproducing it. Yoshida Shigeru’s merchant state policy posture was only possible, because of the security relations with the United States and low perception of regional threats. In the 1960’s government skillfully pushed the military theme to the background, as Japan was in the middle of economic boom<sup>11</sup>. The public, however, did not outrule military power per se. *Asahi Shimbun* polls (Shimbunsha 1988: 172-86) in Bukh 2010) show that even though public did not agree on Japan becoming a military superpower, it consistently agreed on the need of military. As an example, only 15% in 1970 and 21% in 1988 of opinion polls stated that there was no need to rely on military power and no need for either the SDF or the American military to protect Japan<sup>12</sup>.

Changes in military perception illustrate regional power shifts. China conducted five nuclear tests from 1992 through 1995, showing its growing power ambitions. More importantly, the defense alliance with the United States began to fade as Japan’s check-book diplomacy no longer sufficed America’s foreign policy wishes. Japanese inability to participate in the Gulf war of 1991 provided politicians an opportunity to reignite the constitutional change debates. Starting point came a year later, with 1992’s Peace Cooperation Act. This law allowed the SDF to join other nations in U.N. peacekeeping (Arase 2007: 566). This act broke various normative and psychological barriers connected to sending Japanese troops abroad.

What is apparent on the constitutional debate<sup>13</sup> (as well as most of Japanese policy discourse) is the omnipresence of the “other,” personalized within the United States (or the West in broader term). Discourse is basically divided on two lines, bordering the possibility of use of force and the relationship with the United States (See Samuels 2007: 109-132). The Koizumi administration could be placed very close to the “United States, use of force” axis end, for

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<sup>11</sup> This was not so much a projection of Japanese pacifism, but it was founded on the “self-centered belief that Japan was unlikely to get involved in a conventional war, that the danger of nuclear was not imminent”(Nakamura 1982: 157 in Bukh 2010: 9)

<sup>12</sup> Even public support for SDF grew gradually, from 66% in 1967 to 74.3% in 1984 and support for maintaining or increasing defense capabilities (44.2% and 22% in 1969 and 61.4% and 12.6% in 1984). See Asahi Shimbunsha 1988, Bukh 2010

<sup>13</sup> By constitutional debate I mean the broad debate about changes within post-war Constitution and its Article 9, which revokes war as a policy mean. This debate started in early 1990s and goes on even now.

Koizumi skillfully propagated the need for Japan to raise its importance in the world by carrying out one of the most dramatic expansions of Japan's military role since the war in the Pacific.

The call for constitutional change can broadly be interpreted through the general metaphor of "normalization", or through what Ozawa and Koizumi formulated as making Japan a "normal" country (*futsu no kokka ni mukau*) (See Ozawa 1993, Koizumi 2005). These metaphors have ruled Japanese policy discourse since 1990s. Ozawa coined the term with his book *Blueprint for a New Japan* (1993), prescribing "normal" Japan qualities such as active role in international affairs or even participating in United Nation's military operations.

Both Ozawa and Koizumi base their views on the necessity of cooperating with the "international community" (e.g. Koizumi 2003), providing "contribution towards international peace and prosperity" (Koizumi 2004). These foreign policy metaphors have had considerable impact on Japanese public and therefore on its perception of Japan. From 1993 to 2006, the top three papers in terms of subscription - i.e., The Yomiuri Shimbun, The Asahi Shimbun and The Mainichi Shimbun - published a total of 39 editorials which address the issue of a normal Japan (Katsumata, Li 2008). There is obviously no common definition of a "normal" country, there is a variety of implications these mentions provide.

First, calling for a need of normal Japan presupposes, that Japanese post-war policy stance was far from normal (and thus serves as "other", Japan is comparing itself to). This means that even the identity and foreign relations Japan created through 20<sup>th</sup> century is something that should be altered in order to match the needs of "international community." Second, the metaphor insists on the role of "outside" (be it the United States or broadly defined "international community" as second "other"). By pointing Japan towards the role of other "normal" countries, the metaphor serves as a bridge between the "other" and Japan's uniqueness, as it stabilizes Japan as a part of "international community."

The metaphor of "normal" Japan has ruled much of Japan's post-1991 foreign policy discourse. Even though some theorists (Katsumata, Li 2008) connect the discursive meaning of "normality" towards cooperation with the outside, the metaphor on both conscious and unconscious level undermines the perception of a stable, pacifist and deeply rooted norms-based identity. The metaphor illustrates the swift changes Japan has been going through and their discursive creation.

## Conclusion

In 1853, a fleet of US warships arrived off the shores of Edo Period (1603-1867) Japan (Oguma 2002: xviii). That people named them "Black ships" is an indication of their fear of them. Black ships symbolize the fear of unknown and different. Black ships brought modernization, but at the same time, brought difference into Japanese people's lives. Black ships mark a beginning of a new era.

Since the beginning of the Meiji era, Japan's newly created relations with the West deeply affected its self perception. Combining westernization with modernization, Japan set to

(re)create its uniqueness vis-à-vis the West. Pre-war era saw Japan embracing mixed-nation theory, in order to legitimize its foreign policy ventures. The quest for uniqueness did not end with the war. Embracing homogeneous nation theory, the concept of *nihonjinron* helped to supplement political discourse in formulating Japanese relational uniqueness.

Positivist interpretations of Japan's national identity creation have centered its construction locales on domestically created norms and values. Even though liberal constructivists provide some useful insights, they cannot very well explain the full scope of identity (re)formulation. The insistence on militaristic/antimilitaristic nexus disregards much of the development that Japan has been undergoing in the last three decades.

Critical constructivist or post-structuralist approach provides better insights into the discursive changes of post-1991. The end of the cold war and the rise of China created an altogether new East Asian environment. To cope with the changes, Japan has slowly reformulated both policy discourse and its practical implications, which was reflected even in public opinion<sup>14</sup>. Accepting more international obligations, Japan has set to become a "normal" country.

Even though the definition of "normal" country can be vague and unclear, the metaphor both illustrates and recreates changes in Japan's policy posture. Since the 1990's the difference residing in "Japan/the West" nexus has been gradually eroding. This process of Japan's "normalization" has had a dual effect on Japan's identity. First, it has integrated Japan into broadly defined international society by incorporating the "other" into Japan's "self." Second, this process has weakened the construction of Japan's uniqueness, which has been a fundamental part of Japan's "self" construction.

It is questionable if Japan will ever become "normal". It is, however, interesting that it is trying to.

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<sup>14</sup> In 1991, the Cabinet Office of Japan surveyed public opinion on the country's participation in the UN's peace-keeping operations. At the time, 46% was supportive of it, 38% disagreed with it, and the rest remained neutral. In contrast, in 2003, when the Cabinet Office conducted a survey on the same issue, the percentage of those who were supportive increased to 76%, while the percentage which disagreed decreased to 13%. (Katsumata, Li 2008)

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*Business Opportunities Depending on the Way of Believe in Holiness of Thai Society*

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Abstract:

This research aims to study the behavior of sacred objects rental and factors of sacred objects worshipping of consumers in Thailand conducted with 400 consumers who rents amulets for worshipping in Bangkok and study on Tiger God Shrine worshipping. The sample is obtained by Convenience sampling. In addition, this research also studies on factors entailed to sacred objects worshipping that is conducted with 200 retailers in Amphoe Mueang, Ratchaburi. Likewise, this study also analyzes marketing mix factor affected on sacred objects rental of Thai entrepreneurs by investigating with 400 entrepreneurs who are interested in sacred objects rental. Subsequently, the obtained data will be managed to make opportunity pattern based on the belief of Thai society regarding sacred objects.

It is found that opportunity plan based on the belief of Thai society regarding sacred objects depends on the relative behavior of consumers and entrepreneurs. Consumers provide their opinions that sacred objects rental for worshipping depends on their decision on price and sellers. They also mention that good place for renting amulet is the place that provides convenience of transportation, security and suggestion of sacred objects' profiles and backgrounds. For the entrepreneurs of sacred objects rental business, they consider that factors entailed to sacred objects worshipping are obtained from the importance of sacred objects on business operation regarding basic belief, financial status, decision making, life success and protection. However, the entrepreneur should consider mix marketing factors on sacred objects rental of consumers in order to be used in considering marketing strategy. Mix marketing also effects on sacred objects rental for worshipping regarding product, price, distribution channel and promotion.

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## Introduction

Thai society is a society of the world with way of life according to the principles of tradition stem from Buddhism. Such traditional concept has been corresponded with Thai people and Thai people are also relative to sacred objects worshipping. Anthropologist considers that such worshipping is cognitive culture created by human in order to contribute mental stability transmitted to happiness in society. This will normally happens in all people's mind because it is the basic human needs (Yot Santasumbut, 1998). The remaining belief and inherited for such a long period of Thai people through sacred objects' elements including amulet, metal Buddha image (Phra Kring), talisman, etc., and other idols including Tiger God Shrine, Great statue of Luang Pu Thuat Wat Huai Mongkol, woman statue beckoning happy lot in, etc.

Although there is Thailand development towards the period of information technology and manufacturing sector depending on industrial system, the belief on sacred objects worshipping of Thai people still exists. It may be said that sacred objects worshipping is a kind of cognitive culture that beyond scientific knowledge. Although science has high and various influences on Thai society development, there are several remainders that science fails to respond and explain some phenomenon. As a result, belief of supernatural powers influences the explanation of phenomenon in order to understand and feel stable with several matters in life (Sirichai Suangsaeng, 2005) that is mostly sentimental and emotional phenomenon and social beliefs with mental and life effect of Thai people consecutively (Prapapan Wijitwatakarn, 1989).

The belief on attaching to sacred objects of Thai people is begun to be interested extensively by Thai people regarding religion promotion, being the spirit on occupation of individual and business as well as being used as a cultural strategy and traditional practice inherited to the next generation. In addition, such continuous social result makes the scholars interested in the social context effected on the result of economic expansion regarding belief in sacred objects of Thai people because many entrepreneurs believe that sacred objects worshipping is another good commercial effect and the spirit of entrepreneurs, for example, woman statue beckoning happy lot in worshipping is also another belief of catching attention from customers leading to profitable business. For Golden Boy Worshipping, it is believed to provide luck and fortune or catch customer's attention and make such entrepreneurs wealthy, etc. This belief is also mixed with using techniques and technology in business operation among dependence of knowledge, and expertise in both academic and artistic field of the entrepreneurs in order to enhance the growth of business to be more effective (Surayuth Menapan, 1997).

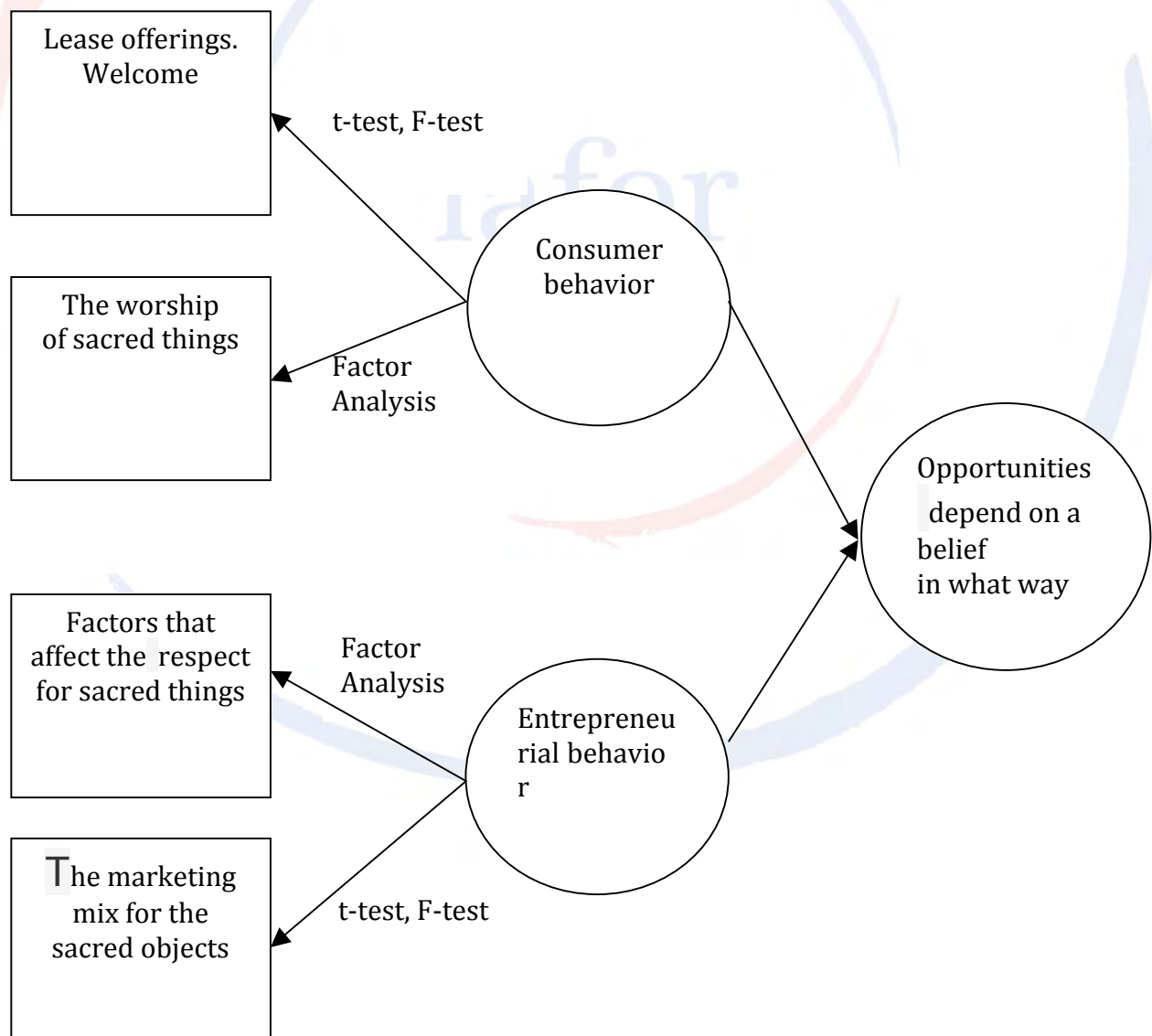
For the integral context of Thai society towards attitude and belief in sacred objects worshipping and living among changing society to the period of Global Communication, it is also found several dimensions in Thai society implementing belief of sacred objects worship as the spirit resulting to living of people in the society including the group of entrepreneurs, company employees, government officers, students, etc. However, while the researcher is interested in the phenomenon of belief in sacred objects of Thai people that influences business opportunity building or business opportunity that depends on belief in sacred objects of Thai society. The study focuses on factors effecting on sacred objects worshipping of Thai entrepreneurs and the behavior on sacred objects rental of consumers in Thai society as well as analysis on mix marketing factors effecting on sacred objects rental of consumers in order to create the opportunity pattern based on the belief of Thai society regarding sacred objects of Thai people

## Objectives

1. To study on the behavior and factors of sacred objects rental and sacred objects worshipping of Thai society.
2. To study factors effect on sacred objects worshipping and analyze mix marketing factors resulting to sacred objects rental of Thai entrepreneurs.
3. To make opportunity pattern based on the belief of Thai society regarding sacred objects of Thai society.

## Conceptual Framework

This research aims to study on factors resulting to sacred objects worshipping of Thai entrepreneurs and marketing mix factor affected on sacred objects rental of Thai entrepreneurs by investigating with 400 entrepreneurs who are interested in sacred objects rental. Subsequently, the obtained data will be managed to make opportunity pattern based on the belief of Thai society regarding sacred objects of Thai society with the conceptual framework as show in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** illustrates the conceptual framework used in this study  
**Methodology**

To follow the objective of this study, the researcher divided research procedures in to 4 sections as follow:

Section 1: It is the study on factors effect on sacred objects worshipping of consumers in Thai society. The researcher focuses on studying the behavior and factors entailed amulet rental in the area of Bangkok by using Quantitative Research and Purposive Sampling is used with 400 samples according to the guideline of Yamane (1967) Alpha 0.05 (Prasopchai Phasunon, 2010). The 150 sets of questionnaire is distributed to entrepreneurs operating business at Phra Chan Pier amulet market, 150 sets of questionnaire at amulet market in Pantip Plaza and 100 sets of questionnaire at amulet market in Weekend Market (Chatujak). The results obtained from the consideration of experts and 40 lessees of amulet market in Bangkok area. It is found that the questionnaire has the reliability from Cronbach's Alpha as 0.92.

Subsequently, the research takes a survey on Tiger God Shrine with the content regarding the behavior of Tiger God Shrine worshipping and investigation on Tiger God Shrine worshipping by analyzing on factors of Tiger God Shrine worshipping with 400 samples obtained from Convenience Sampling. The research tool used in this research is Questionnaire that is used to analyze the reliability of questionnaire with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  Coefficient with the value of 0.867 showing that the questionnaire has high level of accuracy (Sorachai Phisarnbut, Saowarot Yaisawang and Preecha Atsawadechanukorn, 2009). This stage analyzes factors of Tiger God Shrine worshipping by using Principal Component Analysis. The study is also contained with Orthogonal Rotation by using Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. The criteria of factors consideration is the value of Eigenvalues must be over 1 and the value of Factor Loading must have Absolute value higher than 0.71 (Comrey and Lee, 1992).

Section 2: It is a study on factors effect of sacred objects worshipping on 200 retailers in Amphoe Mueang, Ratchaburi. The size of sample group is calculated from the formula of Yamane (Prasopchai Pasunon, 2010) by using questionnaire as the tool. The accuracy of the questionnaire is measured by from Cronbach's Alpha as 0.8120. In this stage, factors entailed to sacred objects worshipping are analyzed by using Principal Component Analysis. The study is also contained with Orthogonal Rotation by using Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. The criteria of factors consideration is the value of Eigenvalues must be over 1 and the value of Factor Loading must have Absolute value higher than 0.5 (Kalaya Waitchbuncha, 2004).

Section 3: It is the analysis on mix marketing factors affected on sacred objects rental of Thai entrepreneurs by emphasizing on 400 samples who are interested in renting sacred objects at Wat Sothorn Wararam Worawiharn, Chachoengsao. The tool used in this analysis is questionnaire with the reliability from Cronbach's Alpha as 0.875 with true value of 1 showing that the questionnaire has high level of accuracy.

Section 4: It is the making of opportunity pattern based on the belief of Thai society regarding sacred objects of Thai society by concluding the overall results from the result of the findings from section 1 – 3 under the conceptual framework of this research.

## Conclusion and Discussion

The result of section 1 shows that most respondents are male in the age of 25 – 40 years and married. They graduated in Bachelor degree with domicile in central region of Thailand and work as private employees with income of 10,000 – 24,000 baht and use private cars as vehicle. Their decision on amulet rental mostly depends on the sellers. The reason may be that amulet is difficult to be measured on its value explicitly that may be said that it depends on belief and faith of customers. Although amulet has the value of itself, the reputation of such amulet is obtained from its legend and history or benefit that is passed along until such amulet is considered to be amulet as it is. Such legend and history is told by the sellers and good sellers should tell be able to tell such legend and history to obtain the faith from consumers as well as knowledge on such amulet to make customers interested in such amulet. Moreover, it also includes good courteous, attention and good service. However, sample with Bachelor degree has different opinion from the sample with lower education level. This is possible that this group of consumer has high education level therefore, they are relatively confident or believe in their knowledge leading therefore they may not wish knowledge from the sellers but good courteous or good service. However, this also depends on maturity of consumers as well. While one of decision making of consumers is information acquisition and consumers are confident with information obtained from discussion with the seller, amulet rental will occur. As a result, the entrepreneurs of amulet shop have to seek for the source of knowledge in various aspects regularly and have to convey such knowledge to their employees in order to make the able to discuss with customers. For consumers with Master Degree, they consider promotion differently from consumers with lower educational level. This may be contributed by their higher education that makes their cost of living higher than that of other educational levels. As a result, they hope the promotion from the sellers, for example, authentic guarantee or after sale service. They expect all of these benefits from the sellers also they have to pay in higher rate. However, it depends on their occupation as well because although some of them have lower education with special work or private business, they may think identically with consumers with high education level. However, these three amulet markets have several differences for price, management process and administrative personnel. This results to the decision on purchasing of consumers. Price may be increased according to each area, for example, amulet market in Pantip Plaza that is located in secured place with good atmosphere and convenience. Most shops have regular customers therefore there is less changing and provide good service with reliability including price guarantee that consumers can be confident that they obtain authentic products from these shops. However, the price will be higher than other markets. In contrast, amulet market in Weekend Market (Chatujak) that is open area without any protection from uncertain weather. In addition, most shops are street stalls that are easy to relocate without any price guarantee. Consumers have to take risk that they will gain authentic or false products. However, the price of amulet in this market is cheaper than other places. For Phra Chan Pier market, it is the combination of good advantages of Pantip Plaza and Chatujak markets; there are various prices, service providing processes or personnel and decoration. Phra Chan Pier market is the oldest amulet market that stated from the place for exchanging amulet in small group expanded to be a large market of amulet rental. The entrepreneurs assemble together to form an association with several great masters of amulet attendance. Most entrepreneurs have organized service providing process from the beginning of their business and provide friendliness to their customers. On the other hand, consideration on personal belief of each occupation is also different according to work condition of each occupation and problems occurred to such occupation, for example, consumers who work in security field wish the amulet to protect

them from any danger while consumers with trading occupation wish amulet to bless them luck and wealth with their business or be successful with their business. However, there are still other demands that can be added or changed upon the living condition, maturity, family or society of each person. For personal belief, this belief is generated by the perception obtained by social influence and discussion with surrounding people on amulet that is typically involved with miracle of amulet possessors and business influence. Normally, newspaper is the media that is the data source of amulet for lessees. Such information is often incorporated with miracle stories of amulet that will create belief and morale to the readers that such amulet will help them from their daily problems.

For survey on Tiger God Shrine worshipping of Thai people, it is found that there are 10 factors of Tiger God Shrine worshipping and factor on worshipping is considered as shown in Table 1 – 10 as follows:

**Table 1** External Circumstance Factor

Factor	Factor Loading	Mean	S.D.	Priority
External environmental factors (Eigenvalues=6.453 and %Variance=14.905)				
Number of stores that offer flowers, incense and candles.	0.835	3.53	0.9409	Much
Just around the scenery.	0.741	3.42	0.9661	Medium
Number of stores that serve food and beverages.	0.732	3.37	0.9395	Medium
The serenity of the location.	0.720	3.36	1.1561	Medium
Close to each other at the altar.	0.737	3.32	1.0751	Medium
To sit back and relax.	0.795	3.27	1.0726	Medium
Label Information.	0.791	3.27	1.0427	Medium
There is ample parking.	0.718	3.18	1.0687	Medium
Total		3.34	0.8134	Medium

**Table 2** Belief Factor

Factor	Factor Loading	Mean	S.D.	Priority
The factor of faith (Eigenvalues=4.566 and %Variance=11.131)				
Improve the service	0.716	3.88	0.8649	Much
Make a success in life	0.732	3.73	0.8233	Much
Make better financial position	0.751	3.59	0.8149	Much
Learning to concentrate better	0.731	3.57	0.8799	Much
Total		3.69	0.6943	Much

**Table 3** Namely Honorable Feature Factor

Factor	Factor Loading	Mean	S.D.	Priority
The respect factor (Eigenvalues=3.665 and %Variance=9.335)				
The sanctity of the Just	0.713	4.07	0.7388	Much
Just have faith	0.734	3.94	0.8055	Much

Make life better	0.798	3.78	0.7636	Much
Expectations of what can be gained by prayer	0.776	3.69	0.8526	Much
Total		3.87	0.6589	Much

**Table 4** Reputation Factor

Factor	Factor Loading	Mean	S.D.	Priority	Table 5 Physical Image Factor
Factors of the Shrine is famous for tigers	(Eigenvalues=3.287 and %Variance=8.574)				
Just legendary	0.725	3.83	0.9331	Much	
A history of reliability	0.805	3.77	0.8190	Much	
The reliability of the informant	0.767	3.69	0.8534	Much	
The sanctity of the closed	0.784	3.68	0.9124	Much	
Respected in society	0.764	3.62	0.9110	Much	
Total		3.72	0.6816	Much	

Factor	Factor Loading	Mean	S.D.	Priority
The form factor	(Eigenvalues=3.218 and %Variance=8.436)			
Faith in the family	0.723	3.93	0.8027	Much
The god of the shrine is located in Tiger	0.796	3.80	0.8566	Much
To inherit the traditions of their ancestors	0.774	3.75	0.9028	Much
Just looking out of the court	0.780	3.69	0.8651	Much
The elegance of the Just	0.704	3.66	0.7510	Much
I believe the most merciful	0.724	3.65	0.9210	Much
Cleanliness of the place	0.763	3.55	1.0282	Much
The ancient shrine of the tiger	0.779	3.53	0.9265	Much
Total		3.69	0.6361	Much

**Table 6** Visiting Costs Factor

Factor	Factor Loading	Mean	S.D.	Priority
Factor cost	(Eigenvalues=2.905 and %Variance=7.811)			
The cost of the lease of the altar	0.722	4.09	0.8182	Much
Convenience of travel	0.754	3.97	0.6689	Much
The cost of travel	0.765	3.90	0.7500	Much
The cost of worship	0.745	3.85	0.9293	Much

The cost of parking	0.714	3.42	0.9418	Much
Total		3.84	0.5835	Much

**Table 7** Visitor Aspect Factor

Factor	Factor Loading	Mean	S.D.	Priority
Factors at the service	(Eigenvalues=2.611 and %Variance=7.222)			
Number of shops	0.782	3.92	0.8221	Much
Number of people who make a votive offering	0.701	3.72	0.9669	Much
Number of people to worship	0.704	3.65	0.8958	Much
Total		3.80	0.7458	Much

**Table 8** Location Factor

Factor	Factor Loading	Mean	S.D.	Priority
Location factors	(Eigenvalues=2.578 and %Variance=7.156)			
When traveling to the shrine tiger	0.716	3.24	1.0235	Medium
Near residential areas	0.806	2.90	1.2106	Medium
In a neighborhood sanctuary	0.792	2.83	1.3401	Medium
Total		2.99	0.9868	Medium

**Table 9** Facility Factor

Factor	Factor Loading	Mean	S.D.	Priority
Facilitating factors	(Eigenvalues=1.871 and %Variance=5.743)			
Easy to find the altar	0.748	3.69	0.9022	Much
Ease of the bus	0.829	3.17	0.9648	Medium
Ease of finding parking	0.790	2.90	1.1024	Medium
Total		3.25	0.7750	Medium

**Table 10** Sacred Dimension Factor

Factor	Factor Loading	Mean	S.D.	Priority
Factor of holiness	(Eigenvalues=1.299 and %Variance=4.598)			
To prevent this unfortunate	0.794	4.18	2.9625	Much
Protection against threats	0.804	3.84	0.7198	Much
Solve the problems of life	0.724	3.50	0.8255	Medium
Total		3.86	1.1660	Much

Factor of expense and holiness are the important factors for consumers who worship amulet for their life's auspice. These consumers believe that Tiger God Shrine is the god of success and they will worship Tiger God Shrine when they are anxious in the high level of significance corresponding to the result of Prasopchai Pasunn and Kanchana Wisutsakulsak (2010). Such two factors influence sacred objects worshipping. As a result, for factor on worshipping, it needs reliability to generate faith of such sacred objects worshipping for being the spirit and protection from all dangers. For the place of business, it has to be convenient for transportation with security for physical aspect and there should be history, legend and holiness of each amulet from the experts provided to customers. As a result, there should be the creation of reliability and faithfulness to the lessees either as the popular sacred objects or the spirit for their mind.

From the results of section 2, it is found that most samples are female with the age of 40 – 49 years graduated in Bachelor Degree with the approximate income of 40,001 – 50,000 baht per month. They have the average expenses of 1 – 10,000 baht with moderate financial status and marriage status and most of them are Buddhist. For analysis on attitude and behavior on sacred objects worshipping, it is found that most respondents prefer to worship woman statue beckoning happy lot in. The objects used in worshipping include joss sticks, candles and flowers. Sacred objects are obtained from temples with the belief that sacred objects worshipping will make business profitable. Most of people who recommend sacred objects to them are their cousin. In addition to sacred objects, they also believe in their own goodness. The place they use to store their sacred objects is their place of business. What they believed to receive from such sacred objects worshipping is they will gain more amount of customers. The principle used in business management is consisted of academic principle and belief in sacred objects. For analysis on factors entailed to sacred objects worshipping, it can be divided into 20 factors with 5 elements including basic belief, financial status, decision making, life success and protection with the explanation of variance at 67.988%.

Such five elements are able to be divided into 2 main parts, i.e., the sample will pay attention on sacred objects benefit to their business operation (First, second and third element) and sacred objects benefit to themselves (fourth and fifth element). It can be explained that the sample group worship sacred objects for their business as one reason but they also accept that they hope that the reward of such worshipping will bring them success in other matters of life as well. Before analyzing, the researcher firstly verifies the appropriateness of information, it is found that the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin is equal to 0.874 with true value of 1 and the value of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is equal to 2021.844 (Sig. = 0.000). This shows that the obtained information is suitable for analyzing factors (Kalaya Wanitchbanha, 2004). The results of factors are analyzed with Principal Component Analysis. The result can be divided into 20 factors with 5 elements including basic belief, financial status, decision making, life success and protection with the explanation of variance at 67.988%. The details are shown in Table 11-15.

**Table 11:** Exhibit factor value, Factor Loading, means, Standard Deviation and the level of first element's importance "basic belief" (Eigenvalues = 4.348, the variance is explained at 21.741%)

Factor	Factor Loading	Average	S.D.	Priority
Help promote business	0.775	3.11	0.76	Medium

The benefit of entrepreneurs	0.720	3.13	0.73	Medium
Help businesses succeed	0.703	3.19	0.79	Medium
Prosperity to the operator	0.683	3.41	0.85	Medium
To anchor it	0.660	3.08	0.81	Medium
Influence operators	0.549	3.42	0.75	Medium
The fate of the operator	0.536	3.18	0.82	Medium

**Table 12** shows the value of Factor Loading mean and standard deviation. And the second priority of the "financial" (Eigenvalues = 2.570 12.852 percent of the variance).

Factor	Factor Loading	Average	S.D.	Priority
Impact on business performance	0.782	3.26	0.73	medium
To claim the gold	0.756	3.58	0.73	very
The improved financial position	0.651	3.84	0.79	very
Make the trade	0.588	2.90	0.74	medium

**Table 13** shows the value of Factor Loading mean and standard deviation. And the third priority of the "decision" (Eigenvalues = 2.317 11.586 percent of the variance)

Factor	Factor Loading	Average	S.D.	Priority
I believe that peace of mind.	0.805	4.05	0.87	very
The decision to operate.	0.766	3.89	0.76	very
As part of the solution.	0.533	3.41	0.74	medium

**Table 14** shows the value of Factor Loading mean and standard deviation. And the priority of the four elements "Lifetime Achievement" (Eigenvalues = 2.250 11.250 percent of the variance).

Factor	Factor Loading	Average	S.D.	Priority
Help them succeed in life.	0.813	2.80	0.82	medium
Prosperity and happiness to life.	0.689	2.89	0.84	medium

**Table 15** shows the value of Factor Loading mean and standard deviation. And the priority of the five elements "covered security" (Eigenvalues = 2.112 10.559 percent of the variance).

Factor	Factor Loading	Average	S.D.	Priority
Protection against threats.	0.699	3.77	0.85	very

Made towards immortality.	0.614	3.47	0.73	medium
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From the results of section 3, it is found that most respondents are female with the age of 41 – 60 years and being single. They graduated in Bachelor Degree and works as private sector employees with the approximate income of 10, 001 – 15,000 baht per month and have private car as their vehicle. Most lessees consider on factors of sacred objects rental upon their faith and they also expect that they will benefit from worshipping such sacred objects. The frequency of sacred objects rental is not certain according to occasion. They mostly prefer to rent and worship sacred objects on Saturday – Sunday and acknowledge the information of sacred objects rental from words of mouth. In each rental, they will rent some sacred objects from temples and they will make their own decision for each rental. Buddha image is the most preferred sacred objects for rental then coin, amulet, Buddha image of each birthday, ring and Buddha for placing at the front area of car, respectively. For studying on mix marketing factors that mostly effected on sacred objects rental, the result show that the most effected factor is product factor then promotion, price and distribution channel, respectively. Considering on testing of mix marketing factors, the factor on population has the different result as shown in Table 16.

