

EXAMINING IDEAS ON NATION-BUILDING
IN P. RAMLEE'S FILMS FROM 1955 TO 1965

BY

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ABSTRACT

The period between 1955 to 1965 was a turbulent period in political and nation-building of Malaya and Singapore. The decades were also intertwined with the gradual independence and the national consciousness of both nations. At the same time, this period also saw the rise of popularity of Malay films, in particular films by P. Ramlee. Could his films reflect the ideas of nation-building that was prevalent at the time? This study aims to explore the theme of nation-building in P. Ramlee's films and identify various inherent political thoughts in the early days of Malaya and Singapore after the Second World War and independence from British. P. Ramlee's films were chosen since they were produced in Singapore, a cosmopolitan city that was important to colonial British and Malay/Muslim political activists. The material for this study was collected through the analysis of the general idea of the film based on the synopsis and main themes of the film, as well as previous studies and writings done on the selected films. There were five films selected to be analyzed. The first film was *Nujum Pak Belalang* which contained ideas related to the changing values and political structure of Malaya and Singapore. The films of *Ali Baba Bujang Lapok* and *Tiga Abdul* featured the ideas of Muslim cosmopolitanism and the preservation of morality and family values, while the movie entitled *Sarjan Hassan* highlighted the effect of atrocities of war and multiracial relations in the building of new nation. In the film *Semerah Padi*, the role of Islam in the new nation and the challenges in implementing the Islamic law were found to be the main subjects of the film. This study revealed that film can become an important cultural document to be examined, studied, and preserved in order to understand the phenomenon and ideas of the society and the nation in the past. P. Ramlee's films have helped us to understand the aspirations and concerns of the people at the onset of Malayan independence and the formation of Malaysia. More studies should be conducted on other filmmakers and industry players at the time of P. Ramlee to further understand the notion of nation-building.

خلاصة البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فحص مفهوم بناء الأمة في أفلام ب. رملي والتعرف على مختلف الفكر السياسي المتأصل. تم اختيار أفلام ب. رملي بسبب إنتاجها في الخمسينيات والستينيات من القرن الماضي في سنغافورة؛ وهي مدينة عالمية كانت مهمة للبريطانيين الاستعماريين وللنشطاء السياسيين الماليزيين/المسلمين. وكانت العقود متداخلة أيضًا مع الاستقلال التدريجي والوعي الوطني لملايو وسنغافورة. ولتحقيق أهداف هذه الدراسة، اعتمد الباحث سياسة فهم الفكرة العامة للفيلم بواسطة الملخصات والموضوعات الرئيسية للفيلم وكذلك قام بتحليل الدراسات السابقة والكتابات التي أجريت على الأفلام المختارة؛ وهي نجوم باك بلالانغ وعلي بابا بوجانغ لايوك وتيغا عبدل وسارجان حسن وسميرة بادي. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن أفلامه تحتوي على أفكار تتعلق بالقيم المتغيرة والهيكلة السياسي لملايو وسنغافورة، ودور الإسلام وتحديات لتطبيق الشريعة الإسلامية وتأثير فئات الحرب على الأمة الجديدة. والأفكار السياسية التي تم تحديدها في الأفلام وهي القومية الملاوية والتعددية العرقية و الكوزموبوليتية الإسلامية والحفاظ على الأخلاق والقيم العائلية. أظهرت الدراسة أن الأفلام كانت وثيقة ثقافية مهمة يجب فحصها ودراستها وحفظها لفهم ظاهرة وأفكار المجتمع والأمة في الماضي. كرجل في عصره، ساعدتنا أفلام ب. رملي على فهم تطورات واهتمامات الشعب في مستهل استقلال الملايو وتشكيل ماليزيا.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts in Islamic Thought and Civilization.

.....

Ahmad Murad bin Mohd Noor Merican

Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts in Islamic Thought and Civilization.

