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Literature, Development, and Southeast Asia

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Abstract

This article focuses on how development issues were portrayed in Southeast Asian literature in the latter half of the twentieth century. Initiative for undertaking developmental projects came from (1) external powers' aim to make local institutions conform to their criteria or (2) endogenous ambitions of emulating nations seen as enjoying higher standards of living. The concrete expression of the first was the adoption of the 'hearts and minds' strategy—the United States' response to the threat of communist movements in the region—as expressed in Thai literature of the 1970s. The second initiative was chosen in the Republic of Indonesia with its adoption and adaption of a cooperative development strategy, as enshrined in the Constitution. Selected works from the Colonial Era to the early Reform Era show a sequence of individual initiatives (Colonial Era, pre-1945) through individuals working collectively with the support of authorities (Sukarno Era, 1945–1965) to individuals taking the initiative in the face of passive authorities (New Order Era, 1965–1998), to the present apparent disenchantment with the model that has served Indonesia for the past three-quarters of a century.

Keywords: Development, Southeast Asia, hearts and minds, cooperative efforts, Southeast Asian literature

1 Introduction

Development has long been part of the Southeast Asian literary tradition. Among the oldest references are the modernizing jingles recited by students of the Vietnamese Dong Kinh Free School[1] at the beginning of the nineteenth century. A call for the complete transformation of old-fashioned attitudes and appearances is immortalized in the 'Cut your hair song'.

> *Your left hand should clasp a comb, your right hand should clutch a pair of scissors. Cut off your bun of hair at the back now. … Do it leisurely so that your haircut will be skillful. Cast away your stupidities, throw away your foolishness. Today we'll have a haircut, tomorrow we'll have a shave. (Chandler et al., 1971/1987, p. 316)*

As with much of indigenous knowledge, the jingle is expressed using symbols of the material aspects of development but implicitly contrasts with traditional perspectives and values. Following its lead, the present essay focuses on examples of how local and regional literature in selected Southeast Asian countries have portrayed complications in the struggle for a better life for the nations' inhabitants. Of necessity, these examples are limited to those with which the present author is familiar, mainly those of Indonesia. The aim is to provide insight into how issues of development are portrayed in novels and short stories, as witnessed by those whose lives are influenced by these issues.

From the below analysis of the literature, two general categories can be discerned. The first, implied by the jingle of the Dong Kinh Free school, is a local ambition to emulate countries seen as enjoying higher standards of life (in both a material and non-material sense). That such initiatives have been fostered by and supported in various degrees by outsiders—often in a colonial version of *noblesse oblige*, as seen in the Dutch Ethical Policy of the late nineteenth century (Chandler et al., 1971/1987, pp. 196, 292–293)—does not detract from indigenous enterprise as the determining element in cultural transfer. As revealed in the literature considered here, development projects' shortcomings or even failures are attributed to the poor performance of those engaged, be they initiators or authorities, rather than the projects themselves. Consequently, the remedy is improved implementation rather than the abandonment of commitment.

1 Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc

The second category, meanwhile, originates in foreign mandates aimed at bringing about change within the society in question. The threat of a communist alternative for building up the state, which was realized in Vietnam and Laos, cast a long shadow over the literature of the late twentieth century. A concrete reaction, propagated by the American government (backed by substantial military intervention) during the 1970s, was the policy of 'hearts and minds' diplomacy[2] aimed at winning local inhabitants' support against the goals of the communist movement[3]. Its dominance in development projects became the "American Era" in Thai literature (as discussed in the following section). In Southeast Asia, 'hearts and minds' diplomacy is most closely associated with U.S. Major General Edward Lansdale.[4] In the Philippines, the strategy—with the backing of the popular and reformistic President Ramon Magsaysay (1953–1957)—contributed measurably to the defeat of the communist-tinged Hukbalahap movement.[5] In the 1960s, this strategy became the United States' chosen instrument for countering the challenge presented by communist (and socialist) insurgency in the southern part of Vietnam. Use in Vietnam continued until the final denouement in 1975.[6] Whatever it lacked in reality, the 'hearts and minds' strategy remains a part of Southeast Asian heritage, not the least in the using the power of music and writing as an alternative to firepower:

> *[Lansdale's] weapons were not guns, but words and music, through which he hoped to persuade the people in the villages to resist the North Vietnamese communists and the home-grown insurgents, the Viet Cong. (Bell, 2008)*[7]

2 'Winning the hearts and minds' was a strategy used by foreign interlopers to drum up support from a subjected population. A favorite phrase of U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson, it may have been a play on John Adams' reference to the 'minds and hearts' of American Colonists during the Revolutionary War.