**Table 16** Comparison on mix marketing factors when the factor on population is different

factor	sex (t-stat)	age (F-stat)	Education (F-stat)	Revenue (F-stat)	occupation (F-stat)	status (F-stat)
product	1.75	5.68*	3.20*	2.05	2.00	0.85
Pricing	1.62	0.70	2.44*	2.18	0.86	2.29
distribution	3.05*	1.50	2.12	1.62	1.50	0.90
promotion	2.52*	3.63*	4.97*	2.15	1.62	0.49

The samples select the sacred objects by considering 4 dimensions of mix marketing including: product – by considering on sacred objects with good and beautiful definition; price – by considering on the appropriate price of amulet they can afford. They specify to rent sacred objects by considering on its reputation regardless its price. For distribution channel, for each sacred objects rental, the sample chose to rent the sacred objects from temples directly. For promotion, they consider whether any famous monk participated in incantation of such sacred objects. This will increase the popularity of such sacred objects corresponding to the research of Suthat Chanmanee (2008) who conducted the research on attitude and behavior of consumers toward Jatukarmramatthep rental for worshipping. For image of Jatukarmramatthep, it is found that the respondents are mostly interested in image of Jatukarmramatthep, especially, white powder Jatukarmramatthep. Secondly, they do not consider on price over the reputation of such sacred objects, i.e., they accept to pay higher price for more famous sacred object. For specific rental, they consider to calculate the increased price when they let other people to sub-rent such sacred objects. For distribution channel, they consider on the rental straightly from the temples which such sacred objects are created. For promotion, they consider to rent the sacred objects passed the incantation from famous monks.

The results of section 3, we are able to make opportunity pattern based on the belief of Thai society regarding sacred objects from the information obtained in section 1 – 3.

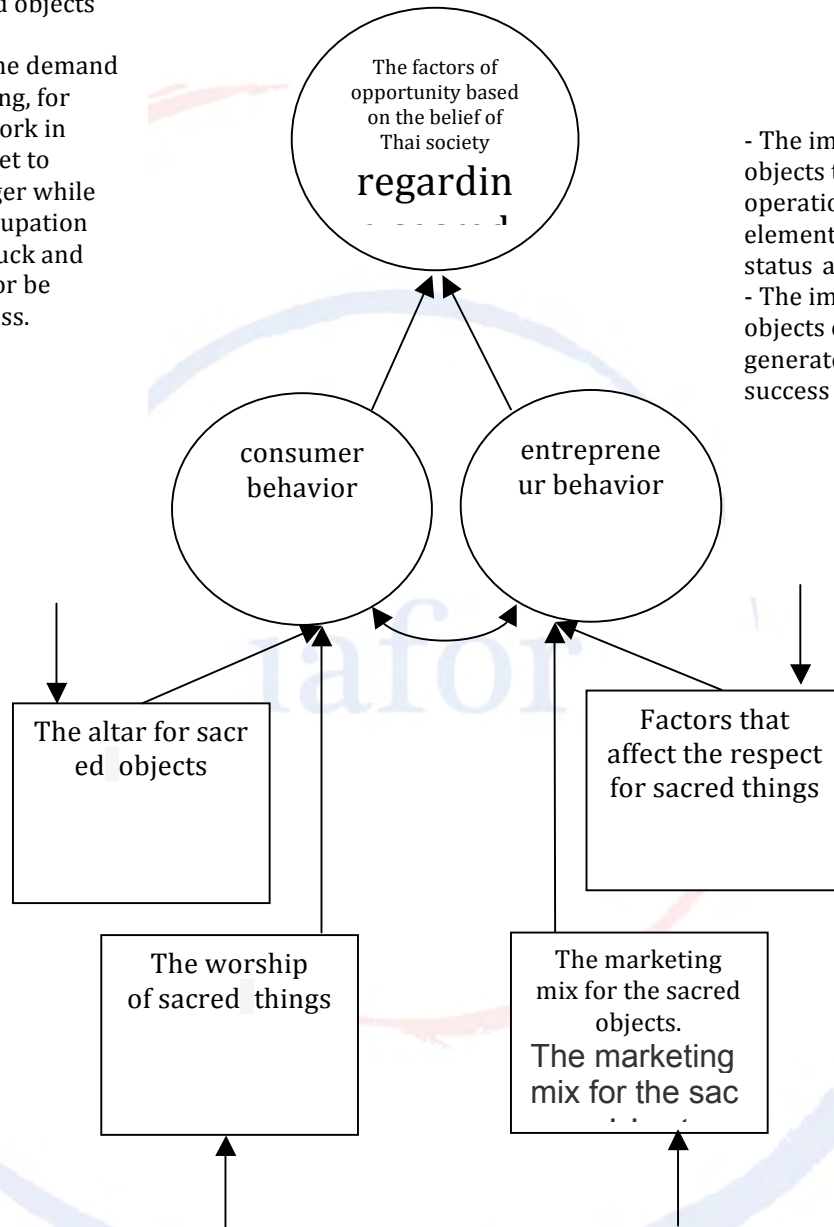
From illustrator 2, it can be seen that opportunity based on the belief of Thai society regarding sacred objects of Thai society depends on relative factors of consumers and entrepreneurs that can be seen that sacred objects rental depends on decision making on price and sellers (have knowledge on sacred objects, good courtesy, pay attention and good service). In addition, price depends on the place of business and the entrepreneurs should assemble together as the association to increase the reliability of their sacred objects rental businesses. Occupation of consumers also has effect on the demand of sacred objects worshipping, for example, consumers who work in security field wish the amulet to protect them from any danger while consumers with trading occupation wish amulet to bless them luck and wealth with their business or be successful with their business.

Moreover, consumers also consider that factors effect on sacred objects rental are expenses and holiness. They worship sacred objects when they are anxious and such sacred objects will benefit as the goodness and spirit of their life as well as benefit for protection. For place of business, they prefer to rent sacred object from a place of business with convenience for transportation and security. There should be the suggestion on legend, history and background of sacred objects. For entrepreneurs of sacred objects rental business, they consider that factors effect on sacred objects worshipping are generated by the importance of sacred objects towards business operation based on the element of basic belief, financial status, decision making and the importance of sacred objects to themselves regarding life success and protection. However, the entrepreneurs should consider on mix marketing factors for sacred objects rental of consumers for considering marketing strategy. Mix marketing also effects on sacred objects rental in 4 dimensions including product (sacred objects with beauty and good definition), price (there should be appropriate price with afford of people to rent such sacred objects for worshipping.), distribution channel (prefer to rent sacred objects from their sources directly) and promotion (incantation by famous monks).

- Consumers decide to rent sacred objects depending on price and sellers (have knowledge on sacred objects, good courtesy, pay attention and good service). In addition, price depends on the place of business and the entrepreneurs should assemble together as the association to increase the reliability of their sacred objects rental businesses.

- Occupation has effect on the demand of sacred objects worshipping, for example, consumers who work in security field wish the amulet to protect them from any danger while consumers with trading occupation wish amulet to bless them luck and wealth with their business or be successful with their business.

- The importance of sacred objects towards business operation is generated by the element of basic belief, financial status and decision making.  
- The importance of sacred objects on themselves is generated by the element of life success and protection.



-Factors influence to sacred objects worshipping are expenses and holiness.  
-They worship sacred objects when they are anxious and such sacred objects will benefit as the goodness and spirit of their life as well as benefit for protection.  
-For place of business, they prefer to rent sacred object from a place of business with convenience for transportation and security.  
-There should be the suggestion on legend, history and background of sacred objects.

Mix marketing effects on sacred objects rental in 4 dimensions as follows:

- Product (sacred objects with beauty and good definition)
- Price (there should be appropriate price with afford of people to rent such sacred objects for worshipping.)
- Distribution channel (prefer to rent sacred objects from their sources directly)
- Promotion (incantation by famous monks)

**Illustrator 2** illustrates opportunity pattern based on the belief of Thai society regarding sacred objects.

### **Recommendation**

Opportunity based on the belief of Thai society regarding sacred objects of Thai society is also able to be utilized in synthesizing the belief of Thai people on both consumers and entrepreneurs. Sacred objects worshipping has the relations with Thai people's way of life from the past to present. The important issue shall effect on the strategy operation of the entrepreneurs regarding sacred objects rental business of Thai society expanded broadly. As a result, from the result, the entrepreneurs should pay attention on the importance of pricing suitable with afford of people to rent such sacred objects for worshipping. Importantly, the place of business should be convenient and secured and the entrepreneurs should assemble together as the association to provide reliability of their sacred objects rental businesses. In addition, the sacred objects rental should be available at the source of such sacred objects directly it should be passed the incantation by famous monks.

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*Developing an Investment Project in Real Property Development on Vacant Land into a Cultural Attraction to Promote Local Economic Sustainability of Uoo - Thong, Suphan Buri*

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Abstract:

This research aims to present the results of the return on investment (ROI) analysis of an investment project in real property development on vacant land into cultural tourist attractions. And to present the evaluation of the possibility to promote local economic sustainability of Uoo - Thong district in Suphan Buri, Thailand. The researcher uses quantitative methods with a sample group of 400 people, consisting of both the locals: general consumers, sellers and sales clerks; and tourists in Bangkok. Then, the investment value is analyzed from the investment feasibility evaluation.

Study results show that vacant land should be developed into a cultural enterprise consisting of traditional markets and a museum of rice farmers and rice production process. This project is an interesting investment, considered from the internal rate of return (IRR) and the net present value (NVP) of the project. The enterprise also has many strong points; it is not far from Bangkok, so it could be turned into a center of cultural attraction which would play key roles in economic growth of Thailand's central region. It is important to provide facilities and accommodations to impress visitors that can serve a large number of visitors. The enterprise has to be near a government compound in Uoo - Thong district. Financial services must be available within the area. For the aspect of opportunity evaluation in promoting local economic sustainability, we should support local-only sellers and campaign, which will make the place unique and will attract tourists. Local Suphan Buri people are diligent, curious, and have a unique local accent. The enterprise will not only encourage them to serve the tourists, but also be a guideline for them to adapt to new environment of a new local career, which can foster and develop the potential of local economic sustainability in the future.

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## Introduction

In the past two decades, Thailand has been developed very quickly, judging from the changes in the aspects of social, economy and politics to follow globalization trend. Our social started to encounter the last stage of the development of capitalism, turning things into mediums of exchange of goods and services and focuses on reaping benefits from resources or even culture. Feelings, value and the mind of people have all been turned in to goods, and it is worrisome that the popularity of globalization is still growing. It had to be traded for with the lost of local culture, not to mention consumerism caused by the population. The lack knowledge and skills of resource utilization causes consumerism and makes the desire to purchase goods and services changes according to the country's development trend, which rapidly shifts towards "urbanization" (Warakron Samkoset, 2007) in the environment of social change. Our social has inevitably become a society of consumerism. Most people rely on consummation of products from super stores, as they are convenient and are the center of goods and services that are modern, complete with entertainment. Those super stores might be cultural destinations for modern production that were developed mainly from consumer's demand in urban societies. At the same time, the trend of conservation started to play an important role in the watch for problems that might occur from resource overconsumption in urban areas. Thus, it can be said that the problems from globalization will affect the process of social modernization, and will impact people, especially the juveniles and the intellectuals in urban areas to deny their traditional culture.

However, Thailand is lucky that there are some people in those societies, especially the intellectuals who cherish culture retaining. They started to preserve the cultural character of a uniquely unified national culture and are still doing it. At present, they are supported by both private and government agencies. In Thailand, Ministry of Culture is responsible for taking care and control of culture-related issues.

At present, the promotion of local art and traditions tourism had made cultural attractions, including cultural merchandises, started to attract tourists from both home and abroad because of the conservative consumption concept, which focuses on utility by creating and producing products from the wisdom of local art, culture, and tradition. People in urban areas, especially the Bangkok Metropolitan Region tend to go to cultural attractions in provinces around the Bangkok Metropolitan Region, for example: the Ayothaya Floating Market in Ayutthaya, the Four-Region Floating Market (Pattaya Floating Market) in Chonburi, Plearnwan (Eco Thai vintage village) in Prachuabkirikhan, Damnoen Saduak Floating Market in Ratchaburi, and the Amphawa Floating Market in Samut Songkram. At the same time, the demand for OTOP (One Tambon (District) One Product) and other culture-related products and services is increasing among the existing cultural attractions, which are the center of local cultural products and services in Thailand. However, these cultural attractions are still little in number and do not suffice for the growing cultural economic opportunity. One of the reasons is the constraints of the development of real property into a cultural attraction: the investments; the management readiness of the investors; and the most important, the lack of governmental supports. Another reason is because of legal restrictions, which conforms to a research by Sithvipha Harnsuksa, who studied on the topic "Legal problems in real estate business case study: land use control laws in private volition." The result stated that the deceleration of real property development occurred due to the entrepreneurs' lack of financial liquidity which had effects on a large number of other related business. Other than that, there were also legal restrictions concerning professional license of people working in real estate business, such as real estate development license, real estate agent license, and real estate

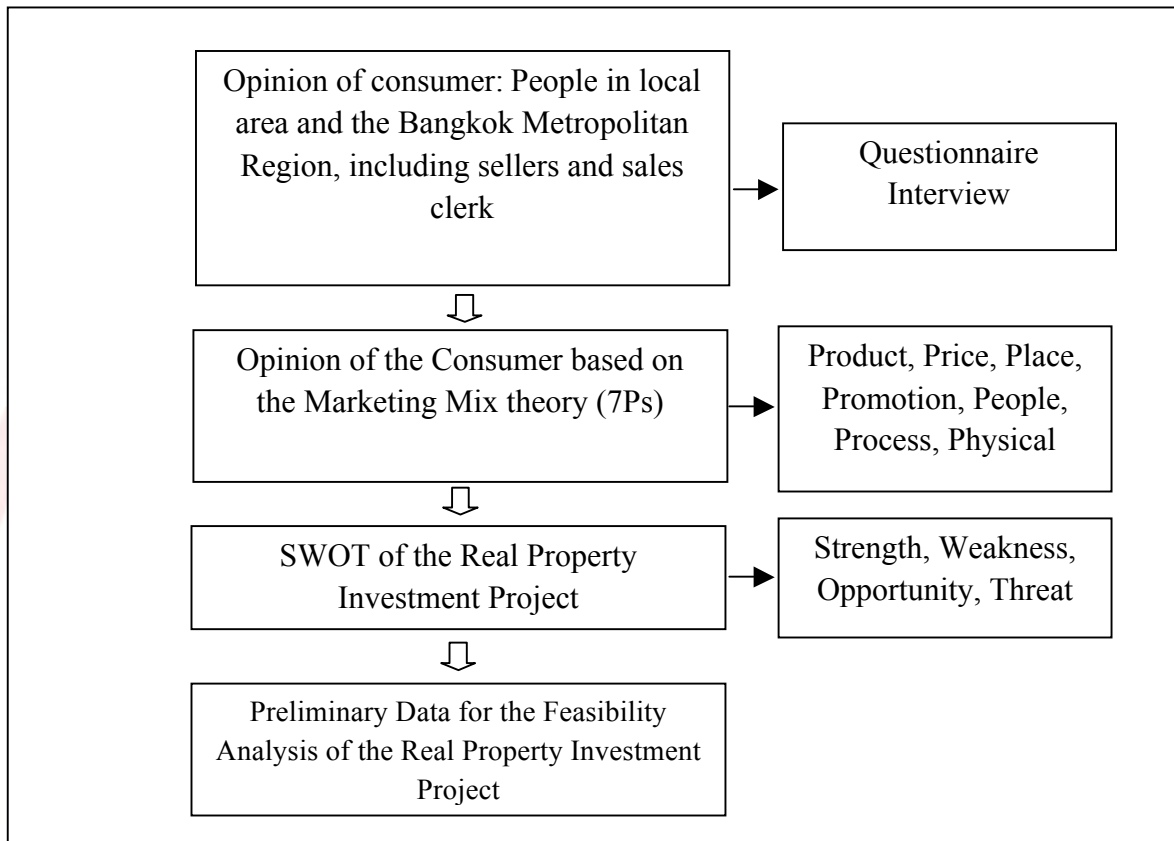
salesperson license; which can control private sector land use. At the same time, the country's macroeconomics problems also cause the reduction of the efficiency in the development of real estate business. A research by Jitnapa Chaemkun et al. (2009) on impacts of economic factors on real estate development businesses shows that when analyzing the data of 20 year's time, from 1988-2007, it was found that the sale value in real estate development business is directly related to GDP, inflation rate, and population size; and inversely related to interest rate. On the other hand, if existing real properties are continuously developed in the economic system, it will allow for the opportunity of economic growth, as goods related to the property can be produced and people can earn their income from the producing or selling goods (Jan K. Brueckner & Alfredo M. Pereira, 1997). The researcher found the information mentioned above very interesting, thus decided to conduct a study to develop an investment project in real property development on vacant land into a cultural attraction to promote local economic sustainability of Uoo - Thong, Suphan Buri. This research aims to achieve two goals: 1. to present the results of the return on investment (ROI) analysis of an investment project in real property development on vacant land into cultural tourist attractions, which is the Output; and 2. to present the evaluation of the possibility to promote local economic sustainability of Uoo - Thong district in Suphan Buri, Thailand, which is the Outcome.

## **Methodology**

The researcher designed this study starting with the use of quantitative social research methods, handing out questionnaires and interviewing a sample group of 400 people, consisting of both the locals: general consumers, sellers and sales clerks; and tourists in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region. Then, the investment value is analyzed from the investment feasibility evaluation, based on results of the quantitative research mentioned above. The research tools used in the study are check list questionnaires and some open-ended questions, along with some semi – structured interview and conversation interview. Document of proofs on related topics are also used to process and analyze the data, which is to give meaning, which can impact the interpretive methodology used to conclude the results based on the critical methodology. In order to achieve the research goals, the methodology is divided into 3 steps, as the followings:

The first step is using quantitative social research methods, handing out questionnaires and interviewing a sample group of 400 people, consisting of both the locals: general consumers, sellers and sales clerks; and tourists in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region to analyze their level of opinion to determine the marketing strategies based on the Marketing Mix theory (7Ps), which is the theory used by entrepreneurs in business planning, both before and after running the business, in order to improve the business competitiveness (Sirivan Serirat et al., 1998) and to do SWOT analysis to evaluate the feasibility, for it to be able to achieve a business competitive advantage, as every business needs to increase the competitive threats and expand the marketing scope (Wit Satyarakwit, 1999.) of the investment project. The sample group consists of 400 people. The study tools are questionnaires and interviews. As for the data analysis, the following statistics are used: 1) Descriptive statistics, used to describe personal information and opinion of the interviewee. The data presentation consists of 1) Frequency Table, showing the count of data variables, categorized by group or type

(Chatchavan Ruangpraphan, 1994); 2) Percentage, a fraction or ratio expressed as part of 100, calculated with the percent formula (Cherdlarp Wasuwat, 2004); 3) Mean (Chusri Wongrattana, 1998); and 4) Conceptual Framework of the first step of the research. (See Illustration 1)



**Illustration 1** Conceptual Framework of the First Step of the Research

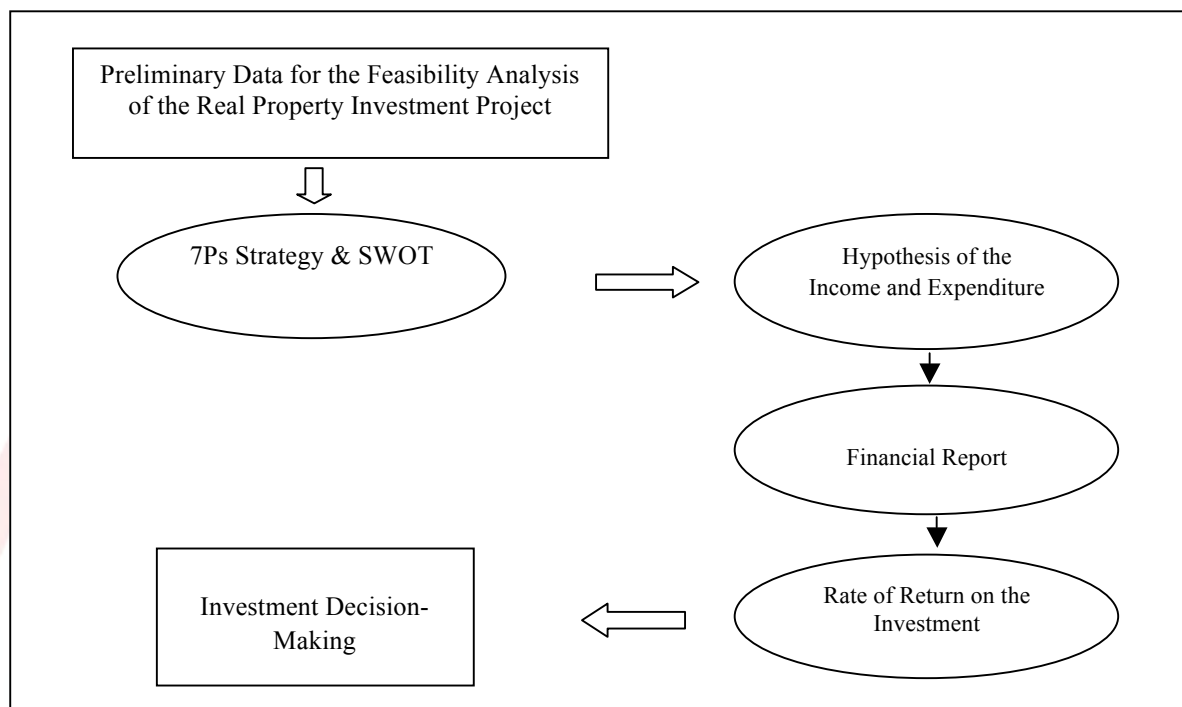
Illustration 1 shows the marketing research process. The researcher has studied for more information from other researches on related topics and collected the data by asking the opinions of a sample group of 230 people in local area and the Bangkok Metropolitan Region, including sellers and sales clerk, based on the 7Ps Marketing Mix theory (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical, Process); and produce a SWOT analysis of the real property investment to obtain the preliminary data for the feasibility analysis of the project.

The second step is using the preliminary data from the first step that were obtained from the 7Ps Marketing Mix theory and the SWOT analysis to formulate a hypothesis of the income and expenditure (cost), then write a financial report, consisting of income statement, balance sheet, cash flow statement, and payback period (Somnuk Aujiapongpan, 2003).

The third step is calculating the rate of return (ROR) on the investment using the ratio formula (Cohn & Geske, 1990) as follows:

1. The IRR must be higher than other ROR values, e.g. depositing money in a bank, investing in debt securities, gold, and common stocks. (Yuavares Tubpun, 2008)

2. The NPV must be higher than zero to be considered as a good investment. The conceptual framework of the process is shown in Illustration 2 (Yuavares Tubpun, 2008)



**Illustration 2** Conceptual Framework of the Second and Third Step of the Research

## Conclusions

### 1) General Data

Vacant land should be developed into a cultural conservative market. This result is supported by the data from the survey. Products to be sold in the market should show the cultural character of the attraction. Sellers should focus on selling food and souvenirs that represent the art and tradition of Uoo - Thong, Suphan Buri. The place should be designed or decorated to show the local lifestyle; the life of rice farmers and rice production process, to attract tourists, so that the enterprise will become the first new cultural attraction of the place, as there are none in the surrounding area.

### 2) Conclusions of the 7Ps Marketing Mix strategy analysis

In the aspect of Product, vacant land should be developed into a cultural enterprise consisting of traditional markets and a museum of rice farmers and rice production process. Multimedia presentation should be provided to acknowledge tourists of rice and the lifestyle of local rice farmers.

In the aspect of Price strategy, the rate for stall rentals should be 100 – 200 Baht for daily rents, less than 1,000 Baht for weekly rents, and 3,000 - 5,000 Baht for monthly rents. As for shop rentals, proper rate should be 15,000 - 20,000 Baht per month.

In the aspect of Place, the public circulation inside the enterprise should be efficient and in a one-way direction. A visit to the place takes approximately 3 hours and 3,000 - 5,000 Baht; half of the amount will be spent on food and beverages, and another 10 – 20% will be spent on souvenirs. Enough clean restrooms must be provided to serve a lot of visitors.

In the aspect of Promotion, for the opening promotion, visitors should get 10% discount, and the promotion should also apply to travel agencies. The cultural attraction should build its unique character, reflecting the local style together with the acknowledgement of rice culture. There should be an information desk at the front of the enterprise. As for publicity, continuous advertising must be done so that the target group will always be informed of new promotion, especially television publicity or commercial.

In the aspect of People management, the staffs should know about the history and other attractions in Suphan Buri and should be able to offer the information to tourists. They should also process good personality, politeness, and should dress in simple local costume. Most importantly, sellers and sales clerks should be local people only and should know about their products and the local character of Uoo - Thong, Suphan Buri. This is also a way to encourage local career development opportunities in order to strengthen the local economy.

In the aspect of Process management, the cultural attraction should open everyday during 08:00 - 21:00 both on weekdays, weekends and holidays.

In the aspect of Physical features, a parking lot must be provided for the convenience of visitors travelling by personal cars. Estimated average number of visitors during the starting period will approximately be less than 800 daily; the number includes local people, tourists from the Bangkok Metropolitan Region, other provinces and foreigners.

The information mentioned above can be concluded into 12 marketing strategies, as follows:

- 1) Inexpensive products: the average price sold elsewhere
  - 2) Selling already well-known OTOP products; thus encourage the sale of other local products and make other products known as well
  - 3) Local-only sellers: encourage the locals to serve the tourists and create the local character to attract tourists
  - 4) Continuous marketing
  - 5) A van station must be available in front of or near the attraction
  - 6) Financial services must be available within the area. Convenience store that open 24 hours must also be available, so that both the locals and tourists can come into the cultural market at all time.
  - 7) Provide clean restrooms, and an information desk in front of the enterprise.
- Circulation inside the enterprise should be in a one-way direction.

8) Applying the guaranteed market standard to the enterprise and selling products that has passed the quality checks and approval by local organizations, Provincial Operations, the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Commerce of Thailand

9) Cooperate with travel agencies, offering commission fee, and offer discounts to tourists

10) Organize exhibitions and performances to attract tourists. Promote and preserve the uniqueness of rice culture for the tourists to come and see

11) Publicity through television and newspaper to introduce the enterprise to the target group

12) Develop and train staffs regularly; stimulating service mind and the knowledge of local culture

### 3) Conclusions of the SWOT analysis

<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is not far from Bangkok, so it could be turned into a center of cultural attraction which would play key roles in economic growth of Thailand's central region</li> <li>• Facilities and accommodations are provided: clean restrooms that can serve a large number of visitors, and a parking lot for the convenience of visitors travelling by personal cars</li> <li>• The enterprise is both an attraction and museum of rice. It preserves the local culture</li> <li>• Inexpensive products: the average price sold elsewhere</li> <li>• The support and preservation of local rice culture makes local people become more friendly and make the enterprise become the knowledge center that focus on morals and ethics</li> <li>• Cultural market is highly popular among tourists and it will also make the locals love and be proud of their hometown</li> <li>• Located near a government compound in Uoo - Thong district</li> <li>• Financial services are available within the area</li> <li>• Marketing is done continuously</li> <li>• Regular staff development for good service</li> <li>• Van station will be in front of the enterprise</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the starting period, the location is unfamiliar to people in Bangkok and other provinces</li> <li>• The enterprise is a new business, and might have to compete with present businesses already selling local products to tourists</li> <li>• The enterprise is not located in bus routes</li> <li>• Limited space of the market project. The enterprise cannot be expanded to support future popularity growth</li> <li>• Water diversion to the museum might only be possible during the period of seasonal high-flows</li> <li>• Laws and restrictions</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The location is unfamiliar to people from other provinces</li> <li>• There is not a lot of publicity or promotion to encourage tourists to visit Uoo - Thong, Suphan Buri</li> <li>• The enterprise is a new business. Without continuous publicity, people will not be informed that there is a new attraction complete in all aspects and features</li> <li>• During the starting period, the market and products might not meet the standard yet. Customers might not trust the quality of the products.</li> </ul>
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**Opportunities:**

- There are different kind of promotional activities to attract tourists, such as exhibitions performances, and the preservation of rice culture
- The local-only sellers campaign will encourage them to serve the tourists and will create a local character, which will attract tourists
- Attract the locals to participate in the activities and will bring more income to the district
- The enterprise will become the melting pot of localism and urbanism, and will add more option to tourists
- The enterprise will be supported by both private and government agencies in Suphan Buri
- It is a way to promote local culture to both Thai and foreign tourists
- Selling already well-known OTOP products; thus encourage the sale of other local products and make other products known as well
- Convenient communication to the place will enable the flow of business
- Local Suphan Buri people are diligent. They also have a unique local accent, and are always ready to learn new technologies and new local careers
- Publicity through television and newspaper will introduce the enterprise to the target group
- There are other famous attractions for tourists to go to on the same visit to Suphan Buri

After obtaining the preliminary data from the opinion of the sample group, a hypothesis of the income and expenditure was formulated to support the writing of financial report of the investment project. Then, the numbers in the financial report is used to calculate the ratios of the investment to support the investment decision-making. The ratios of the investment is shown in Table 1

**Table 1** The Internal Rate of Return (IRR) and Net Present Value (NPV), calculated with 10% discount

Year	IRR	PV	NPV
0		-34,340,003.00	
1	6.21%	33,155,807.85	-1,184,192.15
5	14.91%	40,221,121.23	5,881,121.23
10	17.13%	47,890,709.83	13,550,709.83
15	18.09%	53,518,280.22	19,178,280.22
20	18.59%	57,640,234.57	23,300,234.57

From table 1, if we consider the NPV by the end of the first year, the NPV of the enterprise is negative at -1,184,192.15 Baht, which shows that the project is not a good investment. When considering the payback period, that is during the 5-6<sup>th</sup> year, the NPV is positive, showing

that the enterprise is a good investment: the NPVs in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> year are 5,881,121.23 Baht; 13,550,709.83 Baht; 19,178,280.22 Baht; and 23,300,234.57 Baht, respectively.

As for the internal rate of return (IRR) from the end of the first year, the rate is at 6.21%, until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> year, the rate is at 18.59%. We find that the IRR gives higher return than the opportunity cost, based on the calculation of deposit rates of banks in Thailand, which is between 2 – 4.5%. Thus, overall consideration shows that the project is a good investment and the payback period is at the 5.28 year, calculated from the formula:  $[(34,340,000 - 32,511,029.48) / (32,511,029.48)] * 5 + 5$ . When compared to other 20 years projects, this project can pay back within approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the age of the project, which is considered to be a good investment: the break point is lower than the profit from the first year of the project on. See Illustration 3 for more details.

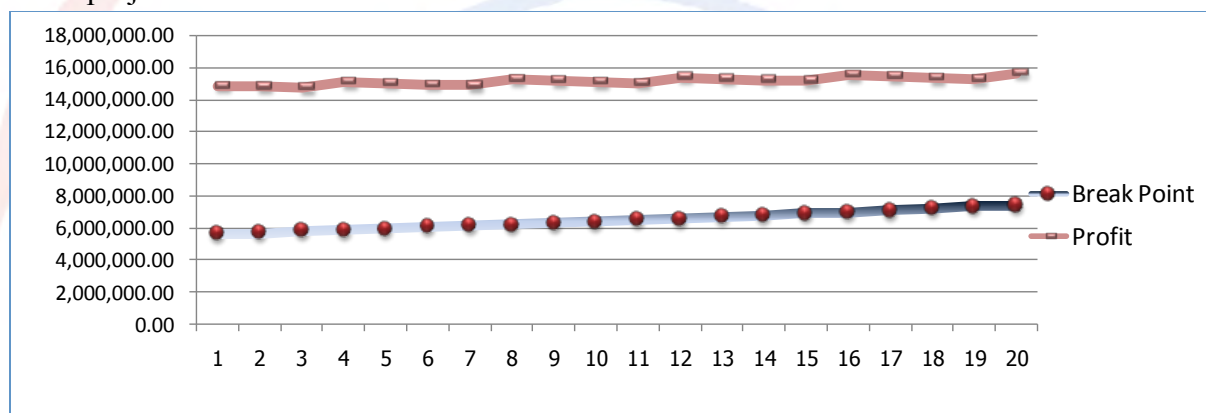


Illustration 3 Break Points and Profit of the Investment

## Discussions

The project aims to develop a vacant land into a cultural attraction to cultural conservative market. The results show that the land should be developed into a cultural enterprise consisting of traditional markets and a museum of rice farmers and rice production process. The market should show the local cultural identity of Uoo-Thong, Suphan Buri, Thailand. The identity can be shown through the rice culture, and the enterprise will become the source of income to the district. Moreover, it will strengthen the local economy, and most importantly, this enterprise will make the locals love and be proud of their hometown, as there is also a museum of rice, with multimedia presentation of the local lifestyle of people in Uoo - Thong, Suphan Buri. The market is not only a place for products and services, especially food and souvenirs of local traditions, but the overall purpose includes creating the center of academic services for short term career development and local career training programs to preserve and promote the wisdom of local art, culture, and tradition; and use the wisdom to develop the local economy to achieve sustainability. Another main goal is to develop the vacant land into a local center of business, attraction, and social services to the youth and common people. In conclusion, the project aims to develop a real property on vacant land into a cultural enterprise consisting of traditional markets and a museum of rice farmers and rice production process, the center of local products and services, the center of

academic knowledge of rice and local lifestyle, and to preserve and promote the local wisdom and utilize it to develop the local economy and community to achieve permanent sustainability, including to create a local center of business, attraction, and social services to the youth and common people.