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Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the International Institute for Islamic Thought and Civilization and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Islamic Thought and Civilization.

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Aziz Berghout, Dean,

International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization

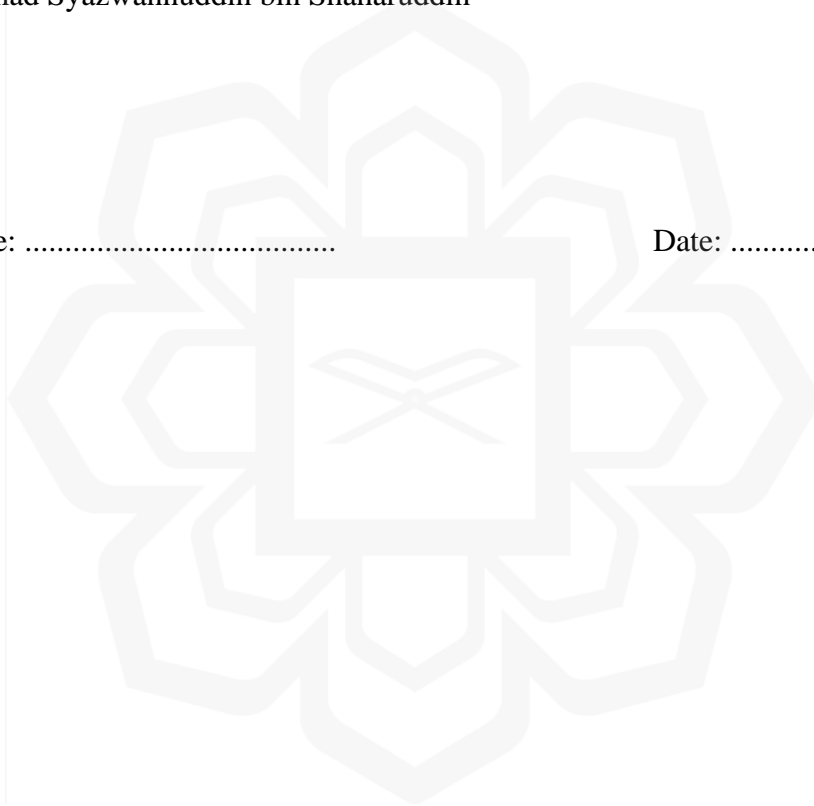
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole or in part for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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This thesis is dedicated to all the outliers and the revolutionaries



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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The period between the Second World War until the 1960s was a period where diverse groups in Malaysia were contesting to define the nature and the destiny of the nation. Although independence was granted by British, Malaysia still had to abide to the former British Empire norms such as parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy. Generally, the creation of a new nation is not only defined by the body politic, but also the ideology embraced by majority of the citizens. The building of Malaysia is influenced by ethnicity, religion, political party, and regional identity.

Perikatan, a coalition of multiracial political parties consisting of UMNO, MCA and MIC ruled the nation after winning the general election in 1955. The independence of Malaysia from British came with condition that it will continue the British economic system and maintain close relations with the West. Political party like Parti Islam Se-Malaya (PAS) aspired a more Islamic nation, while Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan) and Democratic Action Party (DAP), which at the time were more left leaning, however aimed at creating an equal political system which does not favor any special position to any race. There were also Malays in Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (PKMM), a political party which propagated the spirit and concept of nationalism aspired from Indonesia and rejected the traditional Malay political rule. In Singapore, there were also contestation between the People Action Party (PAP) and Barisan Sosialis to rule the city-state.¹ Meanwhile, the agenda of nation-building by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) was more radical whereby it wanted to tear down the British system and build a new system by launching an insurgency. In 1963, after negotiation between different parties in Malaya, Singapore, and the British government, a new nation was formed by including Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak which had different historical experience with colonialism and ethnic composition compared to the peninsular Malaya.