3 A variant was used as early as 1948 by the British military during the Malayan Emergency. By providing medical aid and food to the Malays and indigenous tribes, they offered trust as an alternative to communism pushed by ethnic Chinese. Only recently has Malay literature come to terms with the excesses perpetuated in the name of that policy.

4 See Currey, 1988, for a biography of Lansdale. A thumbnail portrait of Lansdale's career can be found in a recently published study of the CIA by Scott Anderson (2020).

5 The Hukbalahap (People's Anti-Japanese Army) of World War II developed into a revolutionary movement threatening the Manila government (Chandler et al., 1971/1987, pp. 432–434).

6 Despite its failure in Vietnam, a measure of the strength of the 'hearts and minds' ideal can be seen in later attempts to employ it in Iraq (among others), as well as a nostalgia for what could have been as captured in Max Boot's 2019 Pulitzer Prize finalist, *The Road not Taken: Edward Lansdale and the American Tragedy in Vietnam* (The Pulitzer Prizes, n.d.).

7 A lasting contribution of Lansdale was the creation and preservation of folksong collection tapes by Americans and Viet alike (see Fish, 1989)—some of which were reported to the country's leaders in an effort to clarify the message of the 'hearts and minds' campaign of the mid-1960s.

2 Thailand

'Hearts and minds' diplomacy is a common element in mid-1970s Thai literature. This section's discussion leans heavily on two works. The first is an anthology edited and translated by Benedict R. O'G. Anderson and Ruchira Mendiones (1985), *In the Mirror: Literature and Politics in Siam in the American Era*. Crucial here is the introductory essay by B. R. O'G Anderson (pp. 9–40), which sets the stories in historical and institutional perspective. The title's "American Era" pinpoints the period of U.S. engagement in the region, including its efforts to ensure that the war in neighboring Vietnam would not spread to Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia in a domino effect. Developmental aid programs sought primarily to counter the Marxist challenge; increasing welfare and supporting democratic institutions were secondary. A similar anthology, *Value Conflicts in Thai Society: Agonies of Change Seen in Short Stories* (Kriengkraipetch et al., 1992), expands its scope to cover attempts to alter the prevailing social system.

Tellingly, both anthologies contain translations of Witthayakon Chiangkun's 1974 "As If It Had Never Happened".[8] Through the eyes of a young girl, to whom the students—by dint of dress, behavior, and speech—belong to another world, this story relates the activities of a group of Bangkok students who have sacrificed their holidays in the interest of national development. The students travel to a poverty-stricken village in Northeast Thailand with the ambition of assisting the villagers in constructing a community hall. The project is initiated with many fine speeches, which are not understood entirely by the villagers; the work is carried out in a spirit of community effort; and its completion celebrated in style. Ultimately, however, a measurable contribution to villagers' lives is lacking; at the end of the story, the community hall stands empty except for a few stray water buffalo.

That these characteristics are not limited to short stories is attested to, among others, by Khammaan Khonkhai's novel *The Teachers of Mad Dog Swamp* (1978/1992). Originally published in 1978, it focuses upon a younger generation of idealistic (urban) young teachers who, at the end of their training, ask to be posted to remote villages in the Northeast, where they dedicate their lives to bettering residents' material and educational standards. They are confronted with many challenges, including not only the grinding poverty of the region but also villagers' resistance to change and vested interests' often violent opposition. The dramatic ending emphasizes failures on the personal plane and parochial forces' victory over those of progress.

8 Anderson & Mendiones, 1985, pp. 111–122; Kriengkraipetch et al., 1992, pp. 33–39

3 Indonesia

As an endogenous counterpart in comparison to Thailand, Indonesia's path differed. On the surface, the Indonesian model appears compatible with the cooperative movement embraced internationally. At least on paper, the various Indonesian governments' commitment to development is impeccable. Concrete expressions are found in, among others, the Five-Year national development plans promulgated at every new opening session of the People's Consultative Assembly (Replita[9] I, II, and so on), and the "development cabinets" appointed by the President. Moreover, if understood as the betterment of the material welfare of citizens, development is built into the Indonesian state, being ensconced in Article 33 of the Constitution of 1945.[10]

Such emphasis on mutual help and cooperation with authorities helps explain why Senggono (1957/1965)'s *Kembang Kantil* [Magnolia Blossom] embodies much of Indonesia's developmental ideals, even though it is written in Javanese rather than the national language of Indonesian. The novel deals with the victory of the collective action of progressive (young) individuals in cooperation with, if not in anticipation of, the authorities. These youth triumph over conservative forces—be they religious bigots or out-and-out criminals who draw on tradition and superstition—and receive the support of the authorities, in the person of a policeman who appears just when the cornered villains were about to commit violence against the novel's heroes.