After considering the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the project, results show that the enterprise is a very good investment, as there are a lot of strengths, e.g. it is not far from Bangkok, so it could be turned into a center of cultural attraction which would play key roles in economic growth of Thailand's central region; it has complete facilities and accommodations: clean restrooms that can serve a large number of visitors, and a parking lot for the convenience of visitors travelling by personal cars; it is located near a government compound in Uoo - Thong district; financial services is available within the area; and a van station will be in front of the enterprise. As for the opportunities, the projects also has many interesting points, e.g. there are different kind of promotional activities to attract tourists and make them interested in the preservation of rice culture; the local-only sellers campaign will encourage them to serve the tourists and will create a local character, which will attract tourists; local Suphan Buri people are diligent and have a unique local accent: they are always ready to learn new technologies and adapt to new environment of a new local career; and there are other famous attractions for tourists to go to on the same visit to Suphan Buri. On the other hand, there are only a few weaknesses and threats, such as the enterprise is a new business, without continuous publicity, people will not be informed of a new attraction complete in all aspects and features; the location is unfamiliar to people from Bangkok other provinces; and there is a limited space so the enterprise cannot be expanded to support future popularity growth. However, the weaknesses and threats can be part of the factors in determining the future management strategies, such as the local-only sellers campaign, as it will inspire the locals to serve tourists and will create a local character which will make the place unique and will attract tourists; selling already well-known OTOP products, thus encourage the sale of other local products and make other products known as well; selling inexpensive products, the average price sold elsewhere; continuous advertising and publicity to make the market project publicly known; and a van station must be available in front of or near the attraction.

### **Suggestions**

Research Results show that weaknesses and threats should be considered as the factors in determining the future management strategies, for example, the local-only sellers campaign will inspire the locals to serve tourists and will create a local character which will make the place unique and will attract tourists; selling already well-known OTOP products, thus encourage the sale of other local products and make other products known as well; selling inexpensive products, the average price sold elsewhere; continuous advertising and publicity to make the market project publicly known; and a van station must be available in front of or near the attraction. The technique used in the research methodology is the Marketing Mix strategy which focuses on the demand of the consumers, consisting of local sellers and sales

clerks and tourists from the Bangkok Metropolitan Region. As for the project development, the sample group might not cover the tourists from all of the country, therefore, further research should focus on the opinion of a sample group of both Thai and foreign tourists, including government officials who play a role supporting the development of vacant land into cultural attractions, such as officials from the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the Ministry of Culture, and the Department of Local Administration.

### **Acknowledgements**

First, I would like to thank the sample group who are very cooperative in the survey: the locals, people in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region, and local sellers. The information I have obtained from their answers was extremely crucial to this research, and without their help, this research could never be accomplished. Next, I offer my sincerest gratitude to all of the professors listed in the references, who I gain the insight from your text books or articles, and adapt the knowledge to my studies, which allow me to complete my research. Finally, I am utterly grateful to Dr. Pitak Thanbancha, MD, business director of B. Care Medical Center, who has funded my studies.

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*Factors that Influence Trading of Goods and Services via Electronic Commerce Behaviors of the Students of Silpakorn University at Phetchaburi IT Campus and at Sanam Chandra Palace Campus*

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Abstract:

The research is aimed to compare the trading via Electronic Commerce behaviors, categorized by personal data, and to study the different contexts of Electronic Commerce in various areas by taking into consideration the level of understanding, the experience and the motivation of the students as well as to study the pros and cons of Electronic Commerce. The research also studies the factors, including the level of understanding, the experience and the motivation, that influence the trading via Electronic Commerce behaviors of the students at Phetchaburi IT Campus and at Sanam Chandra Palace Campus. The tools developed and used by the researchers in this study are the questionnaires performed on 400 samples and an in-depth interview. The researchers utilized a descriptive statistics which include Frequency, Mean, Percentage and Standard Deviation. The referred statistics are t-test, F-test and crosstab chi-square.

The research results show that there are various factors that influence the trading via electronic commerce behaviors. The basic understanding about Electronic Commerce in other transactions on the websites factor shows the statistics of 7.848 and the significant level of .049. The basic understanding about Electronic Commerce relating to the trading time on the websites factor shows the statistics of 12.265 and the Significant Level of .007. The price motivation factor shows the statistics of 23.031 and the Significant Level of .027 and the distribution channel factor shows the statistics of 30.477 and the Significant Level of .002. The Significant Level for the statistics is set at .05. As for the in-depth interview, most of the samples agree that trading websites usually have untimely delivery or the delivery of wrong products issues. They also agree that there should be an improvement on the credibility of the information and the services offered on websites.

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## Introduction

It is undeniable that today the telecommunication technology has advanced rapidly. At the same time, both Internet and E-commerce have taken the key roles in pushing forward various activities in the business world as well as facilitating the daily lives of most people. In terms of business sector, the quality of productions or services alone may not be sufficient. Therefore, it is highly necessary to apply new strategies and new marketing methods to business operations. The use of E-Commerce in trading goods and services has inspired the creation of other distribution channels by proliferating various online marketing on Internet network that are more efficient and convenient than the traditional marketing methods. The key benefits deriving from the creation of online marketing system are companies or organizations can interact with their customers directly, therefore, increasing the opportunity for improvements, the timely introduction of new products and services to their customers, and the ability to collect information from the customers in order to customize the products to meet their satisfaction. Meanwhile, the consumers receives the convenience from trading online due to lesser time required in searching, contemplating and ordering products or services directly from the websites, regardless of the location and time.

The National Statistical Office has carried out a survey to collect the data about the value and the ratio for each types of business that trade goods and services on Internet. The survey results shows that 73.6% of E-Commerce businesses are Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that have no more than 5 employees. This is further categorized into B2C (Business-to-Consumer) which makes up 85.3%, B2B (Business-to-Business) at 14.4% and B2G (Business-to-Government) at 0.3% (Phawut Pongwittayaphanu, 2007:16). The National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) has pointed out the evidently upward trend for the usages of Internet in various areas by Thai population in the past 10 years. In 1999, the statistics showed that there were 1,500,000 Internet users as compared to 18,300,000 Internet users in 2011. The growth rate is more than 12 folds. The rapid growth in the number of Internet users as described by the statistics implies that borderless communication technology is greatly desired by the market. This causes the businesses in this trading channel to experience growth in a similar manner. Moreover, The Internet survey, which was carried out by The National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) in 2007, found that children age below 20 years old makes up the majority who prefer online activities. The ratio of Internet users age between 20-25 years old is averaging at 19.9% and users age below 20 years old is averaging 16.5%.

However, when considering the importance of Internet in business context and the daily lives of people in urban society, Orachorn Maneesong commented that Internet market is consumer market because trading activities happened mainly as the result of the consumers' decisions. Successful businesses in Internet market are ones that can satisfy the customers the most in two major ways including customization and in-time service (Orachorn Maneesong, 2003: 74). In addition, Internet market is also an important channel and the foundation for Electronic Commerce. Electronic Commerce extremely useful for the consumers since Electronic Commerce facilitate convenient trading processes to sellers or Business-to-Consumer (B2C) transactions which require lesser time through the use of online payment by

credit card system provided by service provider such as PayPal. Moreover, the producers and businesses can reap the benefits from these technologies through Business-to-Business(B2B)communication and information exchange among themselves to arrive at smooth internal business operations such as online warehouse, Internet banking or Financial Electronic Data Interchange (FEDI). The Government can also benefit from Government-to-Customer (G2C) in providing services such as E-Revenue to the people.

Silpakorn University, Phetchaburi IT Campus is an educational institution that provides the support in terms of resources and information technology to both staff and students. This is especially for the students, who are the largest population in the university and in the age group that start taking interest in communication technology and electronic media in daily life. Apart from this, the Faculty of management Science, Marketing major, has included subjects on E-Commerce Management with researchers as guest lecturers. This shows the correspondence between the academic courses and the technology advancement in present days. Meanwhile, due to the location of Sanam Chandra Place campus, which is located in the central district area, both the number of students and the use of information technology have expanded dramatically. Moreover, many faculties within the campus such as the Faculty of Science, the Faculty of Education or the Faculty of Arts have supported the students in the use of computers and information technology for their own benefits.

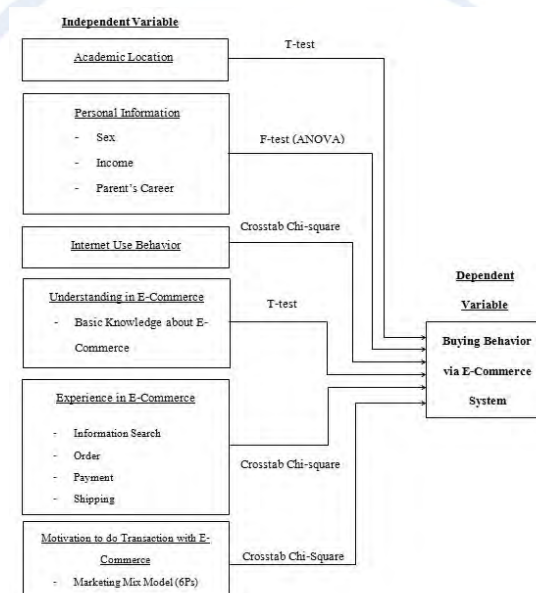
This phenomenon has tempted the researchers to carry out the study in order to find out how the level of understanding, the experience and the motivations of students of Silpakorn university at both campuses influence their trading via E-Commerce behaviors as well as to compare behavioral differences in using E-Commerce between students outside central district area, referring to Phetchaburi IT Campus, and students inside central district area, referring to Sanam Chandra Palace campus to obtain useful information for SMEs businesses that is initiating or operating online businesses and to obtain basic information for students who are interested in using or developing their own academic work as well as for those who are interested in having a profession involving E-Commerce.

## **Methods**

The researchers have established the scope for this study including the population which is year 1 to year 4 Silpakorn university students who are studying at Phetchaburi IT campus in any of the three faculties which include the Faculty of Management Science, the Faculty of Information Technology and Communications, and the Faculty of Veterinary and those who are studying at Sanam Chandra Palace campus in any of the five faculties which include the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Science, the Faculty of Pharmacy and the Faculty of Engineering and Industrial Technology. The selection of the research population from Silpakorn university Phetchaburi IT campus, which is located in Cha-am, Phetchaburi, and from Sanam Chandra Palace, which is located in the central district area of Nakornpathom, serve one of the research purposes which is to compare the behaviors of students based on the locations of the universities whether inside or outside the central district area. The total research period, which includes the construction of the questionnaire,

interview script and data collection from the samples selected during July to September 2011, is three months.

The research tool used to collect data from the selected samples is the questionnaire, which is developed by the researcher. The questionnaire on Internet using behaviors, the experience and the motivations for products trading on Internet, the trading behaviors and the types of products that are generally found in E-commerce is used to collect data from the total of 400 samples. The calculation based on Taro Yamane formula and the in-depth interview, which comprises nine questions covering the topics including the usage of E-Commerce to provide supporting data for the questionnaire, the attitude and the view points towards trading via E-Commerce, performed on ten interviewees who have the experience in trading via E-Commerce, result in the guideline for improvement. The construction of the research tool and the data collection process is within the basic conceptual framework as shown in illustration 1.



**Illustration 1.** Conceptual Framework

The researcher has established the procedures in developing research questionnaire as followed:

Step1. Review the literatures and research documents about the attitude, the behaviors and the process involved in trading on Internet as well as consider the ideas and theories behind E-Commerce.

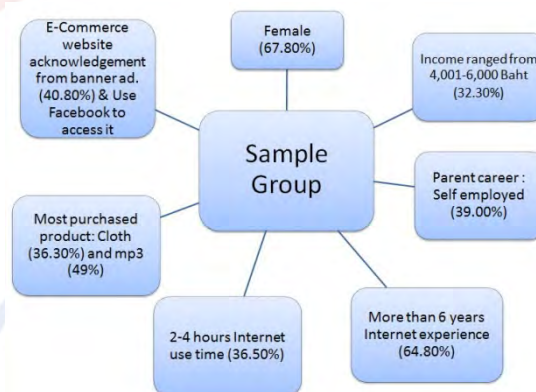
Step2. Collect the data and construct the questionnaire then consult with the experts in order to obtain the guidance in developing an accurate questionnaire.

Step3. Review for correctness and perform the confidence analysis of the questionnaire by using Alpha Coefficient of Cronbach to arrive the confidence level at 0.874, which means that the questionnaire is appropriate and can be used for data collection.

Step4. Bring the questionnaire to test on the student groups outside the selected research sample groups in order to check and improve the questionnaire before performing the actual data collection.

## Research Summary

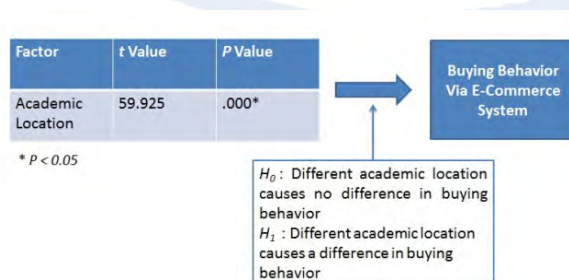
Based on the research study, the basic information of most sampled students can be summarized as shown in illustration 2



**Illustration 2.** Basic information of most samples

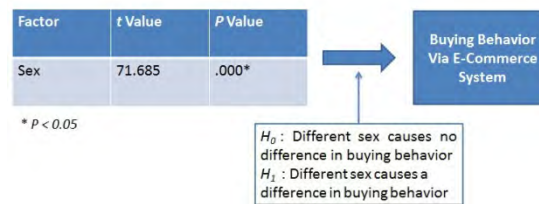
Based on the demographic study, it is found that the majority of the selected samples are female students who have average income between 4,001 Baht to 6,000 Baht and have parents who are business owners. As for Internet using behaviors, it is found that most of selected samples have more than six years of Internet using experience, averaging two hours to four hours per day. The Internet is used mostly to communicate with others, to buy items, with the most popular being clothing items, and to download mp3. The samples learn about selling website through the advertisement bans on various websites and the most visited website to purchase goods and services is Facebook, which correspond with the research work of Nutcharin Chobdumrongtham (2010) on the subject of the influence that the advertising media in online network has on consumer response.

In testing the research hypothesis, the researcher categorizes the topics for analysis into two aspects. The first aspect is the location of the education management, the personal data and Internet using behaviors, which lead to different trading via E-Commerce behaviors. The second aspect is the level of understanding, the experience, and the motivation which have the influence on the trading via E-Commerce behavior of the students. The analysis results for the first aspect is summarized and shown as followed



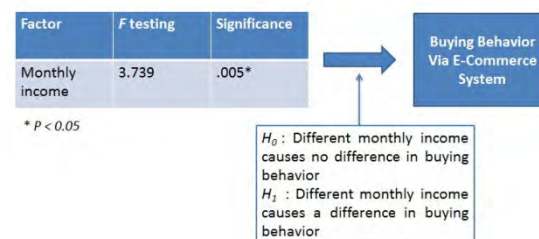
**Illustration 2** Analysis of the location of the educational management resulting in trading via E-Commerce behaviors

Based on the test of hypothesis using t-test, the statistics show 59.925 and the Significance Level of .000 which is lesser than 0.05. Therefore, the primary hypothesis is denied and the secondary hypothesis is accepted. This means that the different locations of the educational management result in the different trading via E-Commerce behaviors at the Significance Level of .05.



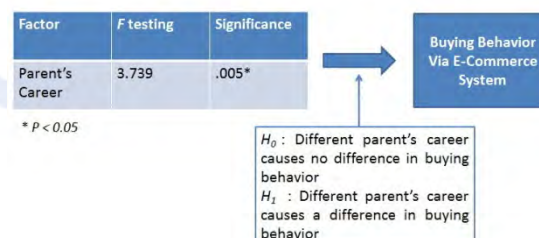
**Illustration 2** Analysis of genders resulting in trading via E-Commerce behaviors

Based on the test of hypothesis using t-test, the statistics show 71.685 and the Significance Level of .000 which is lesser than 0.05. Therefore, the primary hypothesis is denied and the secondary hypothesis is accepted. This means that the different genders result in the different trading via E-Commerce behaviors at the Significance Level of .05.



**Illustration 3** Analysis of monthly income resulting in trading via E-Commerce behaviors

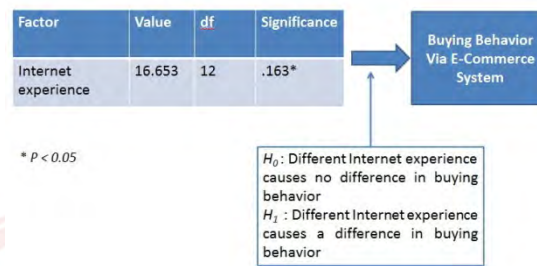
Based on the test of hypothesis using f-test, the statistics show 3.739 and the Significance Level of .005 which is lesser than 0.05. Therefore, the primary hypothesis is denied and the secondary hypothesis is accepted. This means that the different levels of monthly income result in the different trading via E-Commerce behaviors at the Significance Level of .05



**Illustration 4** Analysis of the occupation of the parents resulting in trading via E-Commerce behaviors

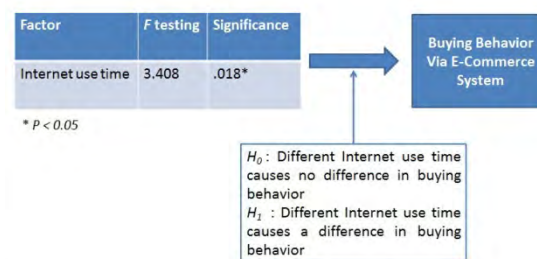
Based on the test of hypothesis using f-test, the statistics show 3.739 and the Significance Level of .005 which is lesser than 0.05. Therefore, the primary hypothesis is denied and the

secondary hypothesis is accepted. This means that the different occupation of parents result in the different trading via E-Commerce behaviors at the Significance Level of .05



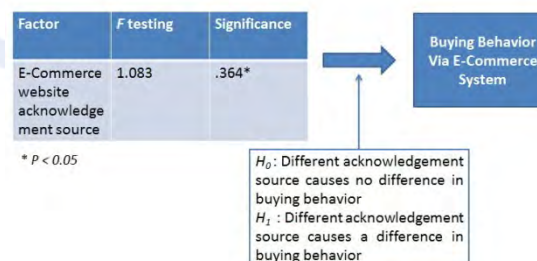
**Illustration 5** shows the test of the Internet using experience of the students which influence the trading of via E-Commerce behavior in terms of frequency in trading goods/service via E-Commerce

Based on the test of hypothesis using Crosstab Chi-Square, the statistics show 16.653 and the Significance Level of .163 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the primary hypothesis is accepted and the secondary hypothesis is denied. This means that different Internet using experience of the students does not result in the different trading of via E-Commerce behavior in terms of frequency in trading goods/service via E-Commerce at the Significance Level of .05.



**Illustration 6** Analysis of the average Internet using time in hours per day resulting in trading via E-Commerce behaviors

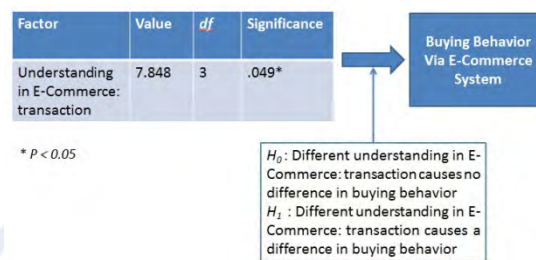
Based on the test of hypothesis using f-test, the statistics show 3.408 and the Significance Level of .018 which is lesser than 0.05. Therefore, the primary hypothesis is denied and the secondary hypothesis is accepted. This means that the different in average Internet using time in hours per day result in the different trading via E-Commerce behaviors at the Significance Level of .05.



**Illustration 7** Analysis of the source of E-Commerce resulting in trading via E-Commerce behaviors

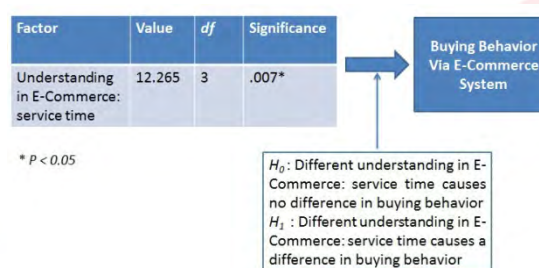
Based on the test of hypothesis using f-test, the statistics show 1.083 and the Significance Level of .364 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the secondary hypothesis is denied and the primary hypothesis is accepted. This means that the different sources from which trading website is learned result in indifferent trading via E-Commerce behaviors at the Significance Level of .05.

As for the analysis of the next aspect, which include the level of understanding, the experience and the motivations resulting in trading via E-Commerce behaviors of the students, these can be summarized as shown in the following illustrations



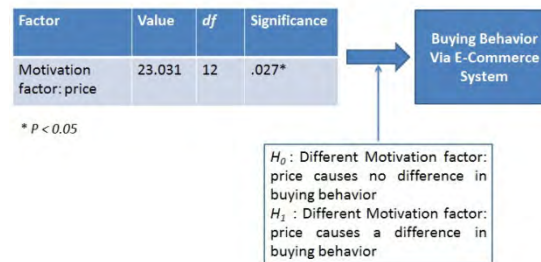
**Illustration 8** Analysis of the levels of basic understanding about E-Commerce resulting in trading via E-Commerce behaviors

Based on the test of hypothesis using Crosstab Chi-Square, the statistics show 7.848 and the Significance Level of .049 which is lesser than 0.05. Therefore, the primary hypothesis is denied and the secondary hypothesis is accepted. This means that the different levels of basic understanding about E-Commerce in carrying out various transactions on websites result in the different trading via E-Commerce behaviors in terms of the frequency in trading goods/services on Internet at the Significance Level of .05.



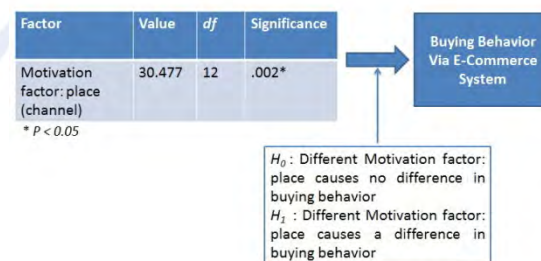
**Illustration 9** Analysis of the levels of basic understanding about E-Commerce resulting in trading via E-Commerce behaviors

Based on the test of hypothesis using Crosstab Chi-Square, the statistics show 12.265 and the Significance Level of .007 which is lesser than 0.05. Therefore, the primary hypothesis is denied and the secondary hypothesis is accepted. This means that the different operating times for trading on various websites result in the different trading via E-Commerce behaviors in terms of the frequency in trading goods/services on Internet at the Significance Level of .05.



**Illustration 10** Analysis of price motivation resulting in trading via E-Commerce behaviors

Based on the test of hypothesis using Crosstab Chi-Square, the statistics show 23.031 and the Significance Level of .027 which is lesser than 0.05. Therefore, the primary hypothesis is denied and the secondary hypothesis is accepted. This means that the different trading via E-Commerce behaviors in terms of the frequency in trading goods/services on Internet at the Significance Level of .05.



**Illustration 11** Analysis of the motivation on distribution channels resulting in trading via E-Commerce behaviors

Based on the test of hypothesis using Crosstab Chi-Square, the statistics show 30.477 and the Significance Level of .002 which is lesser than 0.05. Therefore, the primary hypothesis is denied and the secondary hypothesis is accepted. This means that the different motivation on distribution channels of students result in the different trading via E-Commerce behaviors in terms of the frequency in trading goods/services on Internet at the Significance Level of .05.

In addition, the researcher performs an in depth interview to collect supporting for the analysis and uses Purposive Sampling method in selecting ten data providers. It is found that the sampled students have the experience in trading products on Internet between two months up to five year but averaging no more than one year. It is noted that students from the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Information Technology and Communications have more trading on Internet experience than students from other faculties. As for the reasons to purchase goods via Internet, it is found that students purchase goods through websites because of the convenience in carrying out the transactions due to the lack of travelling required and the lesser time consumed. Moreover, various websites can present a wider range of products, some of which are rare and cannot be found generally in market places. The most popular items purchased on Internet by the students is evidently clothing items, followed by books, computer accessories and movie/music compact disc which correspond with the data analysis result from the questionnaire which are products with long life and

easily maintained products. The normal amount spent for each purchase made by the students is between 300 Baht to 3,000 Baht and above. However, based on the interviewed, it is noted that the students from Sanam Chandra Palace campus have lesser average spending (300 Baht to 2,000 Baht) than the students from Phetchaburi IT campus (500 Baht to 3,000 Baht). As for the payment methods for the purchased made on through websites, all of the students who participate in the interview make the payments by transferring money into the sellers' bank accounts. The reason given are this payment method is the most convenient and most websites support this payment method. The payment by credit cards method is not used since the students do not own credit cards, and therefore, is a more troublesome choice. However, the most frequent issues encountered are untimely delivery resulting in long waiting time and in some instances the products delivered are wrong or not up to standard or different from those advertised on the web pages which lead to products being returned for replacement. At the same time, while most students have positive attitude towards the current servicing systems provided by various websites both in terms of product presentation and in interaction with the customers, they also gives the importance to the credibility of the selling of products and the maintenance of personal information. Therefore, the students consider and choose the most trusted websites. However, the students agree that a number of websites increasingly market their sales promotions through Social Network. This is a good sign because this creates new marketing communication channel as well as increases various activities. Additionally, social network websites such as Facebook have contributed to improve the business as well. Improvements, which should be made, in trading via Internet include providing a detailed and true description of goods and services, reducing product prices to compensate the weakness in the lack of real world experience, improving the information on products both in the type and the genuine certificate of guarantee and accurate quality certification.

### **Explanation of Research Results**

The majority of the students give importance to all aspects of marketing factors. However, the important factors that have the influence on the purchasing via E-Commerce behaviors are price aspect and selling aspect. Therefore, E-Commerce businesses should set the appropriate price to match the quality of the products or use pricing strategies to attract buyers and should also provide the accurate and complete prices. The businesses should also improve selling aspects which means providing services on the websites since most consumers prefer timely, fast and safe services. The information on websites should also be updated constantly and the variety of presentation of services provided should be used to maintain the strength of this electronic media. The research result shows that the students or teenagers age between 18 years old to 22 years old have the tendency to use online social networks such as Facebook to gain an access to purchase products or carry out any transactions on websites. E-Commerce businesses should use the mentioned online social network as an important tool to promote sales strategies by emphasizing the distribution of information and creation of various marketing activities on website in order to enhance the level of awareness of and the access to such media by the target groups as much as possible. However, important problems in purchasing product via E-Commerce which most students

encounter include low quality products, damaged products, receiving different products from ones shown on the websites, lack of product quality guarantee certificate, lack of after sales services on providing the products information, general lack of after sales services, lack of discount for wholesale purchases, lack of privacy on customer personal data and limited choices of payment choices. This points out that the problems in purchasing products via E-Commerce mainly resulted from the products themselves and the sales promotion strategies employed by E-Commerce businesses. Hence, the E-Commerce businesses should provide more attention to the quality of the products, be honest with the consumer or have good governance in carrying out business operations. Moreover, businesses should engage in more promotion activities to attract the customers to purchase the products from E-Commerce businesses more.

### **Suggestions**

In this research, the researchers used Stratified Sampling method in selecting samples. Therefore, in the next research, Quota Sampling might be used in order to obtain more specific and clearer data. Since the questionnaire research tool contains quite a number of questions and might require considerable amount of time to complete, this might impact the willingness of the samples to participate. Since the buyers via E-Commerce tend to be female, the researchers who are interested in the research topic should study the purchasing needs of this sample group. The study of influencing factors on purchasing via E-Commerce decisions should be extended to cover of a wider range of other sample groups in order to obtain a more variety and to increase the accuracy of the data. Since this research only concentrates on the samples of the students from Silpakorn University at Sanam Chandra Palace campus and at Phetchaburi IT campus, the sample size might be too small to represent the total population for the evaluation of the descriptive factor on the types of products that influence the purchasing via E-commerce decisions. The research that follows might apply qualitative research method to obtain an in depth data about the attitude, opinions or other Internet using behaviors in various areas and the access to E-Commerce in order to create an innovative guideline for the development of service system provided by websites including the outline and distribution of contents that correspond with the consumers' needs as much as possible.

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*Evaluation of Authorship in Khorasan Style of Persian Literature*

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Abstract:

Among the common arts in Persia, the art of words, i.e. poetry and authorship, has always had a significant position. In Persian Literature, the authors have been called “owners of Pen” and art of writing, particularly with a reed pen, has enjoyed a special honor, because of the Pen’s role as the first creature. Authorship was, accordingly, an important occupation with high social prestige, and authors were recruited by high rank governors and rulers.

An author’s ability in writing a good text, in terms of content and style, and presenting it skillfully has been of special significance. Therefore, given the importance of writing down prose, a good author was expected to be a skilled literary man and a good calligrapher too. In this article, based on Khorasani’s style, belonging to the first five centuries of well-recorded Persian literature, the characteristic of author and the quality of authorship have been documented and discussed. To this end, numerous examples from literary works of Khorasan’s Style, in relation to authorship, and calligraphy have been analyzed and discussed.

**Keywords:** Khorasani Style, Authorship Skills, Pen, Calligraphy, Social Status of Authors

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## Introduction:

According to Mahdjub (1971: 57) there are four styles in Persian Literature in the Islamic period with their names derived from the regions where the styles first started and grew up; as such, the first style, from Khorasan state, was called *Khorāsāni* and the first five centuries after Islam have witnessed the authority of Khorasani Style. In this period, under the influence of Arabic prosodic poem, the Persian prosodic poem developed in Iran. The data in this paper belongs to this particular period.

In *Lobab-ol-albab* (p, 61), the oldest Poets' Biography in Persian Literature, two types of art, in relation to words,<sup>1</sup> are mentioned:

“Word” is a fountain of sincerity which shines from darkness of ink and gives permanent life to poetry and prose.”

As Aufi mentioned in this book (*Lobab-ol-albab*), the difference between poem and prose is their rhythmic tone. Poem is related to rhythm but in prose such relation is not found.

In Literary works of Khorāsāni Style, authorship has not been addressed directly; instead, wherever *dabiri* or secretary has been discussed, the characteristic of author and the quality of authorship have been referred to as well.

## Essence of *Dabiri*

Bearing in mind the significance of *dabiri* in Persian literature, first the concept of *dabiri* will be explained. Among the literary figures of this style, Nedhāmāi-i- Arudi-i- Samarqandi is the first person who defined essence of *dabiri*<sup>2</sup> or secretary as follows:

The Secretarial Function is an (*sanā'at*) art comprising reasoned modes of addressing and communications, and teaching various forms of address employed amongst men in correspondence, conclusion, contention, eulogy, condemnation, diplomacy, provocation, and conciliation, as well in magnifying matters or minimizing them; contriving means of excuse or censure; imposing covenants; recording antecedents; and displaying, in every case, orderly arrangement, so that all may be enunciated primarily and finally. (Nedhāmāi-i- Arudi-i- Samarqandi, 1899: 22-23)

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<sup>1</sup>. It should be noted that, in this view, as Nāsir Khosraw and Abu-Shakur-e Balkhi have indicated, the purpose of “words” is the words in which the influence of wisdom can be seen, because wisdom was the criterion for judging the words.

<sup>2</sup>. In Qaboosnama's translation, levy translated *dabiri* as “secretary”, but it should be added here that secretary is one of the *dabiran*'s duty, and most of *dabiran* or secretaries were historian and authorships; like: Beyhaqi, Nasro-llahe Monshi, Ravandi, and so on.

As it can be seen, Arudi used the word “*sanā’at*”<sup>3</sup> to explain the essence of *dabiri*. In Persian, this word means “knowledge”, but a form of knowledge which needs exercise. Accordingly, Ghazali viewed *dabiri* as an acquired knowledge<sup>4</sup>, which needs hard strife.

As this definition shows, the aim of this knowledge is to encourage people to pursue what is beneficial to them; furthermore, this art is useful in verbal exchanges common among people, including conversations, consultations, hostilities, and so forth. A *dabir* (pl *dabirān*) is able to magnify or minimize the significance of a specific issue.

### Begining of Authorship:

As Shamisa indicates, in Persian Tradition, *the Beginings* are referred to in myths and mythical works using terms like “first man”, “first person who build bath” and so on (Shamisa, 2002: 67); in this manner, the mythical parts of *Shāhnāma* and *Fārsnāma* and *Nowrooz nāma* will be reviewed here to find out why and where authorship initially started.

“*Shāhnāma*”, “*erdousi*’s Book of Kings” ascribes the beginning of authorship to *Tahmures*, the second *Pishdādid*’s ruler<sup>5</sup>. As *Ferdousi* has narrated this legend, in his *Shāhnāma*, Tahmures had captured demons and in lieu of their freedom, demons taught Iranians the art of writing and characters; and in this manner *dabiri* and the art of writing started.

The next *Pishdādid* ruler, Jamshid, devided people into four groups and regarded the authors, or *dabirān*, as one of the high prestige ranks in his society; in *Fārsnāma* (p, 30- 31) , in this regard, comes:

Those in the first rank who were revered for their delicacy of character, wisdom, sagacity, and insight, as quoted from Jamshid, asked others to learn theology and philosophy; additionally they asked some others to learn *dabiri* and arithmetic to manage dominion’s orders, to keep chronicle of properties and transaction, and so forth.