¹ Mohamed Noordin Sopiee (2005). *From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation: Political Unification in the Malaysia Region 1945-1965*. Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Malaya, 118.

Singapore was always a part of Malaya in terms of cultural and community relations, but the British policy before the war separated the administration of Singapore and Federated States of Malaya. Singapore was the center of administration for the Straits Settlement of Pulau Pinang and Melaka, while Kuala Lumpur become the center for Federated States of Malaya. This loose relation became a point of contention between the two nations when they become independence from British, since political leaders from both nations had their own ideas on nation-building.

Concurrently, this period also marked the rise of Malay films. It was considered as the golden age of the Malaysian film industry, and many Malaysians have looked fondly of this era. Could all the turmoil in politics happening in Malaya and Singapore be presented in the Malay films in the 1950s and 1960s? The Malay film industry reached its peak in the early 1960s and attracted many audiences among the Malays. Many Malays from all over Malaya and Singapore came to works in front and behind the screen. This was the time where P. Ramlee, a legendary filmmaker came to showcase his talent. He was the third Malay to become a film director, after A. R. Tompel and Haji Mahadi. His films were made in Singapore, a hotbed for socialist and Malay nationalist. His films contained messages and criticisms to the point of religious preaching but were done in a subtle manner. This style makes P. Ramlee unique, and his films are still appreciated by filmmakers and film lovers until the 21st century. P. Ramlee was never pigeon-holed by history in any specific group or political preferences. He believed in the importance of ethics and self-control against corruption and temptation. His films were filled with various concepts and ideas but primarily revolved around relatable and human character.

This study can provide understanding on the political criticism by the filmmaker without leaning towards any political party by examining their ideas on nation-building in the era of post-colonialism, modernity in the Malay world and the horrors of war. It can also inspire filmmakers today to have ideas and theme when making their own films. Films are not just medium of entertainment but should also feature cultural and educational values for the benefit of the country and its people.

1.2 Problem Statement

One of the challenges faced by Malaysia after gaining its independence from British was how to build a thriving nation in the presence of various ethnic and religion adherents. The Federal constitution ensures the freedom of religion to all citizens. Parliamentary democracy has been accepted as the governing system with constitutional monarch as the head of state.² Meanwhile, the Prime Minister as the head of government is selected among the Members of Parliament who win in the general election.

This modern political system was very different from what the Malay World had in the past. For the Malays, they recognized the Sultan as their political leader.³ Meanwhile, the Chinese and the Indian pledged their loyalty and familial links to their country of origins. They also saw themselves as the British subjects, not the Sultan although they respected the Sultan as the most influential Malays in the land and recognized them as important trading partner. This new political system emerged in the colonial cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Pulau Pinang and Singapore, where the British ruled these cities directly. These cities also became among the first places to receive influences from the West in the fields of education, economic, technology and entertainment. One of the most popular entertainment mediums emerged in the early 20th century was films.

The Malayan film industry in Singapore was burgeoning in the 1950s and the 1960s, which was the time when Malaya was still a new nation and finding her identity.⁴ The most popular filmmaker at the time was P. Ramlee, who had acted, directed, and written about 66 films. His films had influenced many of his audience among the Malays on the issues of political criticism and nation-building. P. Ramlee's films were also being used to promote Malay nationalist narrative.⁵ He himself would produce a film reflecting on many political discontents at the time. His films were an early representation of the site of

² Abdul Aziz Bari (2014). *Perlembagaan Malaysia: Satu Pengenalan*. Selangor: PTS, 19-21.

³ Milner, Anthony (2016). *Kerajaan – Budaya Politik Melayu di Ambang Pemerintahan Kolonial*. Petaling Jaya: SIRD, 220-221.

⁴ Hassan Abd Muthalib (2013). *Malaysian Cinema in a Bottle*. Petaling Jaya: Merpati Jingga, 53-54.