The conflict between the traditional, superstitious villains, and modern, rational heroes is personified by the characters of Waris and Hardjita. Over the course of the novel, it becomes clear that Waris—a *kasar* (unrefined) villain stereotypical of Javanese folk theater (*ludruk*)—had been robbing and burning houses after he failed in his bid to be elected to the position of village chief. The novel opens with a village council meeting called to discuss these disasters, during which Waris states that these evil deeds are the work of supernatural forces (*wedhi*) centered about the deceased wife of the new village headman, claiming that she had somehow become an evil spirit and begun haunting the village.[11] In this manner, he attempted to discredit the newly elected village chief and establish himself as a leader of the older, more experienced generation.

9 *Rencana Pembangunan Lima Tahun* [Five-Year Development Plan]

10 Mohammad Hatta, the Republic of Indonesia's first vice president (1945–1956), choose to mainly focus on *keluaragaan* (cooperatives screened through a process of 'local genius') as the main form of development in Indonesia (see Hatta & Yasni, 1981, p. 86).

11 Belief in supernatural meddling was not just confined to literary fiction. Geertz (1960) documented many stories, several types of spirits, and the ceremonies and protective measures taken by villagers in East Java.

Waris' opposite is the more *halus* (refined) Hardjita, the natural leader of the village youth. In his reply, Hardjita debunks the idea that the village's troubles were caused by supernatural entities, as charged by Waris and Mas Muljasedana, the village *penghulu* or religious functionary. He felt that they should not waste time identifying who had become a 'worm' in the village's 'body', thereby bringing misfortune.

> *What is most necessary is to still unrest so that the miscreants, the worms in the stomach of the village, can be quickly apprehended. Thus, the priorities are to calm the situation and capture those responsible, not investigate the whole affair and then discuss future action. This takes too long, extending the people's suffering…. [T]hose disgracing the village can be caught only if all the villagers, young and old, officials and non-officials, can work together in a ronda [*night patrol*] which can fight as a guerrilla band. (Senggono, 1957/1965, pp. 14–15).*

Ultimately, young people—patrolling the village in the true spirit of *gotong royong* (community self-help, mutual cooperation)—defeat the villains and their use of fear. Although Hardjita makes a personal sacrifice, being physically injured during this process, he and the *ronda* receive the support of the police and the village council. Symbolically, this records the success of collective modernity over an appeal to the traditional supernatural. On a more personal note, the subsequent marriage of Hardjita to a moderately modern Wartini makes for a happy ending. This is tempered by the interlude, during which Hardjita is rejected by Supini, who dies at the novel's end. Her death-bed scene underscores the message that modern rational action, within the bounds of Islam, will emerge victorious over religious fanaticism (pp. 176–177).[12]

Kembang Kantil departs from a general urban bias. The ideals and convictions of the progressive actors, Hardjita and his companions, could have come from urban stimuli, but the novel itself implies a rural setting using a course of action drawn from villagers' common sense. Tellingly, the population of Gadingredja, where the novel takes place, are identified as inhabitants of the Lampung region of southern Sumatra; this implicitly presents them as migrants (*transmigran*), as individuals who participated in one of the Sukarno–Hatta Era's key projects: a program designed to redistribute the population of the nascent Indonesian Republic.

12 See also Quinn, 1992, p. 89.

Preceding and following examples, however, tend to take a different turn. More typical is the conflict between a relatively isolated figure who takes a stand for progressive ideals despite hindrances and passive authorities. This can be traced back to Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana's *Lajar Terkembang* [*With Sails Unfurled*] from 1936. The key actor is Tuti, who is actively engaged in political and social movements aimed at improving the lot of Indonesian women. As such, she is at the forefront of a team of political activists and makes several personal sacrifices in this engagement. Tuti's background and character contain echoes of the urban–rural dichotomy, as well as that between modern and traditional thinking. However, her goals do not necessarily follow those of the authorities—at that time, Dutch East Indies officials—or even those generally held by Minangkabau society. The novel's ending, with her sister Maria's prolonged illness and eventual death, are not directly connected to the development theme. However, Maria asks on her deathbed that her betrothed marry Tuti, and by implication assist in her work. This reflects S. T. Alisjahbana's conviction that striving for society's development transcends personal concerns.