According to Khayyam, in his *Nowrooz nāma*, writing (and specially *dabiri*) is the greatest human virtue by which one can access higher social ranks as a “scholar”, “leader” or “jurisconsult”. To *Ferdousi*, *dabiri* is an ability by which one can obtain merit for reign. In *Shāhnāma* we read:

کند ناسزا را سزاوار

دبیری رساند جوان را به تخت

بخت، (1494)

<sup>3</sup> . صناعت

<sup>4</sup> . He believed matters were twenty-five means of which five were related to destiny, five to endeavor, five to habitude, five to nature, and the last five were patrimonial. (Ghazali, 1988: 224-225)

<sup>5</sup> . “Pishdād” means “legislator” and the first Persian Kingdom in Persian myths entitled “Pishdādi”.

دبيري ست از پيشه ها ارجمند  
بلند!  
چو با آلت و راي باشد دبیر  
ناگزير  
کزو مرد افگنده گردد  
نشيند بر پادشاه

*Dabiri* bestows the throne to the youth, warding off curse and misfortunes  
*Dabiri* is of the highest rank of professions, giving the best fortune to man  
*A" Dabir" armed with knowledge and means will sit together with the king*  
(Ferdousi, 2007: 7/213)

This verse was narrated in *Rahat-al-sodur* exactly, indicating the importance of *Dabiri*.

Khayyam also indicated that *dabiri* was formed in relation to courts, and the first duty of *dabir* was recording the country's system. In addition, in *Fārsnāma* (p,49) we read that there was a *dabir* in all courts, that arranged people's hierarchy and place. So it can be inferred that *dabirān* always were present in all courts and had a high social rank in their society.

#### Authors' social rank:

As it has been mentioned above, *dabirān* were always present at courts, and in line with this great position, they were mostly together with rulers. This has been indicated in *Beyhaqi's history* (p,45):

And everyday Hajib Ali came to the field and the grandees, the rich, the owner's of Pen and owners of sword, all came and stood on horseback and till afternoon narrated and if there were fresh news they retold it and ...

The importance of *dabiri* was so much that everyone could not be a *dabir*. Ibn-Balkhi mentioned that Anushirvan, one of Sassanid rulers, said:

"Just noble and knowledgeable people should do the great work – *dabiri* – and no man of unknown origin and trader must learn *dabiri*." (Ibn-i Balkhi, 2005: 93)

In this relation, Ferdousi says, during a battle with Romans, Anushirvan had a pressing need to collect money for his army. A shoemaker accepted to pay the money. In response to this favor, the shoemaker asked the king to let his son *become a dabir*, but Anushirvan did not accept this suggestion since the son did not possess the merit to be a *dabir*.

*Shāhnāma* talks about rulers who were *dabir* too. Regarding Qobād (Kavad), one of the Sasanid rulers, for example, we read:

ز شاهيش چون سال بگذشت چل  
يکي نامه بنبشت پس بر حرير  
دبیر (فردوسي، 1386: 7 / 81)  
غم روز مرگ اندر آمد به دل، (358)  
بر آن خط شايسته، خود بد

After forty years of his kingdom

he remembered the sorrow of the day of his demise

He wrote a letter on a velvet cloth  
(Ferdousi, 2007: 7/81)

with excellent scripts in the capacity of *dabir*

The profession of *dabiri* was not limited to rulers. Some prophets like “Joseph” were *dabir* too. Ghazali has referred to this point in his book as follows:

According to a verse of Kor'an, Joseph said: Appoint me the treasurer of the word as I am *dabir* and calculator. (ghazali, 1988: 188)

Now the question is why *dabiri* was so important? And why not everyone could be a *dabir*? And why rulers and prophets were *dabir*?

To reply these questions, we refer the readers to a quotation from *Beihaqi's History*, in which *dabiran* were called “owner's of Pen”. *Dabiri's* value was rooted in Pen's value. The importance of Pen can be discussed from two perspectives: a religious perspective which is indicated in Ghazali's work and a political perspective, reflected in rulers words, on how to control the country. On the importance of Pen, Ghazali said:

“Wise people maintain that nothing is more honorable than the pen, which can be used to retrieve all the past happenings. And one of the honors of pen is that Almighty took an oath to it by saying (in Koran): By the inkstand and the pen and by that which they write<sup>6</sup>”, The Almighty, in another verse proclaimed: “And thy Lord is the Mightiest who thought by the pen to man what he knew not<sup>7</sup>”

Traditions about Pen shows that pen is like a Totem and connect the human with the beginning of creation (Yahaghi, 2009: 654). Mohammad, Islam's prophet, said that the first creature of God was Pen. It can be a reference to this words of him: “ إِنْ أَوَّلَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ الْقَلَمُ، فَأَمَرَهُ .” أَنْ يَكْتُبَ مَا يُرِيدُ

On the other hand, the role of Pen in direction of a country was considered like sword, or more; In this regard, Farrokhi has composed the following:

قلم برابر تیغست

ز تیغ و خنجر

که عاجز آید از آن

بترسد از قلم و تیر

بدین دوچیز بود ملک

دوات را غرض آن بود کاندرو قلمست

بلکه فاضلتر (2288)

نیامد، آنچه ز نوک قلم پدید آمد

افراسیاب و رستم زر

قلم بساعتی آن کارها تواند کرد

کارها قضا و قدر

ملوک را قلم و تیر برترین سپهست

شیر شزره‌ی نر (2295)

بنای ملک به تیغ و قلم کنند قوی

را شکوه و خطر

<sup>6</sup> نون والقلم و ما یسطرون.

<sup>7</sup> اقرا و ربك الاكرم\* الذی علم بالقلم\* علم الانسان ما لم یعلم.

بدین دو چیز جهان را

همه جهان و بزرگان و خسروان جهان  
گرفته سرتاسر

The aim of inkpot is to feed the pen

What can be achieved by pen

Afrasiab and Rostam or gold

The pen can achieve so much in a moment

For rulers the pen is the best army

Pen and sword stabilize the foundation of the estate

All the kings, dignitaries and rulers of the world used t

Farrokhi Sistani (1992: 118)

the pen is more important than the sword (2288)

cannot be obtained from the sword or dagger of

that cannot be done by destiny or fortune

from which the male fierce lion is scared

they remove danger and establish glory

these two items to conquer the world

Khayyam too pointed to the role of Pen in his *Nowrooz nāma* (p,45), and said:

“Persian rulers know that sword can conquer a land and establish the pillars of the government, and pen keeps land and delineates the policy; and the deed performed by the two items is rooted in hand’s arts.”

He believed with the sword new territory can be occupied, but with the Pen this territory will be protected. It may be necessary to indicate that in the literary works of Khorasani style, the term “art” means the ability of doing a work in the best way possible and the act which is performed very well by someone.

Likewise, in *Nasihah-ol-muluk* (p, 189), Alexander is quoted as saying:

The world stands up on two things: sword and pen, but the pen is beyond the sword.”

Ghazali also had assertions as follows: “Nothing is established in the world without pen and sword, and these two items are the true governors of the world.”

Ferdousi, repeatedly compared Pen with arrow; for instance, he said:

بفرمود تا رفت پیش دبیر      سر خامه را کرد پیکان تیر (668)

He used the tip of Pen as his arrow

(Ferdousi, 2007: 2/49)

He then summoned his Dabir

In Ravandi (1921: 97), Ardashir I, the great Sassanid king, called *Dabir* “the imparter of knowledge” as follows:

Ardashir I said a king should introduce a vizier, appoint a doorman and heir a *dabir*; as vezier makes the land stable, the doorman introduces wisdom, and *dabir* imparts knowledge... .

### Characteristics of Authors:

According to what was said, not everybody has the merit to be a *dabir*. Nobility, for instance, is one of the significant features of a *dabir*; but this feature is just one of many other characteristics which a good *dabir* should possess. This part focuses on some other features that *dabirān* should possess:

A good *dabir* should possess two salient features: those inherited and those acquired. A *dabir* should inherently fit the work. He should also acquire certain capabilities like the science and arts essential to his work.

In the following verse from Ferdousi, the acquired features of *dabir* are referred to:

بلاغت چو با خط گرد آیدش      بر اندیشه معنی بیافزایدش (1493)  
ز لفظ آن گزیند که کوتاه تر      به خط آن نماید که دلخواه تر

If eloquence is accompanied by calligraphy      the idea will transcend to get better sense  
Brevity will then be the prime choice      that will be ornamented with the best handwriting  
(Ferdousi, 2007: 7/213)

According this verse, the capabilities of *dabir* can be divided into two categories; the first is eloquence, that means a good *dabir* should know what he should write and how the words should be written down to have the most influence; and the second is that a good *dabir* should be a qualified calligrapher. This two means that a good *dabir* is a capable calligrapher and literary man.

Besides, a *dabir* should be familiar with some other sciences in order to be enough capable to service the rulers. These sciences are listed by Ghazali (p, 189-190) as follows.

“...and in addition to writing *dabir* should know many things if he is to have enough merit for servicing rulers. The former wise men and kings said that *dabiran* should know ten things: the distance of under-ground water resources from the surface to help their extraction or drainage, the length of days and nights in summer and winter, the behavior of the sun, the moon and stars, arithmetic rules and geometry, knowledge of the calendar and days, knowledge of cultivation and agriculture, information about medicine and drugs, knowledge of northern and southern winds and information about poetry and rhymes.”

As a calligrapher, the first and the most important thing a *dabir* has to learn is how to sharpen Pen. Regarding this subject an anecdote was narrated by Ghazali (1988: 191- 192) about Sahib-Ibn-Abbad:

A story: A king had 10 ministers one of whom was called Esmail Ebad. Once the other ministers came together to spread rumors against Esmail, including his unskilled sharpening of pens. When the king realized, summoned them all for a meeting. Then Esmail asked other ministers to explain in which particular art they may be better than him. He continued “My father did not teach me to be a

carpenter, but he taught me to be a calligrapher and a skilled pen sharpener. Which of you can write a letter with even a broken pen, like me?" None of them could; the king then asked him to write. Esmail picked up a pen; broke its pointed tip and started writing a complete letter. All the ministers approved his skill.

Among numerous characteristics of *dabir*, as is indicated, the most important is nobility. The other attributes, as indicated in *Chahār Maqāla* (p, 23), are as follows:

Hence the Secretary must be of gentle birth, of refined honour, of penetrating discernment, or profound reflection, and of firm judgment; and the amplest portion and fullest share of the methods and attainments of this art must be his. Neither must he be remote from, or unacquainted with, logical judgments; and be familiar with the dignities of the leading men of his time. Moreover, he should not be absorbed in the wealth and perishable goods of this world; nor concern himself with the approval or condemnation of prejudiced person and tattlers, or pay any heed to them; and he should, when exercising his secretarial functions, guard the honour of his master from degrading situations and dangerous practices. And in the course of his letter, while pursuing his duties of correspondence, he should not quarrel with eminent and powerful personages; and, even whom he is addressing, he should restrain his pen, and not attack him, save in the case of one who may have overstepped his own proper limit, or advanced his foot beyond the circle of respect...

In this relation *Shāhnāma* (2008: 7/213), by Ferdousi, says *dabir* should be a wise, enthusiastic, experienced, patient, honest, loyal, and confident person:

همان بردبار و سخن یادگیر،	خردمند باید که باشد دبیر
زبان خامش از بد، به تن پارسا،	هشیوار و سازنده‌ی پادشا
وفادار و پاکیزه و تازه روی،	شکیبا و با دانش و راستگوی
نباشد نشستن مگر پیش گاه!	چو با این هنرها شود نزد شاه

Dabir should be a wise person	he should be patient and learnable
He should possess the wit to advise the king	avoid unpleasant words, and bad deed
He should be patient, knowledgeable and truthful	loyal, innocent, fit and clean
Getting to the king with such features	he will be offered the best status

According Kai Ka'us Ibn Iskandar (1951: 209) confidence is the best art of *dabir*, he said: "But the best of all qualities in a secretary is the practice of guarding his tongue, not revealing his patron's secrets, keeping his master informed of all that occurs and never being meddlesome ." and Ghazali (1988: 190) added that: "*dabir* must be well tempered and hospitable."

Besides, Dabir should be able to get the figurative meaning of the communication exchanges; As such, *dabir* should be sharp enough to realize allegorical expressions, to be able to get to the true sense of the text. So as Kai Ka'us Ibn Iskandar (1951:201) declares:

“It is essential for the secretary to be quick of perception, familiar with the mysteries of the secretarial art and capable of appreciating the significance of allusion.”

Above all, Nidhami- I- Aroudi-I- Samarqandi (1899: 30) pointed out that a *dabir* should be in a comfortable circumstance because this art needs a tranquil mind. He further added:

“One who pursues any craft which depends on reflection ought to be free from care and anxiety, for if it be otherwise, the arrows of his thought will fly wide and will not hit the target of achievement, since only by a tranquil mind can one arrive at such words.”

The tranquility and comfort should be provided by the employer of *dabir*. In this relation, in the literary works of Khorasani style, there are numerous references to great rewards offered to *dabiran*, as Ferdousi (2007: 3/63) said:

ز یاقوت رخشان دهان هجیر،	چو برخواند نامه به خسرو دبیر
که دینار و دیبا بیار از	بیانگند، ازان پس به گنجور گفت
	نهفت

After the *Dabir* read out the letter to the king  
The king asked the treasurer to get him

He was offered gem and precious stones  
currency and precious cover from the treasury

### Content of context

The texts, on different themes or for different reasons, should have been started by the name of God, for example. In *Shāhnāma* (2007: 2/45), there are numerous examples indicating that the first words of a text should be in honor of God:

پدید آورد اندرو زشت و خوب (617)	دبیر خردمند بنبشت خوب
کزو دید پیدا به گیتی هنر	نخست آفرین کرد بر دادگر

A wise *Dabir* tended to write well  
He started his words in the name of God  
(Ferdousi, 2007: 2/45)

he developed good written records  
who caused the beauty of art be born

Besides, each text should have instructive points which can be of use in some situations. For example, about superiority of his history, Beyhaqi said:

In other historical records, the issues are not so detailed as they have not been so thorough and, therefore, have summarized their records. However, since I have taken this responsibility, I want to let all others know well about the happenings being reported; I like to search everywhere in order not to miss any happening from being reported. If my books gets thick and bulky, making the readers tired, I expect them not to blame me, as there is nothing that does not worth reading; there is no anecdote without any useful points. (Beyhaqi, 2005: 49-50)

He also added, for this reason, in his history book, instructive anecdotes have been narrated.

Regarding the way sentences are constructed in *ChahārMaqāla* (p,24), we read:

And in the setting forth of his message he must adopt that method which the orators of the Arabes have thus described: “The best speech is that which is brief and significant, and not wearisome<sup>8</sup>.” For if protracted, and the scribe will be stigmatized as prolix, and “He who is prolix is babbler<sup>9</sup>.”

The words should be chosen attentively, in brief and to the point, while long expressions should be avoided.

These are not possible for *dabir* unless he learns the necessary sciences and, more specifically, refers to Qoranic narrations, poems and anecdotes, which could be used wherever necessary and be quoted when they can be used to achieve better influence. In this relation Nidhami- I- Aroudi- I- Samarqandi (1899: 24) said:

Now the words of the Scribe (*dabir*) will not attain to this elevation until he becomes familiar with every science, obtains some hint from every master, hears some aphorism from every philosopher, and borrows some elegance from every man of letters. Therefore he must accustom himself to pursue the scripture of the Lord of Glory, the Traditions of Muhammad, the Chosen one (on whom, and on whose family, be God’s blessing and peace), the memoirs of the Companions, the proverbial saying of Arabes, and the wise words of the Persians; and to read the books of the ancients, and to study the writings of their successor. (24)

Also in *Qabus Nāma* (p, 208- 209) another point for being a *dabir* is mentioned as follows:

Still another rule of secretaryship is this- that while you are in close attendance on the court, you must anticipate the tasks to be performed, be quick in perception, be retentive of what goes on. Furthermore, keep memoranda of what orders you are given and be vigilant of the manner in which persons employed in your bureau spend their time. Be fully aware also of the transactions of all tax-gatherers, that various taxation areas. If the knowledge is not immediately of use to you, the time will come when it will be so. Disclose the secrets so gained to no one, except when it becomes unavoidable.

Not pry openly into the doing of vizir, and yet keep yourself informed covertly of all that occurs. Be proficient in accountancy, not neglecting, either, an interest in the control of affairs, in finance and the writing of business letters. All these are additional qualifications in a secretary.

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<sup>8</sup> خير الكلام ما قل و ما دل .

<sup>9</sup> المكثر مهادر .

Such words indicate that the writer should be sufficiently informed about what he writes and provide documented information. In other words honesty is very important in this profession.

## Conclusion

Finally, it can be said that *dabiri* is a form of “*sanā’at*” which in Persian means some kind of knowledge which needs exercise; this art is formed in relation to courts, and the first duty of *dabir* was recording the country’s system. Also, *dabirān* always were present in all courts and had a high social rank in their society, and because of its importance everyone could not be a *dabir*. *Dabirān*’s value was rooted in Pen’s value. In religious perspectives, pen is the first creature, and in political perspective pen has an important role in direction of a country.

Also, a good *dabir*, should possess two features: those inherent and those acquired. The acquired capability can be divided into two categories: scientific and artistic. Scientific capability refers to the fact that a good *dabir* should be a literary man and know what he should write and how this words should be written down, and also, a *dabir* should be familiar with some other sciences in order to be enough capable to service the rulers. As an artist, a good *dabir* should be a qualified calligrapher. As a calligrapher, the first and the most important thing a *dabir* has to learn is how to sharpen Pen. Among numerous characteristics of *dabir*, as is indicated, the most important is nobility. Besides, a good *dabir* should be wise, enthusiastic, experienced, patient, honest, loyal, and confident person. The texts, on different themes or for different reasons, should have been started by the name of God, and each text should have instructive points which can be of use in some situations. The words should be chosen attentively, in brief and to the point.

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*Turkish Foreign Policy Attitudes towards Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation*

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on the Turkish foreign policy attitudes towards Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Process) was launched in 1995 with the Barcelona Declaration and has been transformed into Union for the Mediterranean with the Paris Summit of 2008 as a result of strong French initiatives. As a Mediterranean and claims to be Mediterranean country Turkey has stayed indifferent to the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in political terms although it has considerably contributed to the process in social and cultural aspects. Therefore, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has never been one of the priority issues in Turkish foreign policy agenda since 1995. The complexity of region, the lack of coherent and long-term sea strategies in Turkish foreign policy, the failure to conceptualize Mediterranean as a totality, and the relations with the European Union have played a significant role in Turkish indifference to Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. Consequently, the aim of this paper is to analyze the Mediterranean perception in Turkish foreign policy and to discuss the reasons of Turkey's reluctance towards Euro Mediterranean partnership in political terms.

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## Introduction

Europe and Mediterranean are closely linked as the two shores of the Mediterranean have had commercial, cultural, diplomatic, political and strategic relations since ancient times. However during the second half of the twentieth century, the relations between the two sides have taken a new shape with changes in the international arena. On one hand, decolonization process which has changed the form of relationships between the European powers and their south Mediterranean neighbors, on the other hand, the European integration, affected the perception of both boundaries and the neighboring countries by Europe (Vandenbegine et al. 2008).

Although shortly after signing the Treaty of Rome Europe realized the geostrategic importance of the Mediterranean, the idea of cooperation appeared in the late 60s, as an important issue in the context of external relations of the European Economic Community. Yet especially after the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht where the Community has evolved into the European Union and gained not only an economic dimension but also political and security, the EU has begun to see the Mediterranean as a policy area that requires more attention in the context of its external relations (Vandenbegine et al. 2008). Therefore since its establishment, in order to create a zone of prosperity and stability in its periphery, the European Economic Community, has developed first an economic discourse, and then a political and security policy for the Mediterranean.

Following the Global Mediterranean Policy and the Barcelona Process, the Union for the Mediterranean has been launched in 2008 and it consists of forty three members today. Each member has different expectations from this cooperation and welcomes differently the European initiatives of cooperation in the Mediterranean. However, I believe that the most interesting of these partners is Turkey which is a Mediterranean country in geopolitical terms, and claims to be a European country at the same time.

Turkey has taken part in the Barcelona Process since the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) in 1995 as well as a member of the Union for the Mediterranean while remaining indifferent several times. As argued by a Turkish diplomat in an interview, Turkey's contribution to the Partnership has most of the time not gone beyond "encouraging the dialogue" and playing a "stabilizing role". Accordingly, this paper argues that the Euro Mediterranean cooperation has never been in the immediate agenda of the Turkish foreign policy as a result of both Turkish concerns in the Mediterranean and the ineffectiveness of the process itself. Put differently, the lack of coherent and long-term sea strategies in Turkish foreign policy, relations with the European Union, the failure to conceptualize the Mediterranean as a totality and the complexity of region, have played significant role in Turkish indifference to Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. Departing from that idea, this paper aims to analyze the Turkish foreign policy attitudes towards Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Furthermore, it aims to examine the Turkish perception of the Euro-Mediterranean by arguing that the Turkish priority is to be on the European side as a full member instead of being a strategic Mediterranean partner. Also, the obstacles to a strong cooperation in the Mediterranean are elaborated.

## **The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and Turkey**

Since its creation in 1995, Turkish diplomacy has not seen the EMP as an effective tool in none of economic, political and security issues of the zone (Tayfur 2000). Turkey's concerns which led Turkey to be indifferent in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation can be grouped around three factors: the long historical relationship with Europe, the Mediterranean perception in Turkish foreign policy, and the utopian nature of the measures proposed by the objectives.

The indifferent position of Turkey in the Euro Mediterranean Partnership, first of all, is a result of its foreign policy towards the west in the context of its deep relations with the European Union. Since the creation of the European Economic Community, the first objective of Turkish foreign policy is to be integrated into Europe. It is for this reason that Turkey has reservations about any construction that could damage the entire accession process. Because of the priority of European integration in Turkish foreign policy, the Helsinki Summit of 1999 was a turning point in the Turkish perception of the Euro Mediterranean Partnership. The degree of indifference has decreased after the Helsinki Summit where Turkey was granted the status of candidate for full accession to the European Union (Tayfur 2000). After the Helsinki summit the degree of indifference has declined, particularly in the economic and social domains however, in political terms, it was still not possible to consider the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation as the immediate agenda in foreign policy of Turkey (Cesmecioglu 2003, 49).

During the Euro-Mediterranean partnership process, Turkey's main objective has always been to be on the European side rather than being on the Mediterranean side as a strategic partner. The Mediterranean is a place of conflict and as a senior Turkish officer points out, with its geopolitical and strategic importance, Turkey has an important *stabilizing role* in the Mediterranean basin, especially in areas of conflict. As of today, the negotiation process is going on between Turkey and the EU since 2005 and Turkish diplomats believe that as a full member of the EU Turkey would be more active and useful to promote peace in the region as it serves as a bridge due to its proximity to Europe and the Middle East.

### **How does Turkish foreign policy perceive the Mediterranean?**

On one hand the geopolitical position of Turkey, on the other hand the lack of coordinated sea strategies in Turkish foreign policy have been playing significant role in the Turkish perception of Mediterranean. Therefore, as Turkish foreign policy has developed separate strategies in dividing the Mediterranean, there is not a single Mediterranean perception for Turkish foreign policy.

As it is in the center of unstable regions in the geopolitical terms, Turkey's survival in the external environment is not easy. The realistic approach of International Relations based on the concept of anarchy in the international system, in which the primary objective of the State is to survive can be used to explain the main motivations behind the Turkish foreign policy. As a State in the center of many regional conflicts, the first goal of Turkey is to maintain its existing position and survive in the international system. As a result of its geostrategic location, unlike other states, Turkey must deal with various issues nationally, regionally and globally crucial (Tayfur 2000, 5).

Since the establishment of Turkish Republic, Turkish foreign policy has failed to develop a long-term and coordinated sea and waterways strategy and this reality has been affecting today's Turkish attitudes towards its bordering seas (Davutoglu 2009). The importance of a coordinated sea strategy to become a regional and international power has been denied, and Turkey's foreign policy has been inconsistent with its own geography for years. If the Ottoman Empire became an international power which dominated three continents is due to the fact that its ability of control over the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea. Accordingly, one of the most important reasons of the collapse of the Empire was the lack of the linkage between sea and land strategies (Davutoglu 2009). Although the Empire succeeded to build the third biggest naval force of the period, the lack of coordination between the foreign policy and sea strategies have prepared the end of the Empire. Since that period the fact that Turkey is surrounded by important seas has been ignored as many mistaken decisions testify (Davutoglu 2009).

In particular, the consequences of mistaken decisions in the Aegean Sea after the Second World War, has been influencing the relationship with Greece; which has played a crucial role in the Mediterranean perception of Turkey (Davutoglu 2009). Likewise, on one hand the delivery of Aegean Islands to Greece, on the other hand the superpower USSR's pressure on the Black Sea and on the Straits limited Turkish actions in the concerned seas and caused to have a status quo approach in foreign policy during the Cold War era (Davutoglu 2009).

Similarly, in the Middle East, the Cyprus has been in the centre of Turkish foreign policy actions. Rather than constructing a global approach, all decisions concerning eastern Mediterranean have been shaped depending on Cyprus. In the period after the Cold War, due to the end of the bipolarity, the eastern Mediterranean has gained importance as a new separated zone of interactions. However, even after the end of the Cold War, denying the new international structure, the establishment of long term and interdependent sea strategy unifying the Mediterranean, the Black sea, the Straits and the Aegean Sea has not yet achieved (Davutoglu 2009).

Therefore Turkish foreign policy has preferred to deal separately with the issues concerning Mediterranean instead of construction a single and unified Mediterranean policy. Hence Turkish diplomats have considered the zone as a "complex of regions" in geopolitical terms, which each of these regions necessitates separate policies (Tayfur 2000). Reflecting this hypothesis, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Mediterranean is in the interests of different regional departments dealing with the Europe, the Middle East and the Balkans (Tayfur 2000).

Consequently, Turkish foreign policy attitudes towards Mediterranean have been influenced by EU candidacy, the Cyprus problem, Greek-Turkish relations in the Aegean Sea, the conflict in the Middle East, and so on. Therefore, unlike other countries of the EMP which mostly focus on North-South interactions, the strategy of Turkey in the area is dominated by the events in the eastern Mediterranean. (Tayfur 2000).

### **Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation: a political failure?**

Since the creation of the EMP, the Process has been facing several difficulties which block a strong political cooperation. On one hand, the regional obstacles, on the other hand the utopian nature of its aims have been the main reasons of the failure of Euro-Mediterranean political cooperation.

The first obstacle has been *the heterogeneity of the zone* (Moisseron 2005) with numerous actors. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership involves forty three actors today with very different economic, political and social backgrounds. Hence, it has been very hard for partners to meet around common interests. As Kenneth Oye points out, the possibility of cooperation decreases as the number of players increases (Oye 1996, 90). The number of actors concerned influences the cooperation because when the number of players increases, the transaction and information costs increase too. Second, the problems of recognition and control increase, and third the reciprocity strategies become more difficult with numerous actors (Oye 1996, 92).

Second, *the weakness of synergy* in both North-South and South-South integration and the *lack of reciprocity* have been blocking the advancement of relations. As it was launched by Europe by mostly ignoring the interests and expectations of the South, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has not advanced the principle of *reciprocity* which is crucial for a successful cooperation. As Kenneth Oye puts it, the “reciprocity” is one of the main principles of cooperation (1996, 90) and as Robert Axelrod argues, the reciprocity strategies have encouraging effects for cooperation by building a direct connection between present behavior of an actor and the expected profit in the future (Axelrod cited in Oye 1996, 88). Besides, Attali emphasizes that no international relations can be based on the granting of one to the others, yet the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is based on the granting of the North to South (Attali 2008).

On the other hand, in terms of political and security actions, other actors such as United States and NATO are present in the region. Regarding the conflicts and the problems, Turkey prefers the US rather than the EU as a collaborator in the Middle East. Besides, Turkish diplomats believe in the effectiveness of NATO more than other constructions such as EMP in security terms due to the ability of shaping decision making process and the weight of its military power in NATO.

Regarding the security objective of the partnership’s political aspect, Turkish leaders have been considering the cooperation as utopian in the “hard security” issues because first of all the Arab-Israeli conflict influences all other efforts in the region (Tayfur 2000, 9). According to Turkish diplomats, there is not much to do for the EMP because all subjects are related to the peace process in the Middle East. Therefore, Turkey prefers to use its quality of being a strong NATO member rather than being a Mediterranean partner candidate to the EU, in its actions in the region. Moreover, Turkish leaders do not believe in the sincerity of the EMP, in the “soft security” issues since Turkey has experienced several events in which Mediterranean partners and neighbors were tolerant and acted as even protectors of certain terrorist initiatives (Tayfur 2000, 10).

Besides, as Europe did not seize the occasion of the end of the Cold War to show up in the Mediterranean, often plays a secondary role behind the U.S. in the area. Today Europe's role is primarily seen as *funder* and *facilitator of socio-cultural dialogue* more than political

stabilizer and peace supplier (Vandenbegine et al. 2008). Therefore, Turkish policymakers have not seen the Euro Mediterranean Partnership as an effective tool to promote peace and democracy and to solve ongoing conflicts in the region.

Regarding the economic cooperation, since the beginning, Turkey has supported the construction of a free trade area and encouraged bilateral agreements. However, according to Turkish officials, one of the most important disadvantages of the EMP for Turkey is to be forced to accept the trade agreements signed between the EU and south Mediterranean partners without any opportunity for Turkey to negotiate; because of the Customs Union. Therefore, in economic sense, this partnership has not offered an advantageous value to already existing economic cooperation.

## **Conclusion**

Turkish foreign policy has been indifferent towards Euro- Mediterranean Partnership since its creation. Although the indifference has decreased in economic and socio-cultural domains, after obtaining the candidate status for full membership to the EU, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has never been in the immediate agenda of Turkish foreign policy in political terms. In this paper argues that the perception of Mediterranean in Turkish foreign policy and the ineffectiveness of Euro Mediterranean cooperation have been the main reasons of this indifference.

Due to historical mistakes, Turkish foreign policy has not succeeded to establish a unified, coordinated and long term sea policy. This approach of separating the foreign policy actions concerning the same zone, by also denying the geographical realities, has still been influential in the foreign policy making. Therefore, foreign policymakers have preferred to develop separated policies for geopolitically linked issues such as the Cyprus issue, the Aegean Sea dispute with Greece, the conflict in the Middle East, so on.

On the other hand, the Mediterranean has been seen as a zone of natural extension of Europe by the EU. However it is not only in the centre of attention of the EU. Moreover, the US and the NATO have been seen as more effective and strong actors in political and security terms. Furthermore, it consists of regions under conflict. Regarding the conflicts in the Mediterranean; which are closely influencing Turkish national interest; Turkish policymakers have not seen the Euro Mediterranean Partnership as an effective tool to promote peace in the region. Therefore, Turkish foreign policy's ignorance of the EU's political power in the Mediterranean has played significant role in the reluctance of Turkey towards Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

According to Turkish policymakers; regardless of its name: Euro Mediterranean Partnership, Barcelona Process, and Union for the Mediterranean; Europe has not been an effective actor to cooperate in the Mediterranean, in political terms. On the other hand, Turkey's aim is to be on the European side of the cooperation rather than being a strategic Mediterranean partner in the EU's periphery. To conclude, as long as the relations with the EU play a crucial role in the Turkish foreign policy, Turkey's reluctance in the Union for the Mediterranean will also continue until Turkey becomes a full member of the EU.

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*Iranian Women's Poetry from the Post-Tevelutionary Islamic Literature to Feminism Consciousness  
and Expression*

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## Introduction

The themes, characters and mainly the dominant literary discussions in the literary works of Iranian women writers have long been connected to subversive discourse within the central patriarchal (male dominated) structure that has been in power after the 1979 revolution. The themes that cover this period of women writers appear to challenge the gender hierarchies, women's experience and the suffering within their social context. Talattof, as a secular writer and reader, explains that the plots and storylines of these women writer's convey their voice of opposition against "sexual oppression and reflect their struggle for identity".<sup>1</sup> This can be compared to the pre-revolutionary period of literature in Iran that was created by women whose works did not provoke any feminist literary movement. Rather they gave voice to socio-political issues over gender relations.<sup>2</sup> Even if their works were engaged with women's issues, they were produced in the socially conscious perspectives within patriarchal devoted literature. In other words, these women's works were marginalized against male-dominated works of literature and became powerless. Hence, we can define two literary discourses within women's literary works before and after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The revolution itself is responsible for this major movement in women's writing. The emergence of Literature concerning the Islamic Revolution (Adabiyat-e Engelab-e Farhangi) restrained the literary works of pre-revolutionary committed writers and created a new movement in literary writing with the application of distinct religious themes. However, during 1990s with the start of Khatami's presidency a new phase of writing developed. The new state reduced its controls and restrictions on writers' works and provided a moderately unguarded setting to writers to enjoy the diversity in discourse. The change was most noticeable in women's writings which let the growth in feminist literary movement. In order to demonstrate the shift in post-revolutionary discourse, two post-revolutionary eras will be explored:

1. The post-revolutionary Islamic committed literature
2. The inclination of feminism consciousness in women's writing

Each period will explore the themes, forms and types of characters that shaped women's literary writings after the revolution. In addition, in each period some selected poems will serve as the primary sources for this paper to indicate the themes within each era.