⁵ Kahn, Joel S. (2006). *Other Malays: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in the Modern Malay World*. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 129.

contestation between various social and political actors seeking to promote their own messages.⁶

P. Ramlee's films reflected the ideas of modern politics and nations. In general, film can become a cultural document therefore, it is undisputedly plausible to utilize his films as an object of study to examine the ideas of nation-building among Malaysians in the 1950s and the 1960s.⁷ We should "read" his films firstly as a product of creative imagination, and an illustration of the prominent culture and ideas at the time. His films also were intentionally created as a creative product and gained commercial success among the Malays, without the need to satisfy the Western audiences.⁸ Film like *Semerah Padi* (1956) highlighted the importance of morality and Islamic elements in the Malay society. There was also *Tiga Abdul* (1964) which portrayed the use of marriage by some Malays to advance their family prestige. *Nujum Pak Belalang* (1959) which was based on the classic story warned the modern audience on the dangers of having ineffective leader who in this film carelessly gambled his nation. The messages and themes from these films showed that the Malays had embraced film as a medium of storytelling. The classic Malay films played a significant role in linking the old Malay folklore and modern audiences.⁹

⁶ Lim, David C. L. (2012). Malay(sian) patriotic films as racial crisis and intervention in Lim, David C. L. & Yamamoto Hiroyuki (ed). *Film in Contemporary Southeast Asia: Cultural Interpretation and Social Intervention*, 93-111. New York: Routledge.

⁷ Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied (2005). Films as social history – P. Ramlee's "Seniman Bujang Lapok" and Malays in Singapore. *The Heritage Journal* 2 (1), 16.

⁸ White, Timothy (1996). Historical poetics, Malaysian cinema, and the Japanese occupation. *Kinema* 1996 Fall Issue.

⁹ Hassan Abd Muthalib (2013). *Malaysian Cinema in a Bottle*. Petaling Jaya: Merpati Jingga, 30-31.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objective of this thesis is to examine P. Ramlee's films in terms of the pattern of nation-building in his films. This thesis also aims at analyzing the various political thoughts depicted in P. Ramlee's films. His films were selected because they were produced in the times of the independence of a new nation such as Malaysia and Singapore in the 1950s and 1960s. These films were produced in Singapore, a city that became the grounding place of many political activists and intellectuals.

1.4 Research Questions

This research aims at providing conclusive answers for these questions:

1. What is the pattern of nation-building notion in P. Ramlee's films from the year 1950-1960?
2. What is the various political thoughts depicted in P. Ramlee's films?

The elements of nation-building and political thought are interrelated as political thought influences the building of the new nation and political system.

1.5 Significance

The study will help us understand that Malay filmmakers from the early on had infused political and social criticisms in their films. The films made were also very influential in disseminating the ideas among the Malays who wanted to build a modern identity that still rooted in Islam and Malay traditions. The criticism was done in a subtle manner and coated with humor and comedy, a staple in the Malays folktales which use humor to educate the masses.

The Malays also had recognized the importance of film as a medium to express and propagate the ideas on nation-building. This study will be beneficial to those who want to understand how films can continue to be used until this day as a tool to disseminate ideas, spread messages and communicate thoughts. Films are not just moving images or spoken words written by the scriptwriters, but they are produced by people who want to use the images and the words for the purpose of improving and advancing the nation.

In terms of economics, this study reveals that the film industry in Malaysia and Singapore can be more collaborative since these two nations share the similar history of film industry. The films made in Malaysia and Singapore should be more inclusive and open to many facets of communities that exists in both nations. Films can be appreciated by many and do not need to be watched by people from only one community since filmmaking language can transcend any languages.