A similar approach is seen in Umar Kayam's *Para Priyayi*[13] [Javanese Gentry] from 1992, well into Suharto's New Order period. As with Tuti in *Layar Terkembang*, the Sastrodarsono family directs its activities toward realizing public enlightenment through education. Despite coming from modest means, the founder of the clan is actively engaged in village education, even above and beyond his regular teaching duties. His example is followed by his son, Hardojo, who uses his teaching positions—first in Mangkunegaran, then in Yogyakarta City—to fight against illiteracy. Sastrodarsono's grandson, Harimurti, follows in his footsteps, although he interprets education in broader cultural terms to include traditional folk culture such as *ketoprak* and *tembang*. Both works portray their heroes' actions as being motivated by a sense of *noblesse oblige*, a traditional, if rarely witnessed, form of civic responsibility.

Specific examples of literary characters single-handedly attempting development activities, despite being handicapped by the actions (or inaction) of governmental authorities, are found in the works of Ahmad Tohari (Yudiono, 2003). These include Pambudi, the central figure of *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak* [At the Foot of Cibalak Hill] (1986), and even more important Kantjat in *Bekisar Merah* [The Red Bekisar] (1993). Pambudi works for the local rice storage cooperative (*lumbuh padi*), part of the state-led cooperative initiatives that characterized the New Order. There he discovers irregularities in the sale of members' rice stores by the *lurah* (village chief). This earns him the enmity of not only the cooperative chief, but also the newly elected and corrupt *lurah*. Through his work in the

13 *priyayi* = bureaucratic elite

cooperative, Pambudi also becomes involved in the difficulties of Mbok Ralem, an impoverished widow with two young children to care for. She has no land to farm and suffers from a cancerous growth on her neck, for which she lacks funds for treatment. The *lurah* refuses to grant her a loan of rice from the cooperative, since it is unlikely that she will be able to repay it. Pambudi later leaves for Yogyakarta to study, supporting himself with part-time jobs, which lead, among other things, to an affair with a Chinese girl. Once in Yogyakarta, Pambudi independently arranges to collect donations from concerned newspaper readers for Mbok Ralem's treatment. The initiative is much praised in Yogyakarta, as well as by the national press. For the authorities in his home village, however, it is a source of great embarrassment, so much so that it becomes impossible for Pambudi to return. In any event, the *lurah* had ruined Pambudi's chance of marrying his intended by taking her as a second wife.

In *Bekisar Merah* [The Red Bekisar] (Tohari, 1993), meanwhile, the character of Kantjat plays a double role.[14] Firstly, he befriends the book's heroine, Lasi, and protects her from the taunts and jibes of their fellow village children. Secondly, and more importantly, is his role in voicing Indonesia's social conscience. As the son of the village's well-to-do buyer (*kulak*) of palm sugar—the sole source of income in Krangsoga, Kantjat studies at a university and receives an engineering degree. His talents are recognized, and he is asked to stay on at the university as a research assistant to Pak Jarem.

In this capacity, he produces a paper on the economic situation of his fellow villagers. By writing this paper, Kantjat comes to terms with his own moral dilemma. He realizes that workers are condemned to the only line of work open to them (i.e., as palm sugar producers) and must bear the physical dangers from climbing the trees, the demanding work of cooking the sugar, and the guaranteed poverty due to capricious sugar prices. His own material wellbeing, including the opportunity to study, was only made possible from their toils. In pondering what to do, he rejects out of hand the idea of forming a cooperative; one had been established earlier, and though initial results had been promising, the cooperative had quickly changed and undermined trust in such institutions.

> *The cooperative became an oppressive form of a trade monopoly, which increasingly made things more difficult for its members. The price of palm sugar fell even more because the transaction chain was longer; the cooperative could only sell the collected sugar through a*

14 A *bekisar* is a "cross between domestic chicken and jungle fowl" (Echols & Shadily, 1989). This is often read as applying to Lasi, who was the daughter of a local Javanese woman and a Japanese soldier that stayed after World War II. However, it could also be read as referring to Kantjat, who has one foot in the modern camp (having received a university education) and the other firmly planted in village traditions.