### 1. The Post-Revolutionary Islamic Committed Literature

In 1979 the religious regime took the power from the Shah's secular regime in Iran. The new religious regime completely restructured the social orders to be in line with the models of Shia Islam. Although different groups from different ideologies contributed to overthrow the Shah's regime, only the Islamic state was registered as the authoritarian regime of Iran. The

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<sup>1</sup> Talattof, Kamran. *Iranian Women's Literature: From Pre- Revolutionary Social Discourse to Post- Revolutionary Feminism*. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 29.4. Nov. 1997. P: 531.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

shift from secularization to Islamization of the regime also generated considerable shifts in all other elements of social life. The implemented Islamic rules criticized and condemned Western culture, instituted the Islamic Jurisprudence laws, compelled censorship, forbid the consumption of alcohol, banned music and finally imposed the veil as being mandatory for women. The new Islamic authorities realised the need to organise and advance the revolution so that they could then remove the leftist and seculars. They also closed down all the universities for a period of time to prevent the intellectuals from contributing to any activities. The remaining lefties and seculars, who saved themselves from the attacks, recognized that their objectives would not be achieved by the new revolution in which they once had hopes within. These writers who considered themselves responsible for the committed literature<sup>3</sup>, started to pose questions of the new regime's intentions. These writers had no interest in creating another uprising movement and for them the cultural concerns became the centre of attention. The figurative language of the past did not fit into the new circumstances. The Persian narrative in particular poetry faced with upheavals.<sup>4</sup> A number of secular writers reflected the outcomes of the revolution and its impact on their personal lives within their writings for a decade after the revolution. Examples could be observed in, *Sher be Daghighah Aknun* (Poetry of the Moment (1988). Langrudi<sup>5</sup> wrote:

I can write a poem  
With a heart  
In which the beheaded deer  
Are galloping.

Give me back my dreams  
My paper  
My pen.  
Give me back the freshness of my fingers  
and tell me  
one what direction  
I should write my name.

In committed writers discourse, it is believed that the ordered repression will finish with the rise of the majorities. The pen and the poet's ability to write symbolises this process. Langrudi illustrates the rise and fall of his dreams and his pen is of no help to write down his dreams in these new conditions. He is in search of a new direction. In *In the Moonlight Terrace of the World* the poet portrays this condition in 1985:

How innocent it stares at me,

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<sup>3</sup> The committed literature writers feel responsibility to show the problems of the society and even offering solutions to its change or at least letting some light in the existing painful and distressing conditions. It was this feeling of responsibility that started the new episode of literary commitment (ta'ahod-e adabi) in the creative writings in Iran in 1950s.

<sup>4</sup> See the series of interviews with literary activists on this topic in *Dunyaye Sokhan* (The World of Speech) No. 48, Feb. 1992, P: 16-33.

<sup>5</sup> Langrudi, Shams, *Qasideh-e Labkhand-Chak Chak* (Ode of the Ruptured Smile), Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1990, Trans. Ahmad Pouri, cited in: <http://enshamselangeroodi.blogfa.com/post-36.aspx>

this broken sunlight  
this bent tree  
this mute duck.

How dumbstruck it looks at me,  
my harvested motherland.<sup>6</sup>

The committed writers were also faced with difficulties from the press and the publication industry. In addition, they suffered from a lack of paper and other utensils. They were often silent and had to hide their voices from the authorities to assure their publications and prevent being attacked by the authorities. In *Censorship*, it is reported that: “in the 1980s the state’s policy toward the press and publishing industry has reflected both fundamental fear of secular ideologies and a deep desire to push the intellectual community into greater conformity.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the restriction and desire of the committed writers’ in the re-evaluation of literature and Iranian culture paved the way to create new literary figures such as symbols and metaphors. This led to the production of inconsistent literary works.

However, the uncertainty and fluctuation in the works of committed authors facilitated Islamic authors to increase in number. These writers endorsed the regime’s policies and developed a new literary episode in 1980s. A few of the Islamic authors were active before the revolution, but the success of revolution paced their activities in the 1980s. The Islamic discourse motivated all the Islamic authors; some of these writers had more fundamental beliefs than others. The Islamic authors supported the regime by providing Islamic ideologies. In return the regime acknowledged their literary works and considered them as important tools to advance and enhance the religious ideology. The Islamic regime presented a public space to the writings of these authors’ and also distributed their works in religious places, mosques, schools and universities. This mutual understanding between the Islamic state and the Muslim writers resulted in the publication of a significant amount of literary discourse such as fiction and poetry. Hence, the Literature of Islamic Revolution (*Adabiyat-e Engelab-e Farhangi*) emerged.<sup>8</sup> The content of this newly born literature was concerned with interpreting the events of the revolution, the eight year war between Iran-Iraq and other religious subjects. These Islamic writers depicted the authorities as God’s trustworthy agents within the Islamic society. Some of the Islamic fiction writers of this episode are Mohammad Noorizad, Nosratollah Mahmudzadeh, Mehdi Shojai, Mohsen Makhbalbaf and poets such as Fatemeh Rakei, Musavi Garmarudi, Teymur Gorgin and Tahereh Saffarzadeh. The works of these authors borrowed their themes, metaphors, along with form and content from the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Poem 4. Trans. Sina Fazelpour. Cited in: <http://shamslangeroodienglish.blogspot.co.uk/>

<sup>7</sup> Karimi-Hakkak, Ahmad, “Censorship”, in *Encyclopedia Iranica* vol.5, Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers. P: 135-142.

<sup>8</sup> In the prerevolutionary period, there were religious collections such as Morteza Motehari’s *Dastan-e Rastan* (The Story of Virtuous) which is a collection of fables collected from Hadith or historical texts about the life of Mohammad and Ali Davani’s *Danstanha-ye Islam* (Islamic Stories) that was about Quranic stories, and there were poetry works that revolved around the lives of the Prophet and Imams and their families. These authors’ works were resembled classical literature and never constituted a literary movement.

committed literature but had different interpretations. Borrowing the committed literature's figurative language prepared the state to undermine the principles and historical impact of the committed literature. As a result the Council for Cultural Revolution took the Islamic writers' works under its control.<sup>9</sup> Jalal Rafi<sup>10</sup> in *Tarha va Mosavabate-e Farhangi* (Cultural Projects and Bylaws) mentions the council's regulations' guideline for outstanding cultural and literary works:

1. Creating and collecting a remarkable work on Islamic traditions and art.
2. Translating a remarkable work on Islamic traditions and art.
3. Creating an organization for supporting Islamic Traditions and art.
4. Recognition of the regime's cultural policy by combining forces with the art and cultural foundations.
5. Establishing Iranian Islamic art and traditions on an international level.

One of the themes that the Islamic writers have committed to in their writings is Karbala. This theme, unlike the previous committed literature, achieved a new position in Islamic Literature after the revolution. Karbala in Islamic literature resembles a holy place where Imam Hossein, the third Imam of Shia followers, was martyred. The writers emphasise its holiness in their writings by illustrating the locations capability for miracles. These beliefs did not exist within the pre-revolutionary committed literature. In pre-revolutionary committed literature, the concept of Karbala was used to set an example of scarification of an oppressed group for their claim of an ideal society. In the Islamic literature the concept was instead used to achieve devotion and reliability of the society to the Islamic state as well as to facilitate the war against Iraq and restrain Western control. To become a martyr during the war against Iraq was defined as a means to entre Paradise. Other themes were also depicted within Islamic writers' discourses such as the events of the Islamic Revolution, Iran-Iraq war events and the state's confrontation with civil disobedience. Among these themes, the theme of war was most popular, particularly near the end of the war. The writers illustrated the soldiers' experiences of war.<sup>11</sup> Mostafa Rahmandoust, a poet, author, teacher and translator of children and young adults' literature, had an active presence in most movements in relation to the development of study and consciousness of children of Iran. The theme of Karbala and its events has been illustrated in some of his poems. Below is a poem about Abbas<sup>12</sup> who showed his loyalty to Hossain at the Battle of Karbala:

[Sometimes I become a cloud and sometimes the rain  
Sometimes I spring from a spring

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<sup>9</sup> The regime closed the universities in the country and the council started its task which included the suppression of leftist academics, the reform of the curriculum and the general Islamization of academic environments.

<sup>10</sup> Rafi, Jalal. *Tarha va Mosavabate-e Farhangi* (Cultural Projects and Bylaws), *Adabistan* 54, June 1994, P: 34-36.

<sup>11</sup> Among these new authors are Qasem Farasat, Mohammad Nurizad, Kambiz Malek, Mostafa Rahmandoust, Hasan Ahmadi, Mohsen Makhbalbaf, Mehdi Shojai and Akbar Khalili.

<sup>12</sup> Al-‘Abbās is revered by Muslims for his loyalty to his half-brother Husayn ibn ‘Alī.

Sometimes I'm coming down a hill  
Sometimes I become a proud fall and sometimes I am a river

Sometimes I am a drop, sometimes I become a sea  
I sometimes find myself in a bowl

I work every day and night  
I water the gardens

There is nothing more superior than me in this world  
Life comes after the water

Although I am water, one day I was burned up  
Drop to the sea I burned up entirely

A thirsty man came to wet his lips  
So he could wet another's lips

A thirsty man came to stop his thirst  
Gave me an empty musk to fill it with water

Abbas was the thirst of that day  
He was the jasmine tents guard

The blood of brave flag holder, Abbas  
Dropped inside me drop by drop

His warm blood burned my heart  
Kindled a fire in my soul

My eyes should sleep, my waves should calm  
My calm blueness should be disturbed

(Am) I water? Oh! Marsh to me  
Give life? No, death and sleep to me

Shame on me, Shame on Me, Oh My  
I am in the swamp regretful

The twist of my river is from listening to my heart  
Pounds with sorrow of heart, turned into the mud

My cry, turned into the gurgle of rain

My sorrow was hidden in a cry

My burned smoke made the clouds dark  
Turned the skies into dusk

If the water became tears of the eyes, it was from the shame  
From the shame it became salty, bitter and hot

I was the water, Karbala was broken behind me  
My prestige has gone; I became inferior, inferior, inferior

Now I am embarrassed from Akbar  
I am embarrassed from Ali-Asghar.]<sup>13</sup>  
Trans: Mahrokh.S. Hosseini

In this poem the story of Abbas is portrayed using painful words of regret. In the story Hossein's camp was surrounded and isolated from the Euphrates River. The camp ran out of water on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the Islamic calendar month called Moharram. The Euphrates River was surrounded by Yazid's Army to prevent Hossain's camp from accessing the drinkable water. Abbas went to the river to get water for Hossain's 4 year old daughter Sakina. The essence of this event was to illustrate that Abbas conquered the Euphrates River, held it within his mighty hands, yet still did not drink. They claim that until this very day the water from Euphrates River circles the grave of Abbas.<sup>14</sup>

Mostafa Rahmandoost's poem about faith and loyalty carries some of the themes simultaneously. The significance of Karbala in his poem differs from the pre-revolutionary works. For instance, Dolatabadi satirized the scenes of Karbala so he could propose a powerful writing to his readership, encouraging them to show their struggle against the social norms. Conversely, Rahmandoost appeals openly to the loyalty of Abbas to Imam Hossein in Karbala that instead enables the readership to realize the themes of scarification and loyalty. Finally the readers could find changes in their lives and become devoted believers. The use of Arabic words is also visible in the poem which is not similar to the previous works that were used to mock the Arabic terminology.

The other theme in Islamic poetry to address is the Iran-Iraq war. The war poetry portrayed the Islamic warrior's experiencing their fights or admiring the warriors and martyrs. Therefore, the mourning poetry or threnody became a common genre for the poets. The poets had abundant cases available from the war to write about. Such occasions inspired the Islamic poets. For the Islamic poets, the Iran-Iraq war is the persistence of Imam Hossein's fight against the unfair leaders. Hasan Hosseini<sup>15</sup> one of the poets of this collection, portrays an

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<sup>13</sup>Rahmandoost, Mostafa. *Gol-e Labkhand va Salam* (The Flower of Smile and Salam), Kanun Publication, 2000.

<sup>14</sup> Tabrizi, Abu Talib (2001). Ahmed Haneef. ed. *Al-Abbas Peace be Upon Him*. Abdullah Al-Shahin. Qum: Ansariyan Publications. pp. 39–47.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

image of a warrior who is saying farewell to his mother and he justifies his departure to the battle. He pronounces to his mother that his wish is to join the race of tulips and also answer Imam Hossein's call for support in Karbala and Ashura in this battle. The tulip is the symbol of becoming a martyr and that the warriors wish is to join the martyrdom:

[I'm leaving my mother; Karbala is calling for me  
From the land of a beloved friend, a familiar voice is calling for me  
A message of "Is there any supporter?" can be heard from Jamaran<sup>16</sup>  
In the passage of love God's spirit is calling for me]  
Trans: Mahrokh.S. Hosseini

The poet here correlates the Iran-Iraq war with Imam Hossein's battle in Karbala. The message of Imam Hossein is echoing not only in the fields of Karbala but also in the poet's text. Imam Hossein's call on the day of Ashura "Is there a helper who would help me?" was not just for the day of Ashura according to the poet but also a call for all the future Shia warriors. The poet's use of Arabic text again adheres to the poem and illustrates the worth of Islamic values for Islamic poets. The poet illustrates that as long as there is oppression and injustice in this world, the mission of Imam Hossein will be alive.

Fatemeh Rakei, a former member of the Cultural Caucus and Women's Affair of parliament is another literary activist who has also promoted the Islamic literature of the revolution with a publication of poems about the war, revolution and devotion to the leader of the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini. In her collection of poetry, she introduces the heroes of the war and Islam, explaining the devastation after the war. She also intended to introduce the distinguished traits of the Muslim woman. Below are two poems from her collection<sup>17</sup>, *For Fatemeh (A.S.)* and *For Imam Khomeini, the Leader of Islamic Revolution* that shows her adherence to Fatemeh, the daughter of the Prophet Mohammad (P.B.U.H), and Imam Khomeini:

For Fatemeh (A.S.)  
O the tokenless one that you are the evidence of God  
Wherever a token of you is seen, but you yourself are tokenless  
O the graceful soul, the utmost of perfection and maturity  
Like the blood of love you are streaming in the vein of being  
The sun smiles with the recollection of your charming countenance  
You are a seed in the worn out earth to grow a rose  
O the unfinished sweet story of life!  
You are the red interpretation of everlasting life  
O the pure Zahra, O the sweet sorrow  
You are the most pleasant amorous love song

<sup>16</sup> Jamaran is the home of Ayatollah Khomeini during his lifetime

<sup>17</sup> Rakei, Fatemeh and Mehdi Afshar. *Nakhonaki be Zendegi (A Touch of Life)*, Tehran, 2006.

For Imam Khomeini, the Leader of Islamic Revolution  
It looks like a dream, as an aspiration as an imagination  
It looks like a non-answerable question  
How can I describe his glance, it looks like the running stream of light  
The ruddy rose of his face, looks like the rose of the sun  
It looks like the turbulent soul of fire, the untamed nature of love  
It looks like the throbbing heart of Revolution  
In this manner that entirely has robbed the wit of the lovers  
It looks like the master couplet of limpid love songs  
How happy is to hear from those lips, which are the source of generosity  
A melody that looks like the whisper of a stream  
It is a fact. But to me  
It looks like an imagination, a dream

Here the poet praises leadership of Imam Khomeini as the main reason for 1979 victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. She praises Imam Khomeini's ethical virtues and his wisdom in the stanza: "In this manner that entirely has robbed the wit of the lovers". She symbolises his face with "the running stream of light" or the sunset, "the rose of the sun" and present his spirituality and holiness. She offers his voice as a sweet melody to ears to hear. Fatemeh symbolises his voice with "the whisper of a stream". She suggests in the fourth stanza that she is not able to describe him since he is "as an aspiration" and "as an imagination". She finishes her poem with the similar suggestion: It looks like an imagination, a dream".

Sepideh Kashani is another poet of the Islamic revolution who is referred to as "The Mother of Islamic Revolutionary Poetry". Her poems before the revolution were focused on social themes and the collection was titled: "Nocturnal Butterflies"

With the establishment of the Council of Poetry of Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance, Kashani accepted the membership in the Council as well as being an active member of Islamic Republic of Iran's Broadcasting service. As a result many of her poems were broadcasted in the form of revolutionary songs. Her themes in the poems included the war, martyrs and warriors, Shia Imams, Ayatollah Khomeini and mothers. She writes in the form of elegy, modern Persian poetry and couplets. In the following poem Kashani<sup>18</sup> portrays a mother's feelings and the pains of war that took the lives of her children. She blames the war and the enemy for the destruction of her land. This poem, "*Bahar Ast-o Hengam-e Chidan-e Man*" (It's Spring and the Time for My Harvesting) have been broadcasting many times over Radio and Television in Iran:

It's Spring and the Time for My Harvesting

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<sup>18</sup> Kashan, Sepideh. "*Bahar Ast-o Hengam-e Chidan-e Man*" (It's Spring and the Time for My Harvesting), trans. "Women in the Domain of Islamic Revolution's poetry", *Farzaneh Journal*, no. 16-2, [http://en.farzanehjournals.com/index.php/articles/no16/3-no-16-2-women-in-the-domain-of-islamic-revolutions-poetry?change\\_font=increase](http://en.farzanehjournals.com/index.php/articles/no16/3-no-16-2-women-in-the-domain-of-islamic-revolutions-poetry?change_font=increase)

O foe! If you smear my earth with my blood  
From every corner of my rose bower, a rose will sprout out  
O foe! If you separate my head from my body  
How can you ever remove from my heart  
My love of my homeland?!

O champion cherisher! Be praise your flourishing patience  
The springtide envy your rose cherishing lap  
Your roses are the best ones and peerless throughout the world  
Yes; your celebrated champions are spring creators  
O mother, you have a wounded heart, you have buried your bunch of roses  
Alas my water lily sprout out in the lake of blood  
At dawn you have bloomed and nestled in the summit of light  
At dusk you have kindled the twilight to flame  
Among the bed of roses you have clamored in such a way  
That you have robbed the nectar of slumber from the fragrance of fennel  
Now you cross from the lap of the plain like a hurricane  
Now you nestle in the private house of the sun  
You denied yourself and dedicated upon your head for your goal  
You earnestly carried the banner of honor by your shoulder  
O the impetuous soul what have you hearken from the Toor of miracle  
That you have set fire the reed land of your body?!

Kashani's poetry is outstanding for expressing her impressive emotions. Her collection of poems was published in 1994 under the title of "The Friend's Speech".

In pre-Revolutionary committed literature, the writers believed that they were the ones who should start the political movement so that the masses could follow them. Similarly in post-revolutionary Islamic literature the poet is seen as a Shia warrior, whose emotions, such as crying makes the mass to respond. In pre-Revolutionary committed literature, the themes circled around freedom, justice, and changes to motivate the readership. In post-revolutionary Islamic literature a warrior has only to restate his devotion and belief to engage the readership. Tahereh Saffarzadeh is an Islamic committed poet who has similar goals in her poetry. She asks people to follow the Islamic teachings. Saffarzadeh devoted herself to the Islamic norms even before the success of the revolution and she is considered as one of the first devoted and faithful poets of Islamic literature. However, her works became greatly recognised after the revolution. Saffarzadeh's, *Bey'at ba Bidari* (oath of Allegiance to Awakening) (1979), presents the poet's correspondence to the 1979's events. Ayatollah Khomeini in her poem appears as "the angel"<sup>19</sup> and a teacher whose job is awakening people from darkness. The Guardians of the revolution (Pasdaran) are addressed as:

O guardian of liberation's revolution  
O lone hero  
God be with you in your loneliness

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<sup>19</sup> Saffarzadeh, Tahereh. *Bey'at ba Bidari*, Tehran, 1979, P: 23.

God be with you when the enemy passes you at night  
God protect you from all harm.<sup>20</sup>

Saffarzadeh's, *Fath Kamel Nist* (Conquest Is Not Complete) (1936), illustrates her committed resistance for Islam in her works. The search for self through connections with others is an important aspect in her poetry to identify her religious spirituality in the 1970s. It begins:

There comes the pure voice of Azan.  
The pure voice of azan  
Is the cry of the believing hands of a man  
Which pluck from my healthy roots  
The feeling of getting away, getting lost, becoming an island.  
I am heading towards a great prayer.  
My ablution is from the street air,  
And the dark paths of smoke.  
And the kiblals of events over time,  
Grant my prayers.  
My nail polish  
Does not keep me  
From uttering "Allah-o- Akbar."  
And I know a prayer of miracle  
A prayer of conversion.

And He is the one who knows  
That the weary back of the cloud  
Awaits fragile moments of breaking down.  
To counter the conspiracy of stupefaction  
Needs the immediate moments of rain  
And the wild moments of the river.  
And I, who know about the ruthlessness of bread,  
Know that victory is not complete.  
And no calculating brain has yet been able  
To count the syllables of the distance of the leaf  
From the hidden spite of the wind.  
And the greed for finding the pearl  
Will allow the whole surface of the shell  
To reject the affection of the sand.<sup>21</sup>

In this poem, Azan (call to prayer) chanted by Moazen (caller to prayer), calls for the poet to return to her roots, where she can find herself amongst other believers and she is not anymore

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid. P: 60.

<sup>21</sup> Saffarzadeh, Tahereh. "The Roads of Martyrdom." Trans. Kamran Talattof, *The Politics of Writing*, P: 131.

alone and isolated. Saffarzadeh shows that her religious feelings are not opposed to the identity of the speaker as a modern woman. Although later, in the post-revolutionary period the nail polish should be cleaned off:

“My nail polish / Does not keep me / From uttering “Allah-o- Akbar.” ”

However, her religious understanding opposes the social and political concepts of her boundary: “And I, who know about the ruthlessness of bread, / Know that victory is not complete.”

The impact of the feminist consciousness is exposed in Saffarzade’s poem and it shows the beginning of new activities which women authors should consider in their discourse. Although these Islamic authors did not apply feminist statements in their works, they did occasionally add to the body of women’s discourse by reinterpreting the Islamic norms. However, some changes began to develop in the 1990s within Islamic writings when the state reduced its censorship and provided a relatively open environment for writers to enjoy the diversity. The change was most noticeable in women’s writings which allowed for the growth in the feminist literary movement. An example can be observed in *Zanan* (Women) Journal. The journal started its activity with a true commitment to the state’s policy and theories but its publication was stopped by the state just because the journal reflected women’s issues.

## 2. Inclination for Feminist Consciousness in Women’s Writing

After the success of the 1979’s revolution in Iran, the state’s policy inspired social and cultural structures with a great impression on literature. As mentioned earlier women’s literary writings have influenced more by these policies. The political policies had an organized influence on women writers’ themes, structure, style, characterization, and metaphorical language. The appearance of these different literary works by women from both Islamic committed literature and feminist literature is linked with application of the Islamic laws in Iran. The laws are enforced by the ‘Cultural Revolution’ (Enghelabe Farhangi) that challenged and restricted women’s freedom of choice. Majidi<sup>22</sup> brings examples as follows:

- Women’s incapability to divorce, travel, work or leave the house without the consent of their fathers, brothers or husbands;
- If divorce happens, the custody of their children from certain ages will be denied;
- Permission for girls to marry at age 9 and later 13;
- Abortion was banned except in very urgent situations;
- Separation of the sexes in public life such as in buses, sport, schools and recently in some Universities;

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<sup>22</sup> Mohammadi, Majid. *Iranian Women and the Civil Rights Movement in Iran: Feminism Interacted. Journal of International Women’s Studies* Vol. 9 #1 November 2007. P: 4.

- Mandatory dress codes with a set of strict rules such as wearing dark and loose uniforms;
- Women are banned from singing and they cannot broadcast;
- Women cannot be ranked in military forces and their jobs are restricted to office jobs;
- The right of men to divorce without the women's consent;
- Women are banned from administrative official positions such as judiciary;

Above all, one can say that the compulsory Islamic dress codes and the application of Islamic rules by the state's clerics in 1979 provided new viewpoints for women's literary discourse and subsequently, their active and conscious presence in Iran's contemporary literature. Therefore, it would be essential to review the rise of veiling issues that inspired the writings of women activists'. Mehrangiz Rassapour, poet, literary critic and editor of *Vajeh* (cultural and literary magazine) was born in Khoram-abad, south-west Iran. Her works, including "Stoning" and "Lash", have been published in several languages, including English, by the poet and translator Robert Chandler, French, German, Norwegian and others. Her poem, *Stoning*, lists some of the enforced laws by the state against women after the revolution:

Stoning  
Throw stones  
Throw stones  
At lewd  
    debauched  
        criminal me!  
Throw stones!  
I was all in red  
    Stone me  
My clothes were the colour of my blood  
    Stone me  
Blood-red is rude  
    Stone me  
My long hair longed for air  
    Stone me  
    But we can't have air here  
        Stone me  
My footsteps called out  
    Stone me  
Sound excites lust  
    Stone me  
My eyes,  
    Fell upon,  
        A man  
            Stone me  
Seeing is forbidden  
        Stone me  
Kissing is forbidden

Stone me  
Drinking is forbidden  
Stone me  
Sobriety is forbidden  
Stone me  
The past is forbidden  
Stone me  
The future is forbidden  
Stone me  
I'm a woman  
Stone me  
I have eyes  
Stone me  
I have a tongue  
Stone me  
I have a brain  
Stone me  
You! Who were not born of a mother!  
Stone me  
Stone...  
Stone...  
Stone...<sup>23</sup>

In Iran, the Stop Stoning Forever Campaign was formed by various women's rights activists after a man and a woman were stoned to death in Mashhad in May 2006. The campaign's main goal was to legally abolish stoning as a form of punishment for adultery in Iran.<sup>24</sup> Here, the poet by repeating "Stone me" highlights the brutality of the law in the period. She condemns the rules and the state itself. In the last stanzas of the poem, she calls the state directly: "You! Who were not born of a mother!" She symbolizes the state with a creature other than human who has no heart and was not born of a mother. The poet counts down her pains and the forbidden rules that surrounded her. Her crimes are showing her hair, kissing, seeing, mobility and being in the public domain, being in love with a man, drinking and the worst, being a "woman". However, she celebrates her being of a woman who is able to see, be visible and have voice. She lets the tyrants stone her but reminds them that she has a brain and she is fully aware of how to make her voice visible using her words. The poem has very creative form. The poet located the phrase "Stone me" in each stanza at different places to illustrate the action of stoning. The last three lines in the poem portray the persona's weak and injured body from stoning that she cannot finish up the phrase in each line: "Stone.../Stone.../Stone...).

<sup>23</sup> Kalbasi, Sheema. *The Poetry of Iranian Women*, Reel Content, 2009. P: 33.

<sup>24</sup> Rochelle Terman (November 2007). *"The Stop Stoning Forever Campaign: A Report"* (pdf). [http://www.stop-killing.org/files/Terman\\_stoning.pdf](http://www.stop-killing.org/files/Terman_stoning.pdf). Retrieved 2012-03-25.

Sholeh Wolpé (1962), a poet and literary translator, has also portrayed the rules of oppression imposed by the state in her poem; *It's a man's world to the end of the end*. She states that her main sin and crime is to be: "a woman. Simply." She writes:

It's a man's world to the end of the end  
I am a woman. Simply.

To look at me is a sin —  
I must be veiled.

To hear my voice is a temptation  
that must be hushed.

For me to think is a crime  
so I must not be schooled.

I am to bear it all  
and die quietly, without complaint.

Only then can I be admitted to the court of God  
where I must repose naked on a marble cloud  
feed virtuous men succulent grapes  
pour them wine from golden vats  
and murmur songs of love...<sup>25</sup>

One of the first concerns for the clerics, one month after the revolution, was the compulsory veiling. Paidar argues that from the very early days of the revolution, many educated and scholar women had become conscious of the Islamic laws' performances against women's rights. They had expected that if they would not ask for their freedom of dress, the issues would go severe, regarding women's rights. Conversely, their main supporters at the time, the leftist group, ignored and even criticized the demonstrations made by the women.<sup>26</sup> This was because of the leftist groups' liberal and democratic perspectives on women's rights and their definition of equal opportunities. Therefore, they did not protest against the actions of the regime and they involved themselves more with the 'liberation of the masses'. These leftist women thought that Iranian women were suffering from the Western impact on their life, the imitation of these western patterns or feminism by Iran's bourgeois and also from the women who all through the former regime "benefited from modernisation were considered accomplices in this imperialistic conspiracy. While lower-class women were portrayed as victims of the regime's oppression, affluent women were condemned as sex-objects,

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<sup>25</sup> Kalbasi, Sheema. *The Poetry of Iranian Women*, Reel Content, 2009. P: 1.

<sup>26</sup> Talattof, P: 138.

accomplices of the Shah and oppressors of the lower-class women.”<sup>27</sup> Consequently, these women did not perceive compulsory veiling as a repressive action. Also it is possible to claim that the leftist group adopted Ayatollah Khomeini’s<sup>28</sup> conception of women as mothers and wives. They believed that “to ensure the continuance of the struggle of the masses, housework, reproduction and the rearing of children are necessity.”<sup>29</sup> These women didn’t disagree with the state’s definition. They gave a masculine meaning in definition to a strong woman who faced with difficulties; thus, wearing make-up and high-heels were considered Western and imperialistic style.

As a result, the revolution agents linked veiled women with the capacity of high value and the Iranian women’s direct elimination of Western style.<sup>30</sup> Women’s veil (their bodies) as Talattof explains “has become a locus of contention and a battle ground between Western modernity and Islam”.<sup>31</sup> Segregation, placing boundaries between male and female sexes and implementing strong veiling laws became one of top priorities in controlling the regime’s policies. Milani argues that the veil has not only the capacity to cause people to adopt extreme opposing positions but also define ‘boundaries’. The veil restricts ‘power’, ‘control’, ‘visibility’ and ‘mobility’ to one social class without regard for the ‘other’ and finally the outcome would be arising many hierarchies in the society.<sup>32</sup>

Restrained by the Islamic regime and disregarded by the leftist group, the protests did not continue. Subsequently, women had to oppose to the issue of women’s veiling in their writings. They started their activities on supporting women’s rights and their struggle over compulsory veiling by publishing their critiques in editorial columns in forms of interviews, discussions, articles, reports in journals such as *Hafteh Nameheye Susiyalistie Kargar* (Socialist Workers’ Weekly) and *Fasli Dar Gol’e Sorkh* ( A Season of Roses). A growing group of feminist writers condemned the silence of men when women’s rights were marginalized; they also criticized men and the leftist groups who actively approved the new restrictions against women.<sup>33</sup> Literature became women’s central self-expression medium and an important means for them to illustrate their suppressed voices.

Women who were active in the fields of fiction and poetry also showed a great inclination for feminism. They published an extensive number of papers in journals or conferences, books,

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<sup>27</sup> Paidar, Parvin. *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, P: 171.

<sup>28</sup> Khomeini, Ruhollah. Edited, Frederic P. Miller, Agnes F. Vandome, McBrewster John, *Hokumat-e Islami: Velayat-e Faqih (book by Khomeini)*, VDM Verlag Dr. Mueller e.K., 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, P: 172.

<sup>30</sup> This symbolic significance was also offered in the Shah’s White Revolution as well as the French Revolution. See Moses, Caire, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984.

<sup>31</sup> Talattof, Kamran, *The Politics of Writing in Iran: a History of Modern Persian Literature*, Syracuse University Press, 2000, p: 136.

<sup>32</sup> Milani, Farzaneh. *Veils and words: the emerging voices of Iranian women writers*, Syracuse University Press, 1992. P: 5.

<sup>33</sup> See Faslnameh’e Elmi- Pazhuheshi Motaleat’e Barnameh Rizi (Studies and Research in Planning Quarterly) 3, Spring 1995.

poems and many other entries that show their concern for women's issues.<sup>34</sup> These leave out the publications by men who write on women's issues in Iran and also women writers in Diaspora. However, women writers in Iran are still faced with difficulties in publishing their work, first because of the male dominated nature of the industry of publishing in Iran and second, because of their fear of being hunted and criminalised by the regime's control. For instance, Shahrnush Parsipur was persecuted for publishing the book *Zanan-e- Bedun-e Mardan* (Women Without Men, 1990) or Tahmineh Milani who was confined by the Revolutionary Court on August 27, 2001, and taken into prison for some days for her film, *Nimeh-e Pinhan* (The Hidden Half). Her house was searched and items were removed.<sup>35</sup> The prominent novelist Simin Daneshvar stated in an interview, "Let Simone de Beauvoir come and live for a year the life I live here [in Iran] if she can still produce one line of writing I'll change my name."<sup>36</sup>

Iranian women writers' motivation to overcome these difficulties, have rewarded them with large audiences of 'other' women. Many critics<sup>37</sup> approve that many women inside their homes, that might also not have much access or freedom to be outside their homes, spend a lot of their time reading books, poems, novels, fictions and many other writings. The evidence for their amount of readership and recognition of women writers can be their reprinted works.<sup>38</sup> For example *Devil's Stone* reprinted within a month. Milani reports that: "By the mid-1990s, however, women dominated the fiction best-seller lists. The number of women novelists now is 370- thirteen times as many as ten years earlier and about equal to the number of men novelists."<sup>39</sup> Novels by women in Iran after the revolution now frequently sell more than novels by men. Milani<sup>40</sup> continues:

Whereas the average Iranian novel has a print run of about five thousand copies, several books by women have enjoyed printing of more than one hundred thousand copies. Fataneh Haj Seyed Javadi's novel *The Morning After*, an engaging and detailed portrait of love and loss published in 1995, has outsold every other work of fiction in post-revolutionary Iran.