1.6 Limitations and Keyword Definition

This study will focus on two main keywords, which are nation-building and the period between 1955 to 1965. Only P. Ramlee films from year 1955 to 1965 were selected since they coincided with the period of independence and post-colonial stage of a nation, an important moment in a nation-building. This was the time when P. Ramlee was involved in the production of many films as an actor, writer, and director. This was also the period when Malaya under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman negotiated independence from British. Then, Malaya proclaimed its independence in 1957 followed by the formation of Malaysia in 1963, and later the expulsion of Singapore from Malaysia which took place in 1965. The Singapore factor is important since it was the center of Malay film industry in the 1950s and the 1960s.

The important elements in nation-building are the national leadership and their political thoughts. Their political preferences guided how they manage the nation's economy, the social relations and judiciary system. To build a coherent nation, there is a need to involve all stakeholders. In the early days of Malaya and Singapore, the most important stakeholders were the leaders from major races which are Malays, Chinese and India. They were the ones who could significantly influence their community when it comes to the election.

1.7 Literature Review

There are four dimensions for reviewing the literature in this study. The first is on P. Ramlee himself in terms of his biography and studies done on his films. The second is the literature review on the history of the Malay film industry in the early 20th century. This is to understand the main drivers of film industry at that time, the kinds of film that were popular among the audience, and the reasons for the decline of the industry popularity in the late 1960s. This paper also attempts to examine the intertwined history between the Malay film industry and the history of Malaysia from the 1930s, the Second World War and the formation of Malaysia in 1965. This history is important to be understood as it tells how people at the time acted based on the changes happening around them. The popular culture and trends of the time had influenced the local filmmakers, and in the context of this study, the producers produced films related to the settings and issues arose during the period of Malaya and Singapore post-war instead of reflecting on the foreign films.¹⁰ The third dimension is the trend of global film industry and their relation to politics and nation-building. This is done by comparing the studies done on the ideas of nation-building in films in other countries. The last dimension is the prevalent ideas on nation-building in the early days of Malaya independence. The ideas of nation-building chosen based on P. Ramlee's films include the decline of Malay political traditional system, the influence of modernity and cosmopolitan, and the position of Islam in Malaysia and the Malay society.

1.7.1 P. Ramlee's Biography

Reviewing the literature and research done on P. Ramlee, they can be separated into different categories. The most prominent one is the biography, where the literatures on P. Ramlee's upbringing, his career as filmmaker and eventually his death and legacy to the

¹⁰ McKay, Benjamin (2006). Global city: Malay motion pictures, Mambang Moden and the contested terrains of Singapore history. *Jurnal Skrin Malaysia* (3). 116.

Malaysian society were reviewed. Examples of reviewed literatures related to his biography were *The Bright Star* written by Ahmad Sarji and James Harding, and *Kisah Hidup Seniman Agung* by Abdullah Hussain.¹¹ There is also a very concise and emotional documentary entitled *P. Ramlee*, produced by Shuhaimi Baba in 2010 for the History Channel series Biography, which focuses on legendary artists in the past and present.

This biography was written by those who had met P. Ramlee in the past or lived through the era of golden age of Malay cinema in the 1950s and the 1960s. Since interview and writing by P. Ramlee were rarely found, most writers resorted to understand P. Ramlee's inspiration and motivation by understanding his films or through his collaborators. Many journalists had tried to interview P. Ramlee but failed to get substantial answer.¹² Different collaborators gave different perspectives on P. Ramlee. People who acted with P. Ramlee such as Aziz Satar, Mariani Ismail and Jins Shamsudin gave inputs from the perspective of the actors who worked with and under P. Ramlee. There is also from the musical perspective such as from Kasim Masdor, Yusnor EF and Jamil Sulong. H. M. Shah and L. Krishnan who provided the perspective of P. Ramlee as an innovator in Malaysian cinema and wanted to uplift the industry. There is also a unique perspective from his family such as interview with his son Nasir P. Ramlee and his wife, Saloma Ismail.