> *couple of merchants (tauke) who had—in the traditional manner—become direct collectors in buying and selling palm sugar. In addition, the cooperative's directors were the village's higher priyayi, who had to be paid an honorarium and so looked for profit. Hence the sugar cooperative collapsed, because it did not have the trust of its members. (Tohari, 1993, pp. 124–125)*

When Kantjat shows his paper to his supervisor, Pak Jarem admonishes him:

> *[M]any graduates like you have forgotten or pretend to forget that the teachers who have instructed them from elementary school up through the centers of higher learning are all paid by the people. (p. 127)*[15]

Pak Jarem continues by pointing out the social responsibility of academicians and encourages Kantjat to go ahead with his project. A chance meeting in Jakarta with Lasi, who has fled the village and her childless marriage, brings him ultimately back home to Karangsoga. Kantjat assembles his team and embarks on the realization of his dream for improving sugar palm yields to benefit the villagers. The means of doing so comes from his university studies, but not the initiative, which is firmly rooted in the village. In these efforts, he receives material support neither from his family, who are against it, nor the authorities, who are indifferent, but from Lasi, who had become rich thanks to a marriage of convenience with an impotent Jakarta businessman.

Roughly contemporaneous with Tohari's novels are two Javanese novels, Esmiet (1977)'s *Tunggak-Tunggak Jati* [Trunks of Teak] and Sudharma K. D.[16] (Karto Dwijo, ca. 1977)'s *Tumbal Kreteg Samaulun* [Sacrifice to Samaulun Bridge]. The two have similar plots: a young engineer (forestry or civil) diligently follows and enforces the rules laid down by the central government, but this leads directly to conflict with local and regional corruption by vested political interests, which renders the ideals of the authorities meaningless. As with *Orang-Orang Projek*, discussed below, this stops them from satisfactorily carrying out their tasks, be it to manage a forest or to build a bridge. Under the Indonesian constitution, the projects are public endeavors and thus the property of the people (at least on paper). Consequently, those working for forestry reform are stymied, and the non-authorized use of public forest lands is 'illegal' because they do not follow the literal wording of bureaucratic rules. This is supplemented by kickbacks and corruption on the part of local officials, not infrequently supplemented by appeals to tradition and even superstition. Right and wrong

15 See also pp. 244–45.

16 A spelling variant is Soedarma K.D.

have been turned upside down; recourse to the spirit (but not necessarily the letter) of Article 33 and its cooperative model is interpreted as a 'radical', which after 1965 takes on negative, if not criminal, overtones. To a great extent, such novels in the literature of Indonesia are thus expressions of efforts to fulfill development ideals despite official indifference or even active opposition.

A late Suharto Era example of an actor committed to development comes from Ayu Utami's *Saman* (1998). As the novel is a self-acknowledged fragment, the plot, such that it is, focuses on the narrator Laila's problematic relationship with Sahir, who is already married and lukewarm in his commitment to a physical affair with her. More relevant here is the middle part of the work, which constitutes a story within a story. It is introduced by an accident on one of the state-owned Pertamina oil monopoly's drilling rigs which took the lives of several workers, among others a close friend of Sahir. It is when witnessing the incident that the narrator first meets Sahir, and subsequently decides to act against the local supervisor whose irresponsibility and callousness are ultimately responsible for the accident. When their letters of protest are ignored by Pertamina, they consult with a group of activists (apparently an NGO) in Palembang. The key figure here is Wis, a defected minister whose history constitutes the middle part of the novel.

After leaving the seminary, Wis asks to be posted to the district town in central Sumatra where he grew up. Considerable details are given on his childhood, with particular attention to the mystery concerning what would have been younger siblings had they not miraculously disappeared from his mother's womb without a trace. On Wis' arrival at his new posting, he visits his old home and encounters what he believes to be the ghost of his younger siblings. This turns out to be a mentally handicapped and deformed girl, Upi. In bringing Upi home to her family of poor rubber tappers on the nearby state-owned plantation, Wis is moved by her plight and decides spontaneously to do something for her. Upi has been abused and sexually violated by village thugs. All Wis' free time, as well as special leaves from his new duties, are spent in arranging proper housing for Upi. During that time, he becomes increasingly engaged in the struggles of the rubber tappers against the plantation directors. The directors want to transition from rubber to more profitable palm oil, even though this will deprive the villagers of their livelihoods and homes. With Upi's brother, Anson, Wis helps the villagers physically and ideologically build up their resources. This attracts the unfavorable attention of the plantation company, which sends its thugs to the village to burn down several of the newly built houses as an object lesson. Wis is also kidnapped and tortured, ostensibly at one of the factories. Assisted by Anson, he escapes and is cared for in a nursing home run by the Church. However, as he had participated in helping the villagers (i.e., revolting against the authorities of the state-owned

plantation), he must flee for his own safety and that of the church establishment. He comes to Palembang, where he actively engages in protest movements against the authorities. It is in this capacity that he meets the narrator and Sahir. At this point the novel abruptly shifts back to the relationship between the latter two, which is played out in Manhattan, leaving the reader ignorant as to the fate of the action against the authorities.