The themes and stories of these best novels or books are embracing the interests of female audiences in women's issues and all aspects of their lives. Themes such as family, gender

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<sup>34</sup> See indexes in women publishing such as Chehrekhanda, Shahrzad Khashi, Sedigeh Soltanifar. Also see women's journals such as *Payame Zan*, *Zanan*, *Zan'e Ruz*, *Payame Hajar*, *Mahjubeh*, *Khanevadeh*, *Vijeh Nameh Daftare Umure Zanan* and many more others.

<sup>35</sup> See [http://www.wworld.org/programs/human\\_rights.htm](http://www.wworld.org/programs/human_rights.htm), Retrieved: 5 March 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Milani, Farzaneh. *Pay-e Sohbat-e Simin Daneshvar (An Audience with Simin Daneshvar)*, *Alefba* (n.s.) no.4, 1983, P: 155.

<sup>37</sup> See Imami, Karim. *Bazar-e Garm-e Roman va Khanumhaye Roman Khan (Novel and Women Novel Readers)*, *Adineh* 44, 20 March 1992, P: 70; Barahani, Reza. *Tarikh Ulaviyathaye Adabi Ra Jabeja Kardeh (History has Changed the Literary Priorities)*, *Adineh* 42-43, 1 March 1992, P: 80; and *Takhayuri, Nasrin. Mokhteban-e Jeditar va Amigtar az Intezar, Adineh*, 1992.

<sup>38</sup> See Fathi, Nazila. *Women writing Novels Emerge as Stars in Iran*, New York Times, June 29, 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Milani, Farzaneh. *Words Not Swords: Iranian Women Writers and the Freedom of Movement*, Syracuse University Press, 2011, P: 185.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, P: 185

relations, domestic violence, depression and mental illness, the oppression or tyranny from their older brothers or fathers and husbands, drugs, child custody, sexual relationships, poverty, the right to choose their husbands or partners and marriage traditions and finally their craving to obtain freedom are covered. Talattof<sup>41</sup> discloses that:

Their [female writers] new literary discourse provides them with more space to talk about deep-rooted sexual norms such as virginity and to disclose the related physical abuse and violence toward women. Their female protagonists tend to emphasize the political nature of the self, care about their historical sisters, promote womanhood, and express awareness of the political issues surrounding the female body and sexuality.

Therefore, a huge movement in literary form, style, characterization, theme and figurative language of women's writing has developed. These women use a new arrangement of feminist metaphors in their literary discourse that completely characterizes them from the themes that writers used before the revolution and also from male writers after the revolution. Feminist expressions such as "freedom of choice," "promoting equality with men," "interaction between man and woman," "struggle against patriarchy," and "criticism of considering women as sex objects" have increased in women's literary writings. The most desired theme in women's post-revolutionary literary writing is the veil. The veil has attained a very substantial place in women's writing, it has turned out to be a characteristic feature of progression for some women and a step to backwardness for others; its meaning is an implication of what Sharia and the post-revolutionary regime has meant for Iran. Some women in Iran perceive the compulsory veil as symbol of disgrace and repression while others perceive it as a way to integrate and enter to the public domain. Compulsory veiling has bestowed veiled writers like Zahra Rahnava authority and power. She advocates that both men and women are required to comply with modest dress and behaviour rules. On the other hand, Sousan Azadi has a critical approach. In her writing Azadi describes the veil as a prison that they carry with themselves. Azadi<sup>42</sup> argues:

As I pulled the chador over me, I felt a heaviness descending over me. I was hidden and in hiding. There was nothing left of Sousan Azadi. I felt like an animal of the light suddenly trapped in a cave. I was just another faceless Moslem woman carrying a whole inner world hidden inside the chador.

Among Iranian women writers, poets play very significant roles in portraying women's sorrow and the distress caused by their patriarchal society as well as their resistance and rebelliousness. They broke the silence with their poetic rhythms and versifying the grief of women. As Helene Cixous stated, women all through the history have continually been confronted by three types of repressions: repression of a woman by herself, repression of women's body by others and repression of the feminine expression or language.<sup>43</sup> She

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<sup>41</sup> Talattof, Kamran. *Iranian Women's Literature: From Pre- Revolutionary Social Discourse to Post- Revolutionary Feminism*. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 29.4. Nov. 1997. P: 543-544.

<sup>42</sup> Azadi, Sousan. with Angela Ferrante, *Out of Iran*. London: Futura, 1987, p. 223. Cited in Farzaneh Milani, *Veils and Words*, p. 44.

<sup>43</sup> Cixous, Helene. *The Laugh of the Medusa*. Trans. by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. *Signs* 1 (Summer 1976): 875-893.

advocates that Women should break the silence. She emphasise that the womanly language is the language in which a woman must write all women's characteristics, including the specifics of her body.

Cixous and Kristeva's theories focus on how male dominated language has defined and oppressed 'the feminine' in the figurative order, removing women from a linguistic space for freedom of expression. Cixous suggests the creation of a new language called 'écriture feminine', defined as "writing the body", in order to undermine the linguistic, syntactical, and metaphysical standards of the 'phallogocentric' narrative.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Luce Irigaray believes that only in a different order of meaning, it is possible to create a positive image of feminine identity.<sup>45</sup> This requires the denial of the ever powerful notion of the universal truth or the committed literature, as its universality is a misleading notion; it is widespread only from the male viewpoint. Below are some other selected poems that will serve as the primary sources for this paper to indicate the rise of feminism themes discussed in this section. The themes will illustrate the interests of female poets' in dealing with the conditions of their current period and also condemning the state's policies against their rights. They indicate the grief and disappointment of women created by their oppression, struggle and disobedience. Rosa Jamali, (1977), is an Iranian poet and playwright. Her poetry language is rough and violent. In an interview, the poet said of writing the poem:

I was inspired by mythological women and Greek tragedies, such as the story of Medea who kills her children and starts the fire; such as Antigone, who doesn't know where to bury her brother; such as the famously cruel character in Islamic history of Hendeye Jegarxar, who eats the fallen pieces of Prophet Mohammad's uncle. I was also inspired by crime fiction, but in my poem I really wanted to convey the old mythological significance you see in Greek tragedies: that a murder is a sacrifice, allowing one to set oneself free and find salvation, whereas in modern society murder is seen as a crime of the kind that Dostoevsky describes in *Crime and Punishment*, in which Roskolnikov fails to regret the murder he commits.<sup>46</sup>

She writes:

I don't know if it's Saturday or Friday today?  
It's morning or night  
Today is forbidden  
Tomorrow is forbidden  
Clapping is forbidden

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Irigaray, Luce. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. Trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill. London: The Athlone, 1993.

<sup>46</sup> Iran-Poetry international Web, Rosa Jamali (1977), [http://www.poetryinternational.org/piw/cms/cms/cms\\_module/index.php?obj\\_id=18522](http://www.poetryinternational.org/piw/cms/cms/cms_module/index.php?obj_id=18522), Retrieved: 25 March 2012.

Always is forbidden  
Trans: Pegah Ahmadi

In another poem Granaz Moussavi (1974), poet, film director and screen writer has a bitter but real view about love:

Barbed wire was my mother's dowry  
In the border of the road that was reaching the bitter moon  
I sleep with you without love  
Here the bare footed hors  
For one pair of shoes and one set of floral china,  
Run Mosaddegh to the end of Valiasr avenue  
Yes! The air is filled with sick children <sup>47</sup>

In this example, the poet leaves behind the historical shyness in order to say that without love and only to following the social contract, she sleeps with her man. The poet continues her poem utilizing two words: “Mosaddegh” and “Vali-asr” in order to point out the history of women's suffering in a satirical way. In this poem, a woman gladly proclaims her freedom to stray from the conventional paths of morality and pay for having done so. Instead of expressing self-denial, instead of agonizing about sexual repression, she gives voice to her bewilderment in the grip of physical desire and the consummation of her passion. The poetic persona voluntarily makes a public confession of a crime for which the punishment was death.

Maryam Masih (1980) in her poem, *I wish we were not forbidden!*, wishes for the freedom that she suffers for. She associates the state's oppression and censorship with the Bastille castle. In her dream for freedom, she sees a woman who is singing on top of the ruins of a defeated tyranny's castle. Just as Van Gugh's paintings are notable for their rough beauty, emotional honesty, and bold colour, her words and poem will also be secured and she will convey the true feelings with her pen:

[I wish we were not forbidden!  
In the remaining ruins of the Bastille  
A singing woman from Iran  
Can be heard  
And I  
On the Persian rug  
Sleep  
Close my eyes  
And on the surviving flowers of the rug  
Dance  
Make my ears deaf  
And Van Gugh's painting

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<sup>47</sup> Granaz,mussavi. *Sketching On Night* (Graffiti on Night) “Khatkhati ruye shab”, Tehran, 1997.

On my old pains  
Nail it [secure it]...<sup>48]</sup>  
Trans: M.S. Hosseini

In today's Iranian poetry we are witnesses of violence, discontent and rage. Screams, grief and sorrows, that time after time have hurt women are reflected in their poems. Women bravely continue their writings regardless of the censorship, controls and restrictions to produce their poems. Pegah Ahmadi (1974) portrays this censorship in her poem; *A circle has swallowed my voice*. Her poems in her earlier works were mixed with linguistic experimentation as was the case with many Iranian poets in the 1990s. But then she took up political and social themes because she considered them to be more relevant. She has mainly considered issues of history and the changing role of women in society, reflecting also what consequences these changes have had for woman writers. In her poem, *A circle has swallowed my voice*, she portrays the captivity of her voice in her community. The shapes she describes for her city, metaphorically refer to the signs in the street. A triangle and circle in her poem are the signs for a warning, particular hazard, obstacle or condition that makes her fearful and terrified. The poet illustrates the status of the freedom of speech in her city and the fear that her words might be recorded by anyone in this city. She is an absolute voiceless woman:

A circle has swallowed my voice  
I remember my city  
with these red shapes:  
Triangle of an interrogator  
Horror  
And a circle  
that has swallowed my voice  
Laces of boots are tightened  
around my neck  
and my crime is  
That I've written that  
Morning newspapers  
looked like our wounded mouths!  
I remember my city  
with these red shapes:  
Doubt and distrust  
And fear of not knowing which friend  
Has a hidden recorder in her pocket<sup>49</sup>

Similar to the previous poem, Fereshteh Sari (1956), poet, writer and translator, is more hopeless and states that opposing the darkness of repression with the light of her pen is not a

<sup>48</sup> Masih, Maryam. *Kash Mamnue Nabudim Ma* (I wish we were not forbidden), Arvij publication, 1993.

<sup>49</sup> Ahmadi, Pegah. *A circle has swallowed my voice*, <http://pegahahmadi.wordpress.com/>

safe tactic anymore. In the poem, *Those Days*, from her book *Pejrvak-e Sokut*<sup>50</sup> (The Echo of Silence, 1989), she reveals the danger of censorship and the terror she feels within her community:

Those Days  
Those days  
Poetry  
Was my room  
And wherever I felt unsafe  
I gravitated into its eternal sanctuary  
These days  
There aren't any rooms  
That can harbour me against the crowd  
and behind every window  
inside and outside every room  
a two-faced clown sneers

Sari in this poem is depressed and does not find her poem a safe place to reveal her voice.

Parvaneh Forouhar (1938 - 22 November 1998) was an Iranian protester and activist. She was murdered during the Chain murders of Iran in November 1998. In her poem, *I Am Depressed*, she, like Pegah Ahmadi, is depressed and hopeless. She is in search of light and "the garden" to break her silence:

I Am Depressed  
I am depressed, ah  
I am depressed from this relentless silence  
From this hopeless patience  
From this quiet cry, this ditch  
I am depressed, ah  
When will we reach the sun!  
When will we arrive at the garden?!...<sup>51</sup>

The female voice in this poem has a very depressed melancholy tone. Her depression is repeated and she is tired of being in this condition. The poet is silently struggling with the monsters of mental illness: Depression. She is tired of being as an object without soul and voice. She condemns the silence and she is in search of the sun, an eternal light to cure her depression.

## Conclusion

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<sup>50</sup> Sari, Fereshteh. *Pejrvak-e Sokut*, Tehran: Bahman, 1989, trans. M. Alexandrian. Cited in: <http://www.caroun.com/Literature/Iran/ContemporaryPoets/FereshtehSari/FereshtehSari.html>

<sup>51</sup> Forouhar, Parvaneh. *Shaayad yek rooz* (Perhaps one day), Tehran :Jame'e Iranian, 2001.

Women's literary creativity in Iran has always been inspired and conditioned by socio-political issues. After having some freedom during the Shah's regime, skilled and educated women were suddenly terrified by the rapid changes to their rights as soon as the Islamic regime and its interpretations of Sharia laws were established. The emergence of the Literature of the Islamic Revolution (*Adabiyat-e Engelab-e Farhangi*) restrained the literary works of pre-revolutionary committed writers and created a new episode in literary writing with application of distinct religious themes. The examination of the Islamic committed literature after the revolution indicates that the writers in this period endorsed their religion and also the state's policy within their works. Their view on the events of the revolution, the Iran-Iraq war and pre-revolutionary history is very spiritual. By applying these themes in their works, they advertise religiosity and they are also able to be closer to the divinity. The Islamic committed literature has also borrowed some of its themes such as fighting against the Western ideologies, justice, freedom and devotion from the pre-revolutionary committed literature. The Islamic writers called their community to loyalty, devotion and their faithfulness to religious ideologies, fighting against their opponents such as Iraq and the West. They inserted the religious themes such as Karbala and Ashura into their poems in illustrating the war between Iraq and Iran. For the Muslim poets, the Iran-Iraq war is the persistence of Imam Hossein's fight against the unfair leaders.

The veil became the symbol of the Islamic government's gender policy. Confused by these laws and the pressure from legalized male dominated restrictions, especially veiling, women were determined to concentrate on writing about women's issues. Women writers explicitly criticized the regime's course of action regarding women's issues. This began with protests and resistance to compulsory veiling, insisting on their rights, and continued with confronting the authorities in their writings, press and social activities. In addition, some elements helped the growth of women writers: The increase in the number of women with literacy, higher education and the growth in population. This also increased the number of audiences and readers who were well aware of the conditions of their own lives as well as their mothers and female friends. This resulted in the reprinting of the women's writings. In their writings, women broke the silence and made their voice to be heard. Although they had to observe the veiling rules within the streets and their public lives, they could unveil themselves in their writing. Thus women writers started their activities in feminist discourses. They unveiled sexual repressions and veiled the male dominated social structures existing within Iran. They started to deal with gender relations. These authors formed their own metaphorical language, themes, and symbols in very new ways to confront the patriarchal committed literature and increase their organized presence. Therefore, their writings controlled and created a clear and noticeable meaning in new and different ways by means of character, symbol, metaphor, irony, and many other literary devices.

Analysis of the poems reveals the new imagery, themes, genres, and structures according to the women's movement. The poems portray how women expressed sexual desire regarding notions of visibility and invisibility (veiling), how they modify the male mythologies from a female point of view, and how they build up spirituality and freedom through their writing. It also shows how they revised the traditional committed pre-revolutionary literary discourse to 'écriture feminine'. During the past three decades after the revolution, women poets experienced a shift in their discourse from traditional Islamic themes as mothers, wives,

guards of revolution, warriors, and martyrs to more feminine themes and the women poets express themselves as:

- a. A social issues critic
- b. An active voice
- c. A poet employing feminine and erotic language in her poetry without feeling shame
- d. A poet portraying her power in her poetry
- e. A poet who has courage to describe issues that were forbidden in the history for a woman.

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*From Community to Nation: The Ngee Ann Kongsi Schools and Chinese Education in Post-1945 Singapore*

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Abstract:

This paper examines the impacts of social movements through a multi-layered study of the Ngee Ann College from 1963 to 1968. By examining this historically important case, I seek to clarify the process by which, migrants transformed governmental policies and constrain these communities experienced when inducing changes in the area of Chinese education. The time period studied includes the emergence of a new political class, the contestation of power between the leading Chinese personalities and the outlaw of student movements, which underlined the future directions of education in the interventionist state. I will use two major research strategies: (1) a case study of Ngee Ann College, a tertiary institution operated by Ngee Ann Kongsi and its associated reports and (2) an analysis of oral interviews and news articles retrieved from the National Archives of Singapore (NAS) and other the main-stream media for this paper. Data have been collected from archives; newspapers and published scholarly work. This paper challenges the argument that the activities of migrants were inconsequential to the development of educational policies in modern Singapore. Being a young nation that only gained self-governance in 1959, colonial legacies, influential political parties, or the elite-class were often seen as the agents driving institutional change, but I propose that these groups often acted in response to the activities of the new migrants in their homeland.

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## Introduction

The British returned to Singapore on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1945. With their egos bruised and political legitimacy seriously in doubt, they were aware that their pre-war paternalistic style of governance was no longer going to work in the post-war environment. This was especially so for the Chinese, as they stayed back and vehemently fought against the Japanese. After the war, the largely transient nature of the Chinese population in the nineteenth century took a change, as it was becoming evident that the Chinese were here to stay in Singapore.<sup>1</sup> According to the British's census, population figures settled in the post-war years with Chinese dominating over seventy per-cent of the island's population. However, the stable racial composition discounted the continued trend of massive Chinese migration after war, chiefly based on the tenuous living condition in China due to the on-going War of Liberation, the influx of wives and families re-joining their husbands in Singapore, and arrival of Chinese from the Malay Peninsula due to the outbreak of the Malayan Emergency and recession in tin and rubber industries in the post-war environment.<sup>2</sup>

This paper recognizes that primacy was often given to the founding generation of political leaders such as People's Action Party's (PAP) leaders Lee Kuan Yew, Goh Keng Swee and Toh Chin Chye for leading Singapore out of their post-war turmoil shortly after they won the 1959 General Elections. Apart from the continuation of British policies, the PAP also revived the flagging economic of Singapore to re-establish its dominant position in Asia. However, this paper proposes that these individuals often acted in response to the activities of the migrants in their homeland and seeks to reinstate the Chinese leaders as the drivers of educational policies that left a lasting impact in post-1945 Singapore. Through an in-depth study of Ngee Ann College, this paper also hope to articulate a wider perspective that goes beyond the usual state versus clan association narrative to present the nuances within the Chinese community in order to present a clearer narrative of the events.

Ngee Ann College, a school funded by leading Teochew clan association Ngee Ann Kongsi was specially chosen for the purpose of this paper, as Teochew schools were largely understudied when compared to schools of Hokkien origins.<sup>3</sup> Despite the college's short period of independent existence (1963-1968), it was certainly no less important in the history of Singapore. Prominent Teochew businessman Seah Eu Chin founded Ngee Ann Kongsi in 1845. The formation of such an organization was due to the inner-divisiveness within the Chinese community, as they normally organized

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<sup>1</sup> Joyce Ee, "Chinese Migration to Singapore 1894-1941", *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 2, 1 (March 1988), p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Loh Kah Seng, "Black Areas: Urban Kampongs and Power Relations in Post-War Singapore Historiography", *SOJOURN: Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 22,1(2007). p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Hokkien schools were the focal point for study on Chinese education, as they were the largest and among the wealthiest dialect group in Singapore.

themselves along the dialect that they spoke.<sup>4</sup> To the new immigrants, such associations provided accommodation, jobs, burial grounds, mutual support and education.

### **A Never Realized Dream: The Case Study of Ngee Ann College**

Ngee Ann College was chosen as a case study for this discussion as it held a very special position in Chinese education of Singapore. Due to the many problems associated with *Nantah*, Ngee Ann College was envisioned in 1961 to become the next great Chinese university to serve the Chinese community in Southeast Asia.<sup>5</sup> With the outstanding reputation of Lien Ying Chow, Ngee Ann College took off very quickly and classes commenced within two years in 1963. However, its meteoric rise was similarly mirrored by its quick decline, when Ngee Ann Kongsì invited the state to take over its operations in 1966.<sup>6</sup> The college officially terminated its status as an institution ran by the Kongsì with the passing of Ngee Ann College Bill by Parliament in 1968. This episode ended with many unfulfilled dreams, as the technical institute never gained university status even till today. This case study would focus on its development from 1963 to 1968. During this essential five years of rapid change, the college developed from a privately owned degree-granting college into a public community college granting diplomas for technicians.

This case study would primarily be based on articles from *The Straits Times*, the Lucien Pye and Arthur Singer Report (Pye and Singer Report) published in 1964, Thong Saw Pak Report (Thong Report) published in 1966 and the Ngee Ann Polytechnic commemorative magazine entitled *The Ngee Ann Story; The First 25 Years: 1963-1988* published in 1988.

### **Background to the Formation of Ngee Ann College in 1963**

Tertiary education was urgently needed for the Chinese in Singapore after World War II. Due to British's fear of Communist subversion, the Legislative Council initiated an Emergency Travel Restriction, followed by the Immigration/Passport Bill in 1950 to curb the outward flow of students to China and banned those that left from returning.<sup>7</sup> Graduates of Chinese schools in Singapore such as Chinese High School in Singapore were left stranded with no alternatives to further their education. They were also unable to gain enrolment into the neighbouring University of Malaya, as the primary language of instruction was English. It was such circumstances that prompted prominent Chinese businessmen such as Tan Lark Sye and Lien Ying Chow to

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> The Ngee Ann Story: The First 25 Years 1963-1988, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> The Straits Times (ST) - 27 October 1966

<sup>7</sup> Lucien Pye and Arthur Singer, *Higher Education and Politics in Singapore*. (Massachusetts: Eastern Press, Ltd: 1965), p. 323.

spearhead the fund raising drive to build Nanyang University (*Nantah*).<sup>8</sup> After a five million dollars donation from leading Hokkien businessman Tan Lark Sye and strong support from the community, *Nantah* was eventually founded in 1956.

However, the lofty aspirations of these businessmen to provide high standard tertiary education were hit by many problems since its inception. Three main allegations that dogged the formative years of *Nantah* were its acceptance policy, graduation requirements, and left-wing ideology infiltration.<sup>9</sup> It was often argued that *Nantah* had a fluid acceptance policy, where all students that completed a pre-university programme were granted a place regardless of academic performance. *Nantah's* fluid acceptance policy was also due to Tan Lark Sye's vision of mass education provision, where all Chinese were given an opportunity to pursue higher education. The second allegation the school received was the low quality of graduates it produced as all students were awarded a degree upon completing the four years degree programme. The low quality graduates *Nantah* produced also resulted in their poor employability, which was widely covered in the Chinese media. The third allegation *Nantah* received was its reputation as Tan Lark Sye's tool for the propagation of communism. Being a Chinese University spearheaded by Chinese for Chinese, it's *de facto* control fell under prominent Chinese leader and rubber magnate Tan Lark Sye due to the enormous donation he have made. Instead of using his wealth to propagate his ideology of education provision, Tan chose to use his influence to manipulate the operations of the school. One notable example would be the appointment of Chuang Chu Lin, the ex-principal of Chung Cheng High School as the Vice-Chancellor of *Nantah*. The appointment of Chuang was a contentious one, as Tan recruited Chuang shortly after his released from the prison for communist related activities.<sup>10</sup> Tan's antics of openly defying the incumbent People's Action Party (PAP) also intensified the already-tensed state-university relationship.<sup>11</sup>

Tan Lark Sye's openly confrontational style against the government infuriated another founder of *Nahtah*, prominent Teochew businessman Lien Ying Chow. Lien, a bilingual and liberal businessman, was against Tan's antics of antagonizing the state.<sup>12</sup> Realizing that *Nantah* was not fulfilling the university dream he envisioned, Lien together with a few others walked out of *Nantah*. Professor Liu Yin Soon, the Head of Education of *Nantah* was other high profile figure that left *Nantah* with Lien. However Lien's involvement in Chinese tertiary education did not end after his exit. His zeal for education led him to continue seeking higher educational opportunities for the Chinese students.

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<sup>8</sup> Ngee Ann Story, p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Ngee Ann Story, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, p. 332.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ngee Ann Story, p. 18.

A well-known opportunist, Lien saw his Presidency of Ngee Ann Kongsi as the perfect opportunity to push for the setting up of a new tertiary educational institute.<sup>13</sup> Using his authority as President, Lien formed a committee in 1961 with Dr Tien Gi Ling and Professor Liu Yin Soon to study the possibility of starting a college under the auspices of Ngee Ann Kongsi.<sup>14</sup> Later that year, the three-man team officially submitted the proposal to the Ministry of Education (MOE) of Singapore. In 1962, Singapore's Education Minister Yong Nyuk Lin gave Lien his word of approval, praising the Kongsi's effort in providing mass education for the people of Singapore.<sup>15</sup> Shortly after Education Minister Yong gave his approval, Lien formed the eleven-men Board of Governors with himself as the Chairman in May 1962. Chairman Lien and Founding Principal Professor Liu Yin Soon officially inaugurated Ngee Ann College on 25 May 1963.

### **The Formative Years and the Pye and Singer Report of 1964**

After Ngee Ann College was inaugurated, students were being recruited to the seven courses it offered, which included degrees in accountancy, business administration, applied chemistry, domestic sciences and tele-communications, reflecting the college's focus on technical and commerce.<sup>16</sup> As its establishment coincided with the Singapore's merger with Malaya, Ngee Ann also offered degree programmes in Malay language to help foster a closer Malayan identity.<sup>17</sup> Candidature was also extended to students beyond Singapore, such as those from Malaysia other regional countries. The courses were offered in both full time and part time format. Due to its flexibility, enrolment rate was very high. By 1964, 688 students were already studying in the college.<sup>18</sup>

After the highly successful and over-subscribed intake in 1963, the College's Board of Governors initiated a two-phase expansion plan for the college in 1964. For the first phase, a new College of Technology will be built on the Kongsi's 100-acre land between Clementi Road and Bukit Timah Road.<sup>19</sup> The second phase of development would see further developments on the land, with a College of Commerce, College of Arts and other facilities like a library and communal hostels being built.

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<sup>13</sup> Lien was described as an opportunist by his wife Margaret Lien in his biography Lien Ying Chow and Kraar Louis. *From Chinese villager to Singapore Tycoon: my life story* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1992), p. 72.

<sup>14</sup> Ngee Ann Story, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> ST - 30 November 1963

<sup>17</sup> ST - 11 August 1962

<sup>18</sup> Ngee Ann Story, p. 25

<sup>19</sup> Ngee Ann Story, p. 27.

After hearing the development plans of Ngee Ann, Finance Minister Dr Goh Keng Swee recommended Lien Ying Chow to seek the opinions of two highly rated educationalists from the United States of America (USA).<sup>20</sup> Lien heeded the advice and invited Professor Lucien Pye, Head of Political Science Department of Massachusetts Institution of Technology (MIT) and Professor Arthur Singer, Executive Member of Carnegie Foundation to advise on the College's development plans. The Pye and Singer delegation arrived on 25 June and concluded their study on 8 July 1964. While in Singapore, the two professors interviewed government officials and academics from various local institutions extensively. Their findings were published two weeks later in a report entitled the "Higher Education and Politics in Singapore".

The principal recommendation the Pye and Singer delegation made was to recommend that Ngee Ann be restructured into a community college to provide technically inclined education.<sup>21</sup> They argued that this shift from a degree-granting college to a diploma-granting community college was needed in order for Ngee Ann to better position itself within Singapore's future development plans. In support of its recommendation, Pye and Singer cited two reasons, namely, the shortage of competent staff and the Chinese community's blind pursuit of irrelevant degrees. The shortage of competent staff was one of the strongest accusations Pye and Singer made in their report. According to them:

Ngee Ann College cannot become a great "Chinese University" because of the shortage of competent staff. Most of the staff has been recruited from outside of Singapore, the best trained among them having received master's degrees at the least eminent of American colleges and universities.<sup>22</sup>

When later assessing Pye and Singer's argument in an interview with National Archives of Singapore, Lien Ying Chow remained silent on the issue of staff incompetence.<sup>23</sup> His silence is understandable as Ngee Ann's Principal "Professor" Liu Yin Soon did not have a doctorate degree, but only a master's degree from Columbia University in New York. The conferment of full professorship to candidates with only master's degrees was largely unacceptable in the Western academic world, especially to the two highly qualified professors, who clearly saw this as a sign that Ngee Ann lacked competent staff.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Lien Ying Chow and Kraar Louis. *From Chinese villager to Singapore Tycoon: my life story* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1992), p. 34.

<sup>21</sup> Pye and Singer, *Higher Education*, p. 323.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 334.

<sup>23</sup> Oral History Centre, National Archives Singapore Lien Ying Chow – 000057 / Reel 28 of 30

<sup>24</sup> Pye and Singer, *Higher Education*, p. 334.

However, Pye and Singer's allegations did not go unchallenged. In a parliamentary session held on 24 May 1967, Mr Ang Nam Piau, Member of Parliament representing the Thomson constituency countered their findings. In his justification, he mentioned that:

I would like to more or less enumerate the qualifications and experiences of the teachers of Ngee Ann College. Dr Wen got his doctorate from Germany and was the Dean of a well-known Taiwan University while Dr Lee got this doctorate from Paris and was a Professor teaching in a Taiwan University. Dr Shueng Su Loon obtained her PhD from Cornell University and Professor Kuan was from the Massachusetts College of Technology previously. From these enumerated facts regarding their qualifications and experiences, we know that the teachers of Ngee Ann College are not teachers without qualifications as alleged in the Pye and Singer Report.<sup>25</sup>

As seen, Ang's justifications suggest that the picture was more complex than that painted by Pye and Singer. Interestingly, Ngee Ann did not official refute the allegations made against the college at that time. Only in a 1988 commemorative magazine did Ngee Ann attempt an explanation. Regarding the shortage of qualified staff, it explained that:

Ngee Ann College had a problem of employing, primarily due to a shortage in qualified candidates. This was an effect of World War II as very few professors were trained. There was also an increasing demand from Taiwan and Hong Kong for such talents as they seek to rebuild their own tertiary educational system after the war. The scholars found were mostly trained in 1920s and early 1930s, which was too old. The wages offered in Hong Kong was also higher; therefore talented Chinese professors had almost no reasons to come to Singapore.<sup>26</sup>

While Pye and Singer's allegations may have had some validity, they must be understood in light of the difficulties that Ngee Ann faced post World War II, as well as the, competition from Taiwan and Hong Kong and the lower salary offered in Singapore.<sup>27</sup>

The second allegation, made by Pye and Singer for rejecting Lien's vision of Ngee Ann as a university, was the irrelevance of Chinese degrees issued by the College. It consisted of two main components, the first being Pye and Singer's viewpoint that Chinese were pursuing academic degrees blindly, disregarding the practicality of the

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<sup>25</sup> Singapore Parliament, Parliamentary debates. (Singapore, Government Printer: 1967), p. 1472.

<sup>26</sup> Ngee Ann Story, p. 26.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

degree conferred, and second being the incompatibility of a Chinese medium degree in Singapore's economy.

According to Pye and Singer, adherence to tradition was the main reason for blind pursuit of degrees by the Chinese.<sup>28</sup> As seen by them, the Chinese community associated education with high status and did not care about the actual quality or practicality, which was why many resisted the downgrade of Ngee Ann from a degree-granting college to a diploma-granting community college. They also felt that such Chinese traditions should be divorced from educational provision, and a technical education model should be pursued in support of Singapore's rapidly industrialising economy. Pye and Singer's call for a technical education was also largely in tune with the Chan Chieu Kiat Commission of Inquiry into Vocational and Technical Education (Chan's Inquiry) published by the Ministry of Education in 1961. In Chan's Inquiry, the study team mentioned that:

Demand for craftsmen and technicians were to increase in the coming years as Singapore pursued industrialization, therefore opportunities in the area of technical education should be encouraged...Singapore has practically no natural resources and it is obvious that her human resources must be harnessed to the fullest potential. To achieve this end, vocational and technical education should indeed play an important role.<sup>29</sup>

Chan's Inquiry also recommended Singapore Polytechnic, a diploma-issuing institute, to be expanded to support the increasing need of technical education.<sup>30</sup> It could be observed that the technical education model Chan's inquiry championed was largely similar to the Pye and Singer's recommendation of Ngee Ann as a diploma-granting college, both anchoring their arguments with the industrializing need of Singapore's economy. However, a closer look at Ngee Ann's initial development plans would debunk Pye and Singer's argument that Chinese were pursuing their degrees blindly. In fact, the College was pursuing a system dominated by engineering and technology-based courses in support of the Chan's inquiry.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the 1964 expansion plan that brought Pye and Singer to Singapore was a mega plan to develop Ngee Ann's College of Technology, a technical area of study that followed closely the Chan's inquiry directions.

In response to Pye and Singer's allegation that a Chinese degree was irrelevant to the economy, it should be clarified that it was not the medium itself that rendered the Ngee Ann degrees irrelevant, but the free market recommended by Dr Albert

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<sup>28</sup> Pye and Singer, *Higher Education*, p. 328.