Another category of books written about P. Ramlee is on his position as the most influential filmmaker in the golden age of Malay Cinema. Most of the books written about the Malay films contain specific chapter on P. Ramlee. *Malaysian Cinema in a Bottle* written by Hassan Muthalib is an example of this type of book. Due to the popularity of P. Ramlee's films among Malaysian, Amir Muhammad wrote a book entitled *120 Malay Movies* to introduce Malaysian to the other classical Malay films that were neglected. Both Amir Muhammad and Ahmad Sarji books reviewed individual films to help people understand the journey of the Malay films.¹³ Ahmad Sarji's book, *The Bright Star* attempted to relate the films made by P. Ramlee with his personal issues involving his

¹¹ Abdullah Hussain had written an article entitled "P. Ramlee yang Kukenal" published in *Gelanggang Filem* magazine. He also had written a short book entitled *Kisah Hidup P. Ramlee*. Both writings had been read by P. Ramlee when he was alive.

¹² Abdullah Hussain (2016). *Kisah Hidup Seniman Agung P. Ramlee*. Kuala Lumpur: DBP, v.

¹³ Ahmad Sarji had initially written the book in Malay language, published in 1999 entitled *P. Ramlee, Erti Yang Sakti*.

marriage life, his relationship with friends and colleagues, and the immediate success of his films. The most recent book also done in the same manner is by Daniyal Kadir entitled *Membedah P. Ramlee*.

P. Ramlee's films had also been studied in understanding the evolution and development of the Malays and Malaysian identity, culture, values, arts, and literature. A book entitled *P. Ramlee di Cakera Nusantara* edited by Awang Azman Awang Pawi and Khor Chooi Lian accumulated the collection of seminar presentations discussing the P. Ramlee's contribution to Malaysian society which was held at UNIMAS in 2005. It contained 22 articles written by P. Ramlee's friends, academician, and analysts on the P. Ramlee's influences on many aspects of Malaysian society in the early days of independence such as the influence of Japanese films and the effect of Japanese occupation on P. Ramlee written by Timothy White in 1996. There was also an article written by Jan Uhde on the influence of Italian neo-realism cinema in 1950s on P. Ramlee's films such *Penarek Becha (1955)*. Both articles attempted to put P. Ramlee's films and Malay films in general as part of the resurgence of world cinema when the classical Hollywood influence had waned after the Second World War.¹⁴ Those articles were also previously published in *Kinema: A Journal for Film and Audiovisual Media*, a prominent journal for film studies published by the University of Waterloo before being republished in *P. Ramlee di Cakera Nusantara*. The book also contained Mahadi J. Murat's writings entitled *Mencari Batin Nasional P. Ramlee*. His film had created an image of the early modern Malays and became the inspiration for Malay identity and unity.¹⁵ Syed Khairudin Aljunied proposed that P. Ramlee's film such as *Seniman Bujang Lapok (1961)* should be used as social history sources. He underlined 3 major themes in the film. Firstly, the film highlighted the aftermath of Japanese occupation. It questioned on the lack of studies on the life of the Malays under Japanese occupation. Malays villages were left alone in the earlier stage of the war, but eventually the reality of the war was felt by the Malays after seeing the effect of the bombardment done to the British buildings. Most Malay youth also had their

¹⁴ White, Timothy (1996). Historical poetics, Malaysian cinema, and the Japanese occupation. *Kinema 1996 Fall Issue*.

¹⁵ Mahadi J, Murat (2005). Mencari batin nasional P. Ramlee in Awang Azman Awang Pawi & Khor Chooi Lian (ed). *P. Ramlee di Cakera Nusantara*, 39. Kuching: UNIMAS.

education interrupted and were forced to learn Japanese language. Secondly, the films highlighted the challenges of modernity towards the Malays value. Malay culture and manners had been westernized and the traditional values were decaying. This theme also had been a major theme among the novel writers. The understandings of Islam also had deviated. For example, there was a scene showing the husband and wife arguing because her husband was caught having affair with another woman. This shows that some modern Malays pick and choose certain law that is convenient to them and abandon the spirit of the law and the teachings of the Prophet. The issue of poverty was also highlighted in the film of *Seniman Bujang Lapok*, whereby the 3 main characters rented a small room in the boarding hostel. It was an inconvenient hostel with limited numbers of toilets in which the renters needed to queue to use it.¹⁶ This research done by Syed Khairudin showed that P. Ramlee did put his observation on the society of Singapore into his film. This study will use the same method of analyzing P. Ramlee's other films in terms of the general theme of his films and the meaning of certain scene in the film.