Common to these works, to which doubtlessly others could be added, is the idea that action does not lead to development. It is not a matter of increasing local communities' material resources and maximizing their human capacity through collective action, even when led by outsiders. Rather it is a question of protest or struggle against the very instruments that are supposed to provide salvation, such as cooperatives and state-owned enterprises. Unlike examples in which protagonists press to accelerate development projects in agreement with the authorities, the struggle is to get the authorities to live up to their responsibilities, i.e., further the welfare of the people while observing basic human rights in doing so.

This theme is further developed in the plot of Ahmad Tohari (2002)'s *Orang-Orang Projek* [Project People] as an indictment on the current Reform Era. The story tells of a young civil engineer, Kabul, who is responsible for building a bridge somewhere in western Central Java. Additional complications arise from his growing attachment to the project's secretary, Wati, which is mutual despite her being engaged to a Gadjah Mada student who has often postponed their marriage. Kabul's immediate problem is with the constant loss of the project's strategic building materials through politically motivated corruption that is implicitly endorsed by his superiors. Also problematic is the pilfering of building materials to be used in rebuilding the local mosque. Kabul's problem is double. This obviously constitutes corruption, although the fact that it profits religion puts Kabul in a moral dilemma. More practically, it threatens the project by weakening the bridge's construction, thus undermining his professional integrity. Having quit the project in protest, he can only witness on the sidelines the elaborate bridge-opening celebrations are carried out by representatives from Jakarta and local interests, marking this accomplishment of national development. Despite his 'treachery' in objecting to corruption, he finds employment with a private contractor, an alternative made possible by the business-friendly reform government. Less than a year later he and his young wife, the former project secretary, happen to visit the bridge site on their way to her parent's house. They discover that the bridge is closed as being unsafe to cross. Despite vindication for Kabul, the implication is that this is the rule, not the exception.

An even more pessimistic tone prevails in Ngarto Februana's *Menolak Panggilan Pulang* [Refusing the Call to Return] from 2000. Set amongst the Dayaks of southern Borneo, the novel deals with the contrast between the ideal of local self-improvement represented by Aruni, the daughter of a chief of a longhouse and the unpleasant realities of the time. Although she has only completed elementary school (*sekolah dasar*) and is immersed in traditional *adat*, Aruni has also acquired an understanding of the wider world. She makes a personal contribution by teaching as a volunteer both at the elementary school and in rudimentary adult-education courses. Her antithesis is the talented but spoiled son of another chieftain, Utay, who has completed high school at the nearest town (a day or so travel from the longhouses). Despite being the pride of his clan, as the only Merunda Dayak to complete secondary school, Utay's only connection to his home is his desire for Aruni. His ambitions are material and self-centered. The denouement of the novel comes in a physical clash between the village and the forestry company, PT Rimba Nusantara, backed by the authorities who have been misled by Utay into thinking that the Dayaks are willing to change their lifestyle by planting fast-growing trees on their *ladang* (dry rice fields) instead of foodstuffs even though they had, led by Aruni, actually rejected the company's offer. Despite knowing that such change-over would destroy the Dayak way of life, Utay persists, tempted by the promised rewards: a motorcycle and a job within the company.

Despite local sentiments, the project has full support from the development authorities in Jakarta. Accompanied by the appropriate governmental officials, the company attempts to deliver the first batch of seedlings for fast-growing forests. Mistrust of outsiders' intentions and a growing antipathy toward Utay result in a heated confrontation which escalates into a small riot, ultimately leaving several Dayaks dead or wounded. Utay is branded as a deceiver by the company and his ambitions are crushed. More importantly, he becomes a fugitive, and must ultimately be sentenced by his father to *adat* justice. The disaster is complete when it is learned that Aruni is with child, a result of Utay's seduction. In desperation, Utay sets fire to his father's longhouse, thus fulfilling a prediction that the community would be punished by the gods in retaliation for departing from the traditional way of life.

4 Conclusion

Possibly skewed by an introduction from one of the foremost scholars of Southeast Asian politics, the Thai examples poignantly portray the mismatch between the aims the 'hearts and minds' strategy foisted