<sup>29</sup> Report of the *Chan Chieu Kiat Commission of Inquiry into Vocational and Technical Education* (Singapore: Government Printer, 1961), p. 61.

<sup>30</sup> ST - 30 November 1963

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

Winsemius, the economic advisor of Singapore that rendered the Chinese degree irrelevant.

Initially Singapore was pursuing an Import substitution economy, which was an important strategy adopted by the British administration. Once the PAP took over in 1959, they engaged Dr Winsemius, a Dutch economist from United Nations to help planned Singapore's economy. His recommendation was subsequently released in 1961, which advised the government to pursue an Export Oriented Model economy that courted for Foreign Direct Investment. With such a strategy in place, bilingualism and specifically the understanding of English was thrust to the forefront of one's job prospects. A component that an Ngee Ann College's graduate was severely lacking, rendering their Chinese degrees irrelevant.

Apart from the state's industrialization plans, its employment policy and the strict adherence to English as the official working language were the other reasons that deprived Chinese-degree graduates of a job. The marginalization of Ngee Ann graduates was highly evident. As mentioned by Education Minister Ong Pang Boon in 1964, even for those who were admitted to civil service, their Chinese degree would not be viewed as equal to their counterparts from the University of Singapore, and they would need to attend retraining courses in the latter institute.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Chinese-language degree graduates were denied positions as Chinese language teachers in national schools even up till 1979. The inflexibility and the strong view that Ngee Ann's degrees were inferior to those from University of Singapore was one of the reasons that rendered Ngee Ann's degrees irrelevant, and not Chinese tradition.

It was reported that Lien Ying Chow agreed with the recommendations of the professors, and decided to take a slower path towards their university plan after understanding the other considerations purported by Pye and Singer.<sup>33</sup> Before Pye and Singer left Singapore, they offered to help the Board of Directors secure a USD\$3million donation, but Ngee Ann Kongs's conservative faction ultimately blocked the donation.<sup>34</sup> The conservative faction led by Tan Siak Kew would then launch a public denouncement campaign against Lien, which saw the dreams of Ngee Ann being a university crushed in totality.

### **The Denouncement of Tan Siak Kew and the Thong Report of 1966**

In 1965, Lien fulfilled his third term as President of Ngee Ann Kongs and handed over leadership to conservative businessman Tan Siak Kew. Lien's stepping down also saw his brainchild of developing Ngee Ann into a university derailed henceforth.

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<sup>32</sup> Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, p. 333.

<sup>33</sup> Oral History Centre, National Archives Singapore Lien Ying Chow – 000057 / Reel 28 of 30

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Upon securing power, Tan started a series of inquiries into Lien's tenure as President. Tan uncovered many discrepancies amongst the promises Lien made, and commented on them.<sup>35</sup> Tan's inquiry also led to the construction of the College of Technology being stopped due to a shortage of funds.<sup>36</sup> After the open denouncement by Tan, Lien also stepped down as a Director of Ngee Ann, which also prompted a mass exodus of other seven members, leaving half the Board of Directors vacant.<sup>37</sup> In an article published on 4 June 1965 on *The Straits Times*, Tan called the action of mass quitting a "drama" put up by Lien to play up his importance. In the same article, Tan claimed that Lien painted a false picture about the financial capability of the Kongsì. Tan claimed that Lien undertook the building of the technological building on his own, as Kongsì did not approve the payment for construction. He accused Lien of acting "*Ultra Vires*", beyond the power that he was assigned. According to Tan, the college needed to be incorporated as an independent organization with sufficient funds on its own before such a plan could proceed. Tan also claimed that Lien lied about the amount of income Teochew Building brought annually, as the accounts show that from 1962-1964, Teochew Building brought in a sum that ranged from \$264,000 to \$358,000 a year, much lesser than the \$500,000 that Lien claimed. Tan Siak Kew felt that the Kongsì had no capability to fund Ngee Ann College with its financial status. Being a conservative businessman, Tan was unable to understand the rationale behind the potentially debt-incurring venture.

Despite the raging allegations against him, Lien only made one public announcement on *The Straits Times* on 8 June 1965 to refute the charges, stating that he had a valid SGD\$40million valuation certificate of Kongsì's Orchard Road land.<sup>38</sup> Lien did not explain the difference in profits pointed out by Tan, but mentioned that the land itself was able to finance the operations of the college, and future university. However, Lien did speak about the reservations he had against Tan Siak Kew, as the latter never took an interest in Kongsì matters until the Clementi plot of land came into question. Lien would subsequently be appointed as High Commissioner of Singapore to Malaysia in 1966, effectively ending any involvement in Ngee Ann. The next occasion when Lien openly addressed the issue was during an oral interview with National Archives of Singapore in 1988, when Lien explained why Tan had allegedly defamed him:

I think that those that were against me were conservative committee members. I felt they were quite jealous of my achievements as they themselves they didn't like to do something.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> ST - 4 June 1965

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> ST - 8 June 1965

<sup>39</sup> Oral History Centre, National Archives Singapore Lien Ying Chow – 000057 / Reel 28 of 30

Lien attributed Tan's allegations to jealousy, and was unwilling to make any further comments. His unwillingness to share about this incident can also be seen in that Tan's denouncement was not featured in Lien's biography *From Chinese Villager to Singapore Tycoon: My Life Story*.

The students of Ngee Ann were not silent as the public fiasco unfolded in the media. After hearing the news on the building of College of Technology being suspended, they demanded an explanation and an immediate restoration from Tan. However, due to Tan's unsatisfactory reply, the students held a mass protest on 4 June 1965 at the College auditorium. Despite the protest, the non-committal attitude of the new Ngee Ann Kongs Management Council persisted. Fearing the termination of the university plan, the students began a two days school-wide boycott.<sup>40</sup> The collective power of the students became an important sphere of influence and remained so throughout the entire affair. Matters started getting out of hand as banners were hung on the walls of the school, urging the school to resume building the College of Technology.<sup>41</sup> An emergency meeting was held by the Kongs Management Council on 8<sup>th</sup> June, in their attempt to resolve the student's grievances.<sup>42</sup> In their bid to restore peace in Ngee Ann, the Management Council informed the students that building would resume very quickly and asked for prompt dismissal of the boycott. The Student Union found the Kongs Management Council's reply acceptable, as they celebrated their victories against the Kongs.<sup>43</sup> Classes were continued while school compounds were cleaned up for the student's usage. However, the peace was only temporary the Kongs later reversed this promise. The students then reconvened on the 24 June and proposed an even larger boycott starting from 30 June.<sup>44</sup> Fearing the outcome of the boycott, the Kongs Management Committee met through an emergency meeting again on 1<sup>st</sup> July. Following the meeting, a statement was released to pacify the students, assuring them that project was being resumed. It was during the 1<sup>st</sup> July emergency meeting that prompted the Management Committee to set up another independent inquiry to study the future of the college.

In view of the increasingly complicated situation between Tan, Lien and the students of the College, Ngee Ann Kongs sanctioned a second review team to assess the future of the college. In February 1966, Professor Thong Saw Pak, the Head of Physics Department in University of Malaya was invited as the Head of the new review team. The team also included Professor Weng Hsi Chiao of Ngee Ann College, Mr Lim Chew Swee of Singapore Institute of Management, Dr Lau Yu Dong of Singapore Polytechnic and Dr TG Ling of Zuelig (Gold Coin Mills) Limited, Singapore to ensure a balanced perspective.<sup>45</sup> After a six-month review, the team

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<sup>40</sup> Ngee Ann Story, p. 29.

<sup>41</sup> ST - 6 June 1965

<sup>42</sup> ST - 8 June 1965

<sup>43</sup> ST - 9 June 1965

<sup>44</sup> Ngee Ann Story, p. 30.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

made an internal release of the Thong Saw Pak Report (Thong Report) on August 1966. The Report made three major recommendations:

1. "In organization aspect, Ngee Ann College should be changed into a public institution to train commercial and industrial technicians. The College should be managed by a council comprising the Principal, three representative from Ngee Ann Kongsi, three appointed members by the Minister of Education, one member appointed from the Economic Development Board (EDB), three representative from the commerce, three from industry and two from senate.
2. In the curriculum aspect, courses of instruction to train technicians should be offered first. Gradually, the experience gained could be used to revise some of the technician courses to professional or even degree level.
3. Ngee Ann Kongsi should make long-term grants to the college and the name "Ngee Ann" should perpetually be maintained.
4. The college should not restrict itself to Chinese as the only medium of instruction.<sup>46</sup>

In the report, Professor Thong mentioned that Ngee Ann College should be converted into a public community college specializing in technological education to satisfy the need of a large pool of technical specialists for Singapore's industrialization. The study of commerce and arts-based subjects were deemed unsuitable and was backed up by similar claims of having a shortage of suitable professors as per the Pye and Singer Report.<sup>47</sup> In line with Singapore new focus on multiracialism following her separation on 9 August 1965, the Thong Report also called for the reduced usage of Chinese as medium of instruction and the increased usage of English. An important point to note was the Report's non-committal attitude towards offering degree courses, even though it still kept open such possibility.

When released to the public on 7 October 1966, the Report created an uproar among the students. On 11 October 1966, Ngee Ann students openly rejected the Report, which they felt that sought to eradicate Chinese as a medium of instruction in Singapore, a move highly unacceptable.<sup>48</sup> The entire school boycotted the mid-year examinations on 17 October 1966. On 20 October, the infuriated students charged up to the MOE asking to see the Education Minister.<sup>49</sup> When the Minister refused, the students did not leave but instead staged a six-hour sit-in. On 4 November, to protest against the declining usage of Chinese language, 1000 students staged a demonstration at City Hall.<sup>50</sup> Students were also photographed holding banners with text such as "抗议行动党政府垄断义安" (Protest against the PAP monopolization of

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Pye and Singer, *Higher Education*, p. 334.

<sup>48</sup> ST - 18 October 1966

<sup>49</sup> ST - 21 October 1966

<sup>50</sup> ST - 5 November 1966

Ngee Ann College).<sup>51</sup> The subversive nature of such banners and the anti-state rhetoric fueled even more anxiety between the protesters and the police. The protest march eventually ended as a riot, with eight policemen, three civilians and innumerable students injured. Rioting students were treated harshly and beaten up by police using their batons even though they were unarmed. Such harsh treatment incited even more displeasure among the students.

In view of the widespread unhappiness generated by his report, Professor Thong granted an interview with *The Straits Times* on 6 November 1966. To ease the crowd, Professor Thong specifically highlighted the fact that Ngee Ann College would still be looking at options to upgrade itself to a university when the suitable time came. He also stressed that the need for an additional university had to be pegged to the requirements of the Singapore economy. He felt that those who wanted to study in Chinese stream should apply for *Nantah* instead and they have enough opening to absorb any aspiring students.<sup>52</sup>

The drama finally ended on 19 November 1966, when the police stormed the Ngee Ann College campus on Tank Road. The students that continued their sit-in were flushed out of the compound. In total, 131 students were arrested, with 81 being expelled permanently.<sup>53</sup>

The Management Committee of Ngee Ann Kongsì reconvened on 18 February 1967 to decide on the fate of Ngee Ann College. After a closed door meeting, it was announced that the Thong Report was cleared unanimously. Ngee Ann Kongsì also requested MOE to put the Ngee Ann College Act before the Parliament. The Ngee Ann College Act was passed on 7 September 1967, making the college a nationalized institution. The renaming exercise on 22 August 1968 also announced the new name of the autonomous as Ngee Ann Technical College, reflecting its technical inclination. From spearheading the Ngee Ann College project, Ngee Ann Kongsì took a step back subsequently and playing the role of a financier, donating three quarters of its profit to the school annually.

## Conclusion

Through the case of Ngee Ann College, we saw how leading migrants leaders were able to consolidate power due to their dominance in their respective fields, which allowed them to gain control of educational institution such as the case of Tan Lark Sye and *Nantah*. Being the leader of the Teochew migrant association, Lien Ying Chow was able to start an educational institution to serve the larger Chinese community in Singapore, independent from support and assistance from the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> ST - 6 November 1966

<sup>53</sup> ST - 20 November 1966

government and dominating political parties. In fact, as observed by Singapore's economic policy of Export-Oriented Industrialization, dependence on Foreign Direct Investments and the constant student activism in relations to communism-related activities, such institution was often not desirable or aligned to the larger national narrative that the state government were pursuing. In pursuance of their vision of the "great Chinese university", Ngee Ann College also met various resistances from government agencies, such as the overt mention of a preference for technical-based education from the state in rejection of a comprehensive institution such as the model Ngee Ann pursued.

This case study also sufficiently espoused how the migrants and state divide was perhaps not sufficient in this scenario, as there were also other stakeholders in the equation, underneath the seemingly all encompassing state-clan association divide. On this end, it could be observed by understanding the personal feud between Tan Siak Kew and Lien Ying Chow. Their rivalry extended into the management of the school, which eventually expedited the handing over process. The students' involvement could also be seen as the catalyst of the decline, as their anti-state and anti-community-college rhetoric reaffirmed the government's desire to suppress the problematic college, even at the expense of using high-handed measures such as violence. Ngee Ann was officially taken over by 1968, triggered by Lien and Tan's rivalry, constant relations with communism and student activism. However its quick decline did not diminished its role in the history of Singapore, as Ngee Ann College subsequently led the realm of tertiary education as a leading polytechnic in Singapore, with graduates constantly topping the Polytechnic Employment Graduate Survey (PEGS) published in the past three years of Singapore.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Joint-Polytechnic GES Committee, *Polytechnic Graduate Employment Survey 2011*. <[www.polyges.sg](http://www.polyges.sg)>.

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The logo for the International Association of Asian Studies (iafor) is centered on the page. It consists of the lowercase letters 'iafor' in a light blue, serif font. The text is enclosed within a circular frame composed of two concentric, slightly irregular arcs. The outer arc is a light red color, and the inner arc is a light blue color, matching the text.

*Domestic Credit Rating Agencies in Malaysia: A View from Bond Market Participants*

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Abstract:

Credit rating agencies play a vital role as informational intermediaries, specializing in the appraisal of the creditworthiness of corporations that issue debt, and thus facilitating efficient financial market operation. However, despite (or perhaps given) their importance, credit rating agencies are often criticized due to 'stickiness'- a failure to adequately forewarn investors regarding changes to credit risks. A major theme related to this criticism is the lack of accountability of credit rating agencies to market participants. There are no legal mechanisms to mandate the quality of rating agencies' evaluations - the informational value of a financial rating assignment depends entirely on the agencies' incentives to build and maintain a good reputation in the financial community. To keep this good reputation it is crucial for domestic credit rating agencies to maintain their credibility and reliability in the eyes of investors and other market participants. The growing importance in the role that credit rating agencies play in the functioning of the bond markets in Malaysia suggests that providing these agencies with insights into various stakeholders' perceptions of their ratings' quality is worthwhile. Thus, in this paper we investigate issuers' and other bond market participants' perceptions regarding credit ratings in Malaysia. Regulatory bodies will find this paper relevant, as its findings may inform the regulatory framework governing the operation of domestic credit rating agencies in Malaysia.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Credit rating agencies provide independent evaluations of the probability of default on bond issues, providing information to debt-market participants beyond publicly-available sources. Credit rating agencies' activities may contribute to capital market efficiency by reducing information asymmetries between issuers and investors. Nevertheless, a criticism of credit rating agencies is a lack of timeliness in their rating decisions and actions (e.g., their failure to report bond issuers' severe financial problems during the 1997/1998 Asian Financial crisis). Even ignoring regulations requiring that bonds and *sukuk* (Islamic debt) issues be rated, the growth in Malaysian companies' appetite for these financial instruments means that independent, third-party opinions will increasingly assist investors in their investment decisions. Although not as sophisticated as their global counterparts, Malaysian investors already rely on credit rating agencies' assessments of companies issuing bonds. However, there is no mechanism to protect investors and/or borrowers from mistakes made, or any abuse of power, by credit rating agencies. Thus, it is likely to be useful for credit rating agencies to be provided with a clear overview of stakeholders' perceptions of their ratings' quality. Additionally, Malaysia has continued with strenuous efforts to promote financial cooperation, with a focus on developing its bond market following the Asian financial crisis. Further bond market development requires that investors be provided with an objective and impartial opinion on the quality of debt issues. So, it is crucial that domestic credit rating agencies maintain their credibility and reliability in the eyes of investors and other market participants.

This paper describes perceptions of bond market participants regarding credit rating agencies in Malaysia collected through a survey questionnaire. The paper is organized as follows: (i) role of domestic credit rating agencies, (ii) literature review, (iii) research method, (iv) result analysis and discussion, and (iv) conclusion.

## 2.1 Role of domestic credit rating for the development of bond market in Malaysia

Following the experience of the Asian financial crisis in 1997/98 Malaysia has continued with strenuous efforts to promote financial cooperation, with a focus on developing its bond market. In the 1990s, and prior to the crisis, Malaysia had experienced large-scale capital inflows of about 10 per cent of GDP (BNM 1999). As the Malaysian bond market lacked sufficient depth and liquidity to become a major mobiliser of savings and to intermediate of funding needs, most intermediation occurred through the banking system. Major companies also borrowed heavily from abroad, with a large fraction of Malaysia's borrowing from foreign banks being intermediated by the domestic banking system. In mid 1997, the ratio of intermediation handled by domestic banks was 77 per cent. This foreign debt accumulation was in the form of bank-related short-term, unhedged, foreign-currency denominated liabilities (Corsetti, Pesenti & Roubini 1999). In principle firms could borrow from a syndicate of banks which could securitise their loans, but securitisation was costly and difficult in the absence of a bond market. Banks therefore found it hard to diversify risk created by their acquisition of concentrated stakes in the large enterprises that were their leading customers. The development of other financial instruments was limited by the absence of bond markets on which to base forwards, futures and more exotic derivatives (Dalla et al. 1995).

The 1997 currency crisis has been diagnosed as resulting from short-term over-borrowing by the banking system. As a consequence the fragile banking system faced the twin problems of currency and maturity mismatches (Corsetti, Pesenti & Roubini 1999). Learning from the experience of the Asian financial crisis the government of Malaysia identified the importance of having an efficient corporate bond market. Having a robust domestic bond market is important for many more reasons. Well-functioning bond markets foster financial stability, improve

intermediation, limit the effects of volatility in the international economic and financial systems, and reduce inflationary funding. Robust bond markets also provide fundamental solutions to how to expand the resource base to strengthen the foundations of economic development, as well as to problems arising from increased capital flows to the country. However, further development of the Malaysian bond market requires that investors be provided with an objective and impartial opinion on the quality of debt issues, making it crucial that domestic credit rating agencies maintain their credibility and reliability in the eyes of investors and other market participants.

## 2.2 Literature review

Credit rating agencies are an independent third party that makes an assessment based on various sources of information, indicating the degree of certainty regarding punctual payment of principal and interest on rated debt instruments (Dale & Thomas 1991, p.2). The activities of credit rating agencies can contribute to the efficiency of capital markets by removing information asymmetries that exist between issuers and investors (BIS 2000). In addition, in economic terminology, ratings are demanded to solve the principal-agent problem—that is, the principal's problem of maximizing incentives for agents to perform well when it is hard to observe or directly control their actions (González et al. 2004). Under Basel II (and III), credit rating agencies will play an even more central role. The Basel II capital adequacy requirement has allowed regulatory authorities to utilize credit ratings in the case that banks have no internal risk models. Banks have used these ratings without seriously considering the appropriateness of the rating methods (Shirai 2009).

Despite their importance, the inability of credit rating agencies to assign ratings correctly and in a timely fashion has led users to question their contribution to market efficiency. A major criticism often raised is 'stickiness' - that is, the slow adjustment of ratings to changes in credit risks. Credit rating agencies got emerging markets 'wrong' with the Asian financial crisis (Ferri, Liu & Stiglitz 1999; Sy 2004), where they were accused of not signaling the problems in Asia early enough, and then of making things worse by downgrading excessively (Radelet & Sachs 1998; Sinclair 2003; Nada 2006). The behavior of credit rating agencies accelerated capital inflows after the Asian crisis emerged (Adams, Mathieson & Schinasi 1999; Kräussl 2005). As such, the BIS (1998), IMF (1998) and The World Bank (1998) raised questions about the credit rating process, particularly about the usefulness of country ratings given the large adjustment to sovereign ratings for many emerging market economies. Some empirical studies document that corporate bonds yield spreads start to expand as credit quality deteriorates and before a rating downgrade. This implies that the market often leads a downgrade and brings into question the informational value of credit ratings (for example see Ferri, Liu & Stiglitz 1999; Amato & Furfine 2004; Sy 2004).

Many domestic credit ratings agencies in Asia were roundly criticized by investors at the time of the 1997/1998 Asian financial crisis because the default rate for highly-rated companies was higher than that for lowly-rated companies (Todhanakasem 2001). Even though domestic credit rating agencies in Asia have a better understanding of and insights into local companies, and access to a wider variety of industry and market information, it does not mean that such agencies are capitalizing on this advantage. They perform poorly in being timely with rating actions (Park & Rhee 2006). Thus there is significant room for forward-looking analysis that leads market sentiment (Imai 2004).

Credit rating agencies function as reputational intermediaries, so stakeholder views are very important with respect to credibility, as gatekeeper quality is difficult to observe directly (Francis 2004; Watkins, Hillison & Morecroft 2004), is subject to a range of definitions, and most reflect

some degree of market perceptions (see also Zeff 2007; Maroney, McGarry & Ó hÓgartaigh 2008). In addition, Blume, Lim and Mackinlay (1998) highlight that gathering and interpreting data about the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of issuers and investors provide further information about market participants. In the same spirit, Sahamid (2002) emphasizes that, even more than accountants and lawyers, rating agencies must trade in their reputations. If bond investors lose faith in the integrity of rating agencies' judgments, they will no longer pay attention to their ratings. If agencies' opinions cease to affect the price that borrowers pay for capital, companies and governments will not pay their fees. So market forces should make rating agencies careful of their good names.

### 3.1 Research Method

This paper records various bond market participants' perceptions regarding Malaysia's credit rating agencies. This research relies on primary data collected through a questionnaire issued to market participants. This method of data collection has proved to be very useful in obtaining the perceptions of people's or respondents' beliefs, attitudes, opinions, behaviours, expectations, self-classifications and knowledge, etc. (Gummesson 1991; Neuman 2004). Furthermore, survey questionnaires are useful in describing the characteristics of a large population, are sometimes regarded as a fairly simple research strategy (Kelley et al. 2003), and useful in overcoming geographical barriers (Sekaran 2000).

#### 3.1.1 Survey instrument development

The survey questionnaire in this study was based on a previous study regarding the perceptions of issuers, investors and a range of parties (i.e., other interested parties) who use ratings for many reasons concerning international or major credit rating agencies. In addition, a comprehensive literature survey to identify pertinent issues relating to credit rating agencies was undertaken for the purpose of developing the survey questionnaire. The criteria used to capture the perceptions of bond market participants are summarized in Table 1.

In attempting to document the perceptions of bond market participants regarding domestic credit rating agencies in Malaysia, questions concerning the identified criteria are grouped into five main sections. These sections encompassed: (i) accuracy, (ii) timeliness, (iii) transparency, (iv) Malaysian credit rating agencies' rating quality, and (v) participants' backgrounds. In order to measure respondents' perceptions of credit rating in Malaysia, this questionnaire uses the 5-point Likert scale, following Krosnick and Fabrigar (1997), who suggested the optimal length of a rating scale is 5 to 7 points. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with accuracy, timeliness, transparency and rating quality based on a Likert scale of 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree or disagree, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree. A nominal scale is used for the survey section on participants' general backgrounds.

Table 1 Criteria and supporting literature concerning the perceptions of credit rating agencies' performance

Criteria use to capture the perception on credit ratings from rating users	Supporting literature and previous survey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Accuracy</b> The issue of accuracy revolving around whether credit rating agencies measure what they are supposed to measure – accurately reflect the rated entities' creditworthiness, provide a current and accurate picture of both relative and absolute risks of corporate bonds</li> </ul>	Ellis (1998), Baker & Sattar (2002), AFP (2002), AFP (2004) and Duff & Einig (2009b), Financial Economist Roundtable (2008)

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defaults.

- **Timeliness**

The issues revolving around whether credit ratings are maintained on a timely basis reflecting changes in a firm's credit and economic condition. Whether credit rating agencies respond quickly enough and adequately warn rating users of the impending failure of rated entities or changes in a borrower's credit risks and changes in economic conditions.

Ellis (1998), Baker & Sattar (2002), AFP (2002), AFP (2004) and Duff & Einig (2009b), Duff & Einig (2009a)

- **Transparency**

To assess the ability of credit rating agencies to disclose the rationale for rating decisions and rating methodologies and ultimately provide an understanding of the rating process and decision rules employed by individual credit rating agencies.

Duff & Einig (2009b) and Duff & Einig (2009a), IOSCO (2003)

- **Rating quality**

To assess whether credit rating agencies are competent and independent in their rating process.

AFP (2004), Duff & Einig (2009a) and IOSCO (2003)

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### 3.1.2 Reliability and validity of instrument

Reliability and validity are central issues in all types of measurement. Validity refers to the extent to which research measures what it purports to measure. Reliability refers to consistency, the extent to which a questionnaire, test, observation or any measurement procedure produces the same results via repeated trials (Collingridge & Gantt 2008, p.390). To assess the validity of questionnaire, this instrument was referred to three experts in Malaysia who provided valuable comments based on their experience in Malaysia's bond markets. They are: (i) two academics from Malaysia's public university, and (ii) the Chief Executive Officer of an agency working in the bond market. A pilot test was conducted as a case study protocol to determine the reliability of the questionnaire and consistency of interpretation of questions. Final drafts of the questionnaires were then tested and sent to 30 heads of finance departments in investment banks and insurance companies and were also circulated among 15 finance and banking academics in Malaysia's public university. In order to pilot test these questionnaires, the respondents were requested to answer the questionnaire and provide feedback on the appropriateness of the questions. However, only 12 respondents replied and based on the pilot test, no amendments were made to the wording, appropriateness of the questions and structure of the questionnaires.

### 3.2 Postal method of data collection

This study uses the postal self-administered survey, instead of an internet survey, despite the fact that e-mail surveys have demonstrated their superiority over postal surveys in terms of response speed and cost (Kaplowitz, Hadlock & Levine 2004). The cost savings are derived primarily from the reduction and/or elimination of paper and mailing costs in an e-mail survey (Sheehan & Hoy

1999). Given the positive benefits of e-mail surveys, however, it is important to not overlook one important element—the response rate. Analyses of studies that have used both mail and e-mail for surveys have concluded that e-mail has not consistently outperformed postal mail. Some e-mail surveys did better than mail surveys when it came to response rates, some did worse, and some were statistically in a ‘dead heat’ (Oppermann 1995; Bachmann, Elfrink & Vazzana 1996; Schaefer & Don 1998; Bachmann, Elfrink & Vazzana 1999). According to Dillman (1991), non-random sampling, technological problems with delivery, inconsistencies with the medium of delivery, security issues, problems with internet junk mail, and other factors converge to make web-based surveys a problematic delivery method even for selected populations that use the internet every day. In their survey, Mui et al. (2002) found that that problems such as slowness in connection/retrieval of information, frequent disconnection and lack of security will be a barrier to those wanting to use the internet for the construction industry in Malaysia. This problem could be attributed to the inadequate infrastructure of the Internet Service Provider (ISP). Since internet speed in Malaysia is generally slow, this influenced the decision to utilize postal mail questionnaires.

### **3.3 Population and sampling procedure for the study**

The bond market participants in Malaysia consist of commercial banks, finance companies, merchant banks and discount houses—as well as unit trusts, provident and pension funds, and insurance companies. The names of these institutions were obtained from the Securities Commission, Malaysia and Bank Negara Malaysia since they need to be registered with this government institution. In addition to bond market participants, companies that were rated by domestic RAM and MARC and institutional investors were also included in this survey. While rated entities’ names were obtained from RAM and MARC’s websites respectively, the lists of investors were taken from Bond Info Hub’s website. All the lists above have been checked thoroughly in order to ensure that double documenting or dual recording of respondents based on the company that they represent has been avoided. This is due to some bond issuers rated by RAM or MARC, also being recorded on the Securities Commission’s website. The number of issuers rated by RAM and MARC takes into account the companies that practice dual rating. This thorough checking ensured that a respondent only received one questionnaire based on the company that they represent. Following this procedure in selecting respondents for this survey, a questionnaire was mailed to 563 respondents. In order to limit the scope of the study, following Duff and Einig (2009b) and Ellis (1998), the target population selected consisted of CEOs/finance managers/heads of finance departments and a range of parties who use ratings information such as bond dealers and bond specialists.

### **3.4 Response rate**

A questionnaire was mailed to 563 respondents and a reply-paid self-addressed envelope was included. The questionnaire was accompanied by a personalised explanatory covering letter describing the purpose of the study. Following Duff & Einig (2009b), two follow-ups (i.e., reminder letters) were sent to non-respondents after 14 days and 28 days (i.e., replacement). Finally, respondents were given the option of receiving a summary report of the results of the survey as an incentive to respond. After two follow-ups, a total of 124 respondents returned to the questionnaire; however, only 104 questionnaires were usable, resulting in a response of 18.5 per cent. Another 20 questionnaires were unusable because some these questionnaires were returned unopened, stamped on the envelope ‘addressee has moved’ or ‘ceased operation’, and some pages were missing from the questionnaires. Due to the low response rate, the researcher took the initiative to conduct follow-up calls and personal visits to respondents’ institutions to collect completed questionnaires.

Given the low response rate associated with mail surveys in Malaysia (Ismail, NA & Abidin 2008), this response rate was considered adequate. Indeed, this level of response rate is acceptable as the average response rate for postal surveys in Malaysia is around 16 per cent (Price Waterhouse Coopers 2002). As a matter of comparison concerning the response rate, a postal survey on the perceptions of professional investors regarding the use and usefulness of corporate quarterly reports of companies in Malaysia by Ismail, KNIK and Chandler (2005) also received a low response rate of 14 per cent. Stock broking firms, unit trust fund companies, fund management companies, investment advisory firms and large public fund organizations were targeted in their study. Although the response rate for this survey seem low, it is typical for the nature of this subject to result in a response rate ranging between 10 per cent and 30 per cent (Green, Tull & Albaum 1988).

#### **4.1 Result analysis and discussion**

The data collected were analysed using SPSS software. The data were then described with median and interquartile ranges (IQR) for each statement concerning the perceptions of bond market participants in Malaysia with reference to rating accuracy, timeliness, transparency and rating quality by domestic credit rating agencies. Since the Likert scale in the questionnaire in this survey represents categorical data, where there is logical ordering to the categories that can be termed as ordinal data, the recommended measure of central tendency is the median (Vaus 2002). The median represents the midpoint or the center of the scores. In calculating a median, scores are arranged in order of magnitude, and the middle number is the median. The interquartile range is a measure of spread or dispersion. It is the difference between the 75th percentile or the third quartile and the 25th percentile or first quartile. In addition to median and IQRs, the Chi-square test was used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the observed frequencies response provided by professional bodies, banking institutions, bond issuers and rating users.

In describing the characteristics and perceptions of participants, this study considered the title or position of respondents following AFP (2004), and the stakeholder group who use ratings information as suggested by Duff and Einig (2009b) and Ellis (1998), as vital for gathering the perceptions of respondents the accuracy, timeliness, transparency and rating quality of the agencies. These stakeholders are grouped as professional bodies, including bond agencies, banking institutions, bond issuers and institutional investors. It is worth noting that the choice of investors is a potential limitation. This study only focused on institutional investors, albeit that Baker and Sattar (2002) note that individual investors may be meaningful users of information provided by domestic credit rating agencies. The reason for omitting the perception of individual investors is that the investor base in the Malaysian bond market is mainly characterized by institutional investors (Kim, Fong & Fazlee Sulaiman 2007). Almost all bond issues are sold via private placement to major institutional investors such as Employees Provident Fund, insurance companies, asset management companies, and commercial banks. Furthermore, since it is working experience that Johns and Alan (2005) have identified as one of the factors that can influence perceptions, this study focuses on the working experience of respondents. In particular, this study is interested in capturing respondents' perceptions that have working experience in assessing credit quality of borrowers.

It is worth noting here that this survey does not aim to resolve the uncertainty over how rating agencies' reputations differ among market participants. Indeed, the survey is unable to address the issues of which agencies' ratings are perceived as being more accurate and timely, given that in Malaysia issuers only need to have their bonds rated by either MARC or RAM. This is unlike

many bond issuers in the U.S. who opt for a dual credit rating approach<sup>1</sup>, and approximately 13 to 17 per cent of U.S. corporate debt issues receive different letter ratings from Moody's and S&P (Jewell & Livingston 1999). In this regard, several studies have compared the ratings of major bond rating agencies and ascertained which agencies' ratings are perceived as being more accurate and timely (see Baker and Sattar (2002), Ederington (1986) and Ellis (1998)). Given that the Malaysian bond market is still developing and there are limited issuers that practise dual rating<sup>2</sup>, it is not possible for stakeholders to compare reputations.