1.7.2 Malay Film Industry

William Van Der Heide in 2002 wrote a chapter entitled *Malaysian Cinema* in his book, *Malaysian Cinema, Asian Films: Border Crossings and National Culture* to consider how the films, 'speak of, around and beside the nation'. He used several of P. Ramlee's films as examples including *Semerah Padi* (1956) and *Ibu Mertuaku* (1962).¹⁷

Malaysian Cinema in a Bottle by Hassan Abd Muthalib is important for this study because it discusses comprehensively the evolution from older form of Malay entertainment such as 'Wayang Kulit' and 'Bangsawan' to film and theater. The author also tried to compare the Malay film industry with other nations' film industry such as Indonesia

¹⁶ Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied (2005). Films as social history – P. Ramlee's "Seniman Bujang Lapok" and Malays in Singapore. *The Heritage Journal* 2 (1), 10-15.

¹⁷ Van Der Heide, William (2002). Malaysian cinema in *Malaysian Cinema, Asian Film: Border Crossings and National Cultures*, 161. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

and the Philippines. The book also elucidates the creativity of the Malays in adapting to the new challenges of technology and the change of taste of common Malay who wanted something modern and different. P. Ramlee repeatedly employed this technique in his film where he maintained certain traditional values and setting, with the addition of modern interpretation, dialogues, and characteristics.¹⁸

The Bright Star highlighted the importance of P. Ramlee's upbringing in multiracial environment of Pulau Pinang. The book also had one chapter dedicated to the role of Indian filmmaker in Malay film industry.¹⁹ The first Malay film produced in Malaya was *Laila Majnun* (1933) which was directed by B. S. Rajhans. He was a native Indian. P. Ramlee's upbringing in cosmopolitan and multiracial Penang is an important aspect to understand his approach in films. Racial relations were severely affected in Malaya after the British colonialism and Japanese occupation. Although Malays were supposed to be the majority, they in fact were only half of population of the total settlement. The spirit of artistry in Singapore was revived immediately after the return of British with the Shaw Brothers launching the Malay Film Production (MFP) located on Jalan Ampas. They restarted the production of the films such as *Singapura di Waktu Malam* (1947), *Chinta* (1948), *Noor Asmara* (1949) and *Aloha* (1950). This was the time of Roomai Noor and Siput Sarawak where they brought their 'Bangsawan' style acting into the Malay film. Most Malay films at the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s were inspired by the excitement and joyful element presented in Indian films. This was the kind of film preferred by the Malays who were the biggest consumer of film in Malaya.²⁰

Before P. Ramlee assumed the role of the director, he had appeared in two folktale inspired films. The first was *Abu Hasan Penchuri* (1955), in which he played the character of a thief who falls in love with the princess. This film was inspired by Arabian Nights story, where the setting was Baghdad in the time of Islamic Golden Age (circa 8th to 9th century). The dress they wore in the film displayed the Arabian-Persian elements. The film also heavily relied on the trick to show a flying horse and carpet to portray the magical and

¹⁸ Hassan Abd Muthalib (2013). *Malaysian Cinema in a Bottle*. Petaling Jaya: Merpati Jingga, 18.

¹⁹ Harding, James & Ahmad Sarji (2011). *P. Ramlee: The Bright Star*. Petaling Jaya: MPH Group Publishing Sdn. Bhd, 43.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 26-27.