#### 4.1.1 Respondents' profiles

Based on frequency information displayed in Table 2, out of a total of 104 respondents who participated in this survey, 64.4 per cent were male and 35.6 per cent were female. A majority of respondents were in the middle aged category. Table 10.2 shows that most individuals in the sample were heads of departments (38.5%), senior executive/officers (23.1%), managers (21.2%), chief executive officers (8.7%), and bond specialists (8.7%). Most of the respondents (75%) have worked in the bond industry for less than 10 years, while around 19.2 per cent worked in the industry between 11 and 20 years. Meanwhile 5.8 per cent of respondents have working experience in the bond industry for 21 years or more. Most respondents (39.6%) represent banking institutions were followed by institutional investors (27.9%), bond issuers (19.0%), and professional bodies that consist of bond agencies (13.6%). Since most respondents (39.6%) represent banking institutions, it is not surprising that 76.9 per cent are involved in credit risk assessment, while the remaining 23.1 per cent are not involved in credit risk assessment.

Table 2 Respondents' profiles as indicated in the survey

Variable	Frequency
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	67 (64.4%)
Female	37 (35.6%)
<b>Age</b>	
30 and below	19 (18.3%)
31 – 40	41 (39.4%)
41 – 50	32 (30.8%)
51 and above	12 (11.5%)
<b>Current title/position</b>	
Head of Department	40 (38.5%)
Chief executive officer	9 (8.7%)
Senior executive officer	24 (23.1%)
Manager	22 (21.2%)
Bond specialist	9 (8.7%)
Others	- -

<sup>1</sup> As surveyed in 2002, Baker and Sattar (2002) reported that about three-quarters of the issuers (77.2%) hire two rating agencies and 20.2% hire three or more agencies.

<sup>2</sup> Only five companies practice dual rating: Cagamas Berhad for mortgage-backed securities; Bumiputra Commerce Holdings; CIMB Bank and AMInvestment Berhad for corporate bonds; and Tenaga Nasional berhad for *sukuk* (RAM and MARC's websites).

**Working experience in bond industry**

Less than 10 years	78 (75%)
11- 20 years	20 (19.2%)
21 – or more	6 (5.8%)

**Type of institution that respondents represent**

Professional bodies	20 (13.6%)
Banking institutions	58 (39.6%)
Bond issuers	28 (19.0%)
Institutional investors	41 (27.9%)
Others	- -

**Conduct credit risk assessment**

Yes	80 (76.9%)
No	24 (23.1%)

Source: based on survey

#### 4.1.2 Accuracy of credit rating issued by domestic credit rating agencies

A bond rating is the most important indicator of a corporation's credit quality. The importance of ratings to issuers and investors largely depends on the accuracy of the ratings (Baker & Sattar 2002, p.1384). The bond ratings assigned by all the rating agencies are meant to indicate the likelihood of default or delayed payment of the security. Credit ratings are opinions of future relative creditworthiness derived from a fundamental credit analysis. The agencies base their ratings on both quantitative and qualitative assessments of the borrowing company's financial state and the special provisions of the particular security at hand. It seeks to predict the credit performance of bonds, other financial instruments, or firms across a range of plausible economic scenarios, some of which will include stress tests. Many of the current uses of ratings presume accuracy on both counts - measuring relative and absolute risks of corporate bond defaults. To be meaningful, ratings must, at a minimum, provide a reasonable rank-ordering of relative credit risks. However, ratings ought to provide a reliable guide to absolute credit risk (Cantor & Packer 1994). Users always assume that credit rating agencies accurately measure both relative and absolute risks of corporate bonds default and have done a reasonable job in assessing the relative credit risks of corporate bonds (Baker & Sattar 2002). Any delay in updating a rating to reflect information already released and known by market participant's means the published rating is different from the true rating being viewed will lack accuracy.

However, market acceptance and recognition of a credit rating depends on the credibility of the opinions of the credit rating agency issuing the credit rating. Not only issuers' and investors' opinions, but also those of bankers, financial intermediaries and securities traders. Therefore, in answering the question about whether the credit ratings agencies measure what are they supposed to measure, this survey starts by addressing the issue of rating accuracy by asking respondents about their perceptions of the accuracy of credit ratings issued by the rating agencies. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement to certain statements concerning the accuracy of credit rating on a 5-point Likert scale: 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree and the result is summarized in Table 3 below.

Analysis of the findings in Table 3 shows that, regardless of whether respondents have conducted credit risk assessments of borrowers or not, given the median score of 4, the findings revealed that respondents agree that domestic credit rating agencies are accurate in their rating issue. However, the respondents do not agree that domestic ratings agencies are able to predict the probability of default of the issuer, given the median score of 2. Based on a median score of 3, regardless of respondents who have or have not conducted credit risk assessment of borrowers, the respondents tend to neither agree nor disagree that these agencies adequately signal to

investors that companies are going to fail. Taking into account the workplace experience of respondents in the bond industry, this study found the same response concerning the accuracy of domestic credit rating agencies' ratings.

By considering respondents' title position, there is consistency in the perceptions of heads of department, CEOs and managers with regard to accuracy of domestic credit rating agencies given the median of score 4 for each statement. The exception is the ability of domestic credit ratings agencies to predict the probability of default of the issuer (given median score of 2). However, the inconsistency of perceptions among heads of department, CEOs, senior executives, managers and bond specialists is evident in the accuracy of domestic credit rating agencies adequately signaling to investors the impending failure of companies. While senior executives agree that domestic credit rating agencies do adequately signal this scenario to investors (given the median score of 4), CEOs and bond specialists disagree that domestic credit rating agencies adequately signal this to investors (given the median score of 2). Given the median score of 3, this study is not able to document the perception of heads of department and managers on the accuracy of domestic credit rating agencies adequately signaling to investors that companies may fail in the future.

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Table 3 Median, inter-quartile range (IQR) and Chi square test of perceptions of bond market participants in Malaysia regarding the **accuracy** of credit ratings issued by domestic credit rating agencies

Accuracy of credit rating	<u>Do credit assessment</u> Median (IQR)		<u>Working experience</u> Median (IQR)			<u>Title position</u> Median (IQR)					<u>Type of Institutions</u> Median (IQR)				Chi-square test	
	Yes	No	<10yrs	11-20yrs	>20yrs	Head of dept.	CEO	Senior Exec.	Mgr	Bond specialist	Professional bodies	Banks	Issuers	Inst. Investor	$\chi^2$	$p$
Domestic credit rating agencies publish ratings that <b>accurately reflect the issuer's creditworthiness.</b>	4 (0.5)	4 (1)	4 (0)	4 (1)	4 (0.25)	4 (1)	4 (0.5)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (0)	4 (1)	4 (0)	4 (1)	4 (0)	13.530	0.140
Domestic credit rating agencies <b>provide an accurate current picture</b> of the company's finances.	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	3 (1)	- -	4 (1)	4 (0.5)	4 (1)	4 (1)	3 (1)	3.5 (0.5)	4 (1)	4 (1)	3.5 (0.5)	10.173	0.337
Domestic credit rating agencies <b>accurately measure both relative and absolute risks of corporate bond defaults.</b>	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	3.5 (1)	3.5 (2)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (0)	3 (1)	3.5 (1.75)	4 (1)	4 (0)	4 (2)	18.523	0.130
Domestic credit rating agencies have done <b>a reasonable job in assessing the relative credit risk</b> of corporate bonds/issues.	4 (0)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (0.75)	- -	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (0)	4 (0)	4 (0.75)	4 (1)	4 (0)	4 (1)	18.518	0.101
Domestic credit rating agencies are able to provide <b>objective and independent information to the market on the issuer's future prospects.</b>	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	3 (1.25)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	3 (2)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	6.126	0.727
Domestic credit rating agencies are able to <b>predict the probability of default</b> of the issuer.	2 (2)	2 (1)	2 (1)	2 (1.75)	1 (1.25)	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (1)	2 (1.75)	2 (2)	3 (1.75)	2 (1)	12.353	0.194
Domestic credit rating agencies <b>adequately signal</b> to investors the impending failure of companies.	3 (1)	3 (2)	3 (1)	3 (2)	2.5 (2.25)	3 (1)	2 (1)	4 (2)	3 (1.75)	2 (2)	3 (2)	3 (1)	4 (1)	3 (2)	12.060	0.441
Domestic credit rating agencies <b>promptly update a rating</b> to reflect information already released and known by market participants.	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	3.5 (1.25)	4 (1)	4 (1.5)	4 (1)	4 (1)	3 (1)	3.5 (1.75)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	12.660	0.391

Source: Based on survey

Likewise, by examining types of institutions that are represented by respondent, this survey find that professional bodies, banks, institutional issuers and investors also view domestic credit rating agencies as being accurate in assessing the creditworthiness of issuers, provide an accurate picture of the company's finance, accurately measure both relative and absolute risk, have done a reasonable job in assessing the relative credit risk of corporate bonds and able to provide objective and independent information to the market on the issuer's future prospects (given median score of ranging 3.5 to 4). Given the median score of 2, professional body, banks and institutional investors disagree that domestic credit rating agencies are able to predict the probability of default of the issuers. Further, responding banks, issuers and institutional investors perceived that domestic credit rating agencies do not provide early signals of changes in borrowers' credit risks given the median score of 2. The chi-square test was used in the analysis to identify any differences in the responses of professional bodies, banking institutions, bond issuers and institutional investors with regards to accuracy of credit rating by domestic credit rating agencies. The chi-square is a test of significance between the sample populations and the total population in the survey. The relationship is significant if the *P* (probability) value is less than 0.05 - indicating that more than a 95 per cent chance that the observations expressed in the cross tabulation did not occur by chance and can therefore be replicated. Based on result of chi-square result in Table 3, no statistically significant result emerged from the test, indicating that there were no differences between professional bodies, banking institutions, bond issuers and institutional investors with regard to the accuracy of domestic credit rating agencies.

By and large, the survey results as shown in Table 3 indicate that domestic credit rating agencies in Malaysia did not fare too badly on the accuracy of their ratings. This finding is underpinned based on people's working experience and involvement in credit assessments, title position and participants' workplaces that were involved in this survey.

#### **4.1.3 Timeliness of credit rating issued by domestic credit rating agencies**

Once a rating is assigned, the credit rating agency is obliged to monitor the rating throughout the life of the rated instrument. Usually the ratings are reviewed once a year based on new financial reports, new business information and review meetings with management. A 'credit watch' or 'rating review' notice is issued if there is a reason to believe that the review may lead to a credit rating change. A change of rating has to be approved by the rating committee. If investors use ratings as a source of information on for creditworthiness, they should want ratings to be timely and reflect recent changes because such changes could affect the value of the bond. In addition, if investors perceive that rating agencies avoid changing a rating resulting from short-term fluctuations, which is typically the case according to Howe (1995), they should assess ratings as lagging the issuer's current status. If the primary role of bond ratings from the issuers' perspective is to certify the quality of the bond offering, they are unlikely to want frequent changes in ratings based on short-term fluctuations in their condition. According to Ellis (1998), investors believe that all information should be incorporated into a bond's rating as soon as possible because delays in updating the rating can be translated into economic losses. In other words, when a firm's financial condition changes or the economic environment changes, domestic agencies should change their rating to reflect the altered probabilities of default.

With regard to the ability of domestic credit rating agencies to maintain their rating in a timely manner, the respondents were asked to reply to the statement relating to the timeliness of credit rating issued by domestic credit rating agencies. While the minimum of 1 indicates respondents strongly disagree, the maximum of 5 indicates that respondents strongly agree with the timeliness of credit rating issued by domestic credit rating agencies. Table 4 summarizes the findings for the perceptions of bond market participants in Malaysia regarding the timeliness of credit rating being issued. By referring to the low score of median value, this survey revealed that generally respondents perceive that domestic credit agencies do not maintain their credit rating in a timely manner.

As depicted in Table 4, regardless of whether respondents have conducted credit assessment of borrowers or not, there is consistency in their perceptions with regards to timelines of rating by domestic credit rating. The respondents did disagree with the contention that domestic credit rating agencies respond quickly to changes in a firm's credit conditions and changes in economic conditions, update the rating in a timely manner, were completely up-to-date in their rating and provided an early warning about any changes and deterioration in borrowers' credit risks (given median value score of 2). Based on median value of 3, this survey was unable to capture the perception of respondents who have and have not conducted credit assessments of borrowers concerning domestic credit rating agencies do not make rating changes based simply on economic cyclical considerations and regularly review ratings to ensure that they are appropriate.

By examining respondents' perceptions, this survey reveals that bond market participants in the business for less than 10 years indicate their disagreement on the rating timeliness offered by domestic credit rating agencies. This is likewise for the perceptions of respondents who have worked in the Malaysian bond market for more than 21 years. Given median score of 2 to 2.5, respondents that have 11 – 20 years' working experience in Malaysia's bond market disagree that domestic credit rating agencies respond quickly enough to changes in the economic environment, are completely up-to-date in their rating, provide early signals of changes in borrowers' credit risks and issue early warnings about deterioration in the credit quality of issuers. Even though respondents with 11 – 20 years' experience were undecided about the contention of domestic credit rating agencies responding quickly to changes in a firm's credit condition and providing early signal of changes in borrowers' credit risk (given median score of 3), they agree that domestic credit rating agencies do not make rating changes simply on economic cyclical considerations (considering median score value of 4).

Table 4 Median, inter quartile range (IQR) and Chi square test of perceptions bond market participants in Malaysia regarding the **timeliness** of credit ratings issued by domestic credit rating agencies

Timeliness of credit rating	<u>Do credit assessment</u> Median (IQR)		<u>Working experience</u> Median (IQR)			<u>Title position</u> Median (IQR)					<u>Type of Institutions</u> Median (IQR)				Chi-square test	
	Yes	No	<10yrs	11-20yrs	>20yrs	Head of dept.	CEO	Senior Exec.	Mgr	Bond specialist	Professional bodies	Banks	Issuers	Inst. Investor	$\chi^2$	$p$
Domestic rating agencies <b>respond quickly to changes in a firm's credit conditions.</b>	2 (2)	2 (1.75)	2 (2)	3 (2.25)	2 (2)	2 (1)	2 (2.5)	2 (2)	2 (0.75)	2 (1.5)	3 (1.75)	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (0.75)	19.254	0.083
Domestic rating agencies <b>respond quickly enough to changes in economic conditions.</b>	2 (2)	2 (2.75)	2 (2)	2 (1)	2 1.5	2 (2)	2 (0.75)	2 (2)	2 (3)	2 (2)	3 (1.75)	2 (2.75)	2 (1)	2 (1.75)	16.640	0.06
Ratings issued are <b>completely up-to-date</b> , so that they reflect 'all available information' regardless of whether it has long-term or short-term implications.	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (2.25)	2 (2)	2 (2.5)	2 (2)	2 (1.75)	2 (1)	3 (2.5)	1.5 (3)	2 (2)	2 (2.75)	23.748	0.022*
Domestic credit rating agencies <b>do not make ratings changes based simply on economic cyclical considerations.</b>	3 (2)	3 (2.75)	3 (3)	4 (1.25)	1 (3)	3.5 (3)	3 (2.75)	3 (2.75)	2.5 (2.75)	3 (2.5)	3 (2.75)	2 (2)	2 (3)	2 (1.75)	7.707	0.808
Domestic credit rating agencies <b>upgrade and downgrade ratings in a timely manner.</b>	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (2)	2.5 (2.25)	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (2.75)	2 (2.75)	2 (0.75)	2 (1.5)	3 (1.5)	2 (2)	2 (1)	2 (1)	24.759	0.016*
Domestic credit agencies <b>provide early signals</b> of changes in borrowers' credit risk.	2 (1)	2 (1)	2 (1)	3 (1)	2 (2.25)	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (1)	3 (1.75)	2 (3)	2 (2)	2 (2)	21.697	0.10
Domestic credit agencies <b>provide early warning</b> about deteriorations in credit quality of issuer/issue in a timely fashion.	2 (2)	2 (2.75)	2 (2)	2.5 (2)	1.5 (2.25)	2 (2.25)	1.5 (1)	2 (3)	2 (1)	2 (1.5)	3 (2)	3 (1)	4 (1)	3 (2)	10.462	0.314
Domestic credit rating agencies <b>regularly review</b> ratings to ensure that they are appropriate.	3 (2)	3 (2)	2 (1)	3 (1.25)	2 (2.25)	3 (2)	2 (1.75)	2.5 (2.75)	3 (1)	3 (2.5)	3 (0.75)	2 (2)	3 (2)	3 (1.75)	18.163	0.111

\*significant at the 0.05 level

Source: Based on survey

Generally, Table 4 shows that respondents disagree with regard to timeliness of rating issued by domestic credit rating agencies, regardless of their title position (given median score value ranging 1.5 to 2) for most of the rating timeliness statement. By considering type of institutions, this study is unable to capture the perceptions of professional bodies (given median score of 3 for each statement), but nevertheless, banks, bond issuers and institutional investors disagree with the credit rating issued by domestic credit rating agencies. With regard to the timeliness of ratings, only bond issuers agree that domestic credit rating agencies provide early warning about deterioration in the credit quality of issuers, given the median score of 4. The chi-square test was again used to measure whether the perceptions of timeliness of credit rating by credit rating agencies differ significantly between professional bodies, banking institutions, bond issuers and institutional investors. Table 4 shows that the chi-square test reveals statistically significant differences among professional bodies, banking institutions, bond issuers and institutional investors. Specifically, two statistically significant results were discovered, which related to the disagreement with the statements: (i) ratings issued are completely up-to-date, so that they reflect 'all available information' regardless of whether it has long-term or short-term implications ( $X^2=0.022$ ,  $df = 12$ ); and (ii) domestic credit rating agencies upgrade and downgrade ratings in a timely manner ( $X^2=0.022$ ,  $df = 12$ ). The results suggested a significant divergence in perception of professional bodies, banking institutions, bonds issuers and institutional investors with reference to ratings issued are completely up-to-date and upgraded and downgraded in a timely manner. These findings might stem from the agency relationship in which these group find themselves. As identified by Ellis (1998), ratings are not same thing to all people and have important meanings for several types of market participants. According to Cantor and Packer (1995), regulators use ratings to define minimum levels of risk for financial institutions engaged in certain activities. Investors need to know just what they are buying and thus need to be able to rely on the rating they purchase. Thus for investors, they need to communicate their true state of creditworthiness to current and potential investors. On the one hand the banking and securities sector generally uses credit for a diverse range of reasons such as determining capital requirements, identifying or classifying assets, providing a credible evaluation of the credit risk associated with assets purchased as part of a securitization offering and determining prospectus eligibility (BIS 2009).

Considering perceptions of the accuracy and timeliness of domestic credit agencies' ratings, the result is consistent with a previous survey conducted by the Association for Financial Professionals (AFP 2004). This 2004 survey reveals that most participants believe that Standard & Poor's, Moody's, Fitch and Dominion Bond Rating Service ratings are slow in responding to changes in corporate credit quality. Critiques of major rating agencies focus mainly on the timeliness of agency ratings, and not on the accuracy of agency ratings. In the same spirit, a survey by Ellis (1998) in 1998 reported that 70 per cent of investors believe that ratings should reflect recent changes in credit quality. It reveals that most participants believe that major agency ratings are slow in responding to changes in corporate credit quality. Critiques of major rating agencies focus mainly on the timeliness of agency ratings, and not on the accuracy of agency ratings.

#### **4.1.4 Transparency of domestic credit rating agencies**

Credit ratings must be disclosed on a timely basis so that they are useful to investors. Likewise, transparency in the rating process—providing investors and issuers with information about the procedures, methodologies and assumptions that result in a credit rating—benefits both investors and issuers. Investors are given information to help assess the quality of a credit rating agency's opinion on the purposes of their investment decisions. Issuers, on the other hand, are reassured about the fairness of the rating process and are encouraged to provide issuers with the information credit rating agencies need in forming their opinions (IOSCO 2003). Transparency assesses the ability to disclose the rationale for rating decisions and communicate effectively with users of rating services. The transparency of credit rating agencies' decision-making can be viewed from the perspective of users' ability to employ ratings information so that they understand the rating process and decision rules employed by individual credit rating agencies (Duff & Einig 2009b).

To determine Malaysia's bond market participants' perceptions of domestic credit rating agencies' transparency, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The answers are shown in Table 5 below. Given a median score of 4, the majority of respondents agree that domestic credit rating agencies allow issuers 'right of appeal' to correct factual errors and misrepresentations. The higher median value for this element of transparency can perhaps be related to a code of conduct in credit rating agencies, where the issuer has the right to appeal the final rating being published in the media or made publicly available (MARC 2009; RAM 2009).

Table 5 further provides the finding that there is inconsistency in respondents' perceptions regarding whether or not the respondents have conducted credit assessment of borrowers, with reference to the transparency of a domestic credit rating. Given median value 2, the respondents disagree that that domestic credit rating agencies communicate effectively with investors or issuers. In addition, the respondents also perceive that investors or issuers do not understand the methodologies employed by domestic credit rating agencies (given median score of 2). This also applies to the perception of respondents who have worked in this industry for less than 10 years, 11 to 20 years and more than 20 years with regard to the transparency of credit rating agencies.

With respect to the transparency of credit rating agencies in explaining their methodologies to bond market participants, this survey revealed the perceptions between CEOs and bond specialists are inconsistent. Likewise, as indicated in Table 5, median score of 4 for CEOs, while 2 for bond specialists, other indicate uncertain. Furthermore, by examining the title position of respondents, this survey finds that perceptions are inconsistent with regard to domestic credit rating agencies keeping bond market participants informed of all development of ratings and communicating effectively with investors concerning issuers' performance. However, by considering median score of ranging 1-2, irrespective of their title position they all disagree that: firstly, the domestic credit rating agencies communicate effectively with issuers; and secondly, investors or issuers understand the methodologies employed by domestic credit rating agencies.

Table 5 Median, inter quartile range (IQR) and Chi square test of perceptions of bond market participants in Malaysia regarding the **transparency** of domestic credit rating agencies

Transparency of credit rating agencies	<u>Do credit assessment</u> Median (IQR)		<u>Working experience</u> Median (IQR)			<u>Title position</u> Median (IQR)					<u>Type of Institutions</u> Median (IQR)				Chi-square test	
	Yes	No	<10yrs	11-20yrs	>20yrs	Head of dept.	CEO	Senior Exec.	Mgr	Bond specialist	Professional bodies	Banks	Issuers	Inst. Investor	$\chi^2$	$p$
The domestic credit rating agencies <b>allow issuers a ‘right of appeal’</b> to correct factual errors and misrepresentations.	4 (1)	4 (2)	4 (1)	4 (2)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (2)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (2)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (2)	18.897	0.091
The domestic credit rating agencies <b>offer publications, websites, courses and seminars</b> that explain their methodologies to investors and other market participants.	3 (2)	3 (1)	3 (2)	3 (2)	2 (3.25)	3 (2)	4 (3.5)	3 (1)	3 (1)	2 (3)	3 (2)	3 (2.5)	3 (2)	3 (2)	6.834	0.868
The domestic credit rating agencies keep issuers, investors and other market <b>participants informed of all developments relevant to ratings.</b>	3 (2)	3 (1)	3 (2)	3 (2)	3 (2)	3 (3)	3 (1)	2 (2.75)	4 (2)	3 (3)	3 (3)	3 (2)	3 (2)	3 (2)	9.234	0.683
The domestic credit rating agencies <b>communicate effectively with investors</b> regarding an issuer’s performance (e.g. when assessing an upgrade).	2 (2)	2 (1)	2 (2.25)	2 (2)	3 (2)	2 (2)	4 (1.5)	2 (1)	1 (1)	2 (3)	1 (2)	2 (3)	1.5 (2)	2 (2)	18.003	0.116
The domestic credit rating agencies <b>communicate effectively with issuers</b> regarding an issuer’s performance (e.g. when assessing an upgrade).	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (1.25)	- (-)	2 (2)	2 (1.5)	2 (2)	2 (2)	1 (2)	1 (1)	2 (2)	2 (1.75)	2 (2)	9.798	0.634
<b>Investors understand the methodologies</b> employed by domestic credit rating agencies.	2 (2)	2 (3)	2 (1)	2 (2)	1 (1.25)	2 (1)	2 (1.5)	2 (1)	2 (2)	3 (2)	3 (0)	2 (1.5)	2 (2)	2 (2)	12.398	0.414
<b>Issuers understand the methodologies</b> employed by domestic credit rating agencies.	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (1)	1.5 (2)	1.5 (1)	2 (1)	3 (1)	2 (2)	2 (1)	2 (1)	2 (2)	3 (2)	2 (1)	2 (2)	22.351	0.305

Source: Based on survey

By focusing on the median value of 1 to 2, the survey results indicate that the professional bodies, banks, bond issuers and institutional investors disagree that the domestic credit rating agencies communicate effectively with investors and issuers regarding an issuer's performance. Respondents are also disagreeing that either investors or issuers understand the methodologies employed by the domestic credit rating agencies. Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) estimates were calculated to test whether respondents' perception about transparency of domestic credit rating agencies varied with professional bodies, banks, bond issuers and institutional investors. Based on Chi-square analysis in Table 5, the estimates were not statistically significant, confirming that respondents' perceptions were similar for professional body, banks, bond issuers and institutional investors.

As transparency focuses on users understanding rating decisions, this survey outcome revealed that domestic credit rating agencies could consider how they may communicate better with stakeholders. Such communication could include providing issuers with more specific information about what they actually do - detailed guidance on their models and the relative weights of each factor affecting their decisions and simplifying ratings information for less sophisticated investors.

#### **4.1.5 Rating quality of domestic credit rating agencies**

According to Duff and Einig (2009a, p.110), rating quality can be described as a reliance on two matters: (i) the competence of credit rating; and (ii) the independence of credit rating (such as the willingness to downgrade an issuer's security, or issue a lower rating than the issuer anticipated). In order capture the rating quality provided by domestic credit rating agencies, bond market participants were asked to indicate how much they agreed with the statements relating to competence and independence of domestic credit rating agencies (see Table 6). The scale employed for competence and independence are ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

With respect to competency of domestic credit rating agencies, respondents that have or have not conducted a credit assessment of borrowers can be said to agree that such agencies are competent, based on statements that indicate median score value of 2. However, given median score of 3, it is evident that the respondents are uncertain about the robustness of domestic credit rating agencies' methodology and rating methodology as being consistent across the sector. This is the same for the perceptions on the competency of domestic credit rating agencies, as held by particular respondents involved in the Malaysian bond market for less than 10 years and more than 20 years. However, for respondents who have worked for 11 – 20 years in the market, this survey only captures respondents' agreement that domestic credit rating agencies are conscientious, credible to third parties, incorporate the professional judgement in their analysis and give adequate access to the information to form an opinion about creditworthiness of borrowers (based on median value of 4).

Table 6 Median, inter quartile range (IQR) and Chi square test of perceptions of bond market participants in Malaysia regarding the **rating quality** of domestic credit rating agencies

Perception on the competence of domestic credit rating agencies	Do credit assessment		Working experience			Title position					Type of Institutions				Chi-square test	
	Median (IQR)		Median (IQR)			Median (IQR)					Median (IQR)				X <sup>2</sup>	p
	Yes	No	<10yrs	11-20yrs	>20yrs	Head of dept.	CEO	Senior Exec.	Mgr	Bond specialist	Professional bodies	Banks	Issuers	Inst. Investor		
Domestic credit rating agencies operate to the highest standards of <b>integrity</b> .	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	3 (1)	4 (0.25)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (2)	4 (2)	3.5 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	3.5 (1)	1.654	0.647
Domestic credit rating agencies are <b>conscientious</b> .	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (0.75)	4 (1)	4 (1.5)	4 (1)	4 (0.75)	4 (2)	4 (0.75)	4 (1)	4 (0.25)	4 (1)	1.540	0.673
Domestic credit rating agencies are <b>credible to third parties</b> .	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1.75)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (2)	4 (1)	3 (1)	1.691	0.639
Domestic credit rating agencies are highly <b>competent</b>	4 (1)	4 (2)	4 (1)	3 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1.75)	4 (1.75)	3 (1)	4 (1)	4 (2)	4 (1)	4 (2)	3.5 (1.25)	3 (1)	3.268	.352
Domestic credit rating analysts are very <b>knowledgeable</b> about an issuer's industry.	4 (1)	3 (1)	4 (1)	3 (1)	4 (1.25)	3 (1)	3 (1)	4 (2)	4 (0.75)	3 (3)	4 (2)	4 (1)	3.5 (1)	3 (1)	4.486	0.344
Domestic credit rating agencies <b>incorporate the professional judgment</b> of the credit analyst, beyond a decision derived from the application of a mechanistic methodology.	4 (2)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1.25)	4 (1.25)	4 (1)	3 (1)	4 (1)	4 (0)	3 (2)	3 (1.75)	2 (3)	2 (2)	2 (2)	1.241	0.404
The domestic credit rating agencies' <b>rating methodologies are robust</b> .	3 (1)	3 (0)	3 (1)	3 (1.25)	3 (1.25)	3 (0)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (2)	3 (0.75)	3 (1)	3 (0.25)	3 (1)	3.902	0.142
The domestic credit rating agencies' <b>ratings methodologies are consistent across the sector</b> .	3 (2)	3 (2)	3 (1)	3 (2)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1.75)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	1.401	0.705
Domestic credit rating agencies have <b>adequate access to the information</b> they need to form an independent and objective opinion about the creditworthiness of an issuer	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (2)	4 (3)	4.5 (1.25)	4 (1)	4 (2)	4 (2)	4 (1.75)	5 (1)	4 (1.75)	4 (2)	4 (1.25)	4 (1)	2.778	0.427
<b>Perception on independence of domestic credit rating agencies</b>																
The domestic credit rating agencies' are independent of issuers and investors when they issue high quality credit ratings.	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (2)	4 (1.5)	4 (1.5)	4 (2)	4.5 (1.75)	4 (1)	4 (1)	3.5 (1)	3.5 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	3 (1)	0.854	0.837

Source: Based on survey

Overall, regardless of title position of respondents, they indicate that domestic credit agencies are competent, a conclusion based on statements that indicate median score value of 4. However, these respondents who are uncertain about the robustness of agencies' rating methodologies are consistent across the sector (based on median value of 3). A similar perception is exhibited by professional bodies, banks, bond issuers and institutional investors. Remarkably, banks, bond issuers and institutional investors do not agree that domestic credit rating incorporate the professional judgement of the credit analyst, beyond a decision derived from the application of mechanistic methodology (given median score of 2).

Further, taking into account the median value of 3.5 to 4.5, the respondents generally agreed that domestic credit rating agencies are independent of issuers and investors when they issue high quality credit ratings. Based on the chi-square tests, there results indicated that perceptions of professional bodies, banks, bond issuers and institutional investors were not significantly different regarding the rating quality of domestic credit rating agencies. Therefore, by and large, bond market participants believe that domestic credit rating agencies are competent and independent.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

This paper provides findings and analysis from a survey on perceptions regarding domestic credit rating agencies of participants operating in Malaysia's bond market. A limitation of this survey is that the response rate was fairly low. Therefore, it is important to note that this survey makes no attempt to make generalizations of the bond market participants in Malaysia regarding domestic credit rating agencies. Nevertheless, this survey has identified two points that should be addressed here with regards to respondents' profiles. First, this survey have drawn responses from the most senior people and job positions from a diverse range of bond market participants such as investors, issuers and the banking industry. Second, since the majority of respondents represent banks, most respondents in this survey have worked in credit risk assessment as it relates to the creditworthiness of borrowers. Therefore, this survey at least provides some indication of how domestic credit rating agencies are perceived by bond market participants.

In summary, this survey reveals bond market participants who participated in this survey tend to view that domestic credit rating agencies are accurate in their credit rating. Likewise, with reference to rating quality, bond market participants perceived that domestic credit rating agencies are competent and independent. However, given the low score of median value for the timeliness criteria, it is evident that domestic credit rating agencies are perceived as not being timely in their rating actions. Further, this survey's finding demands that domestic credit rating agencies must improve the transparency of their rating methodology and communicate more effectively with relevant stakeholders. However, the lack of timeliness and transparency indicated in this survey does not mean that the credit ratings are meaningless. Their product (credit evaluation) is essential to keeping capital markets functioning properly. For obvious reasons, neither the buyer nor the seller can be credible when they are valuing a security. It is important for the credit ratings to fulfill their role effectively and it is paramount that market participants are confident that ratings constitute an up-to-date assessment and adequately reflect the potential risks. The rating agencies need to ensure

the quality and independence of their assessments, keep the ratings current, and avoid conflicts of interest while keeping their methodologies and assumptions transparent.

Given that Malaysia has realised the importance of having an efficient corporate bond, therefore, much more needs to be done to further increase its depth and efficiency. The importance of Malaysia's domestic credit rating system lies in making certain that the bond market functions effectively. The study is novel in quantifying and juxtaposing the perceptions of a wide range of market participants. It is likely to be useful for domestic credit rating agencies, providing them with a clear overview of how their ratings' quality is perceived by various stakeholders. It is crucial for domestic credit rating agencies to put efforts to educate the financial community in credit methodologies and the limitations of rating should reduce unwarranted expectations and faith in credit rating exercises. It is also of interest to those who actively use, or have an interest in, credit ratings by providing them with a better insight into the relationship dynamics between domestic credit rating agencies and the different groups of people they deal with. Finally, regulatory bodies will find this report an interesting read, since the findings should inform the regulatory framework governing the operation of domestic credit rating agencies.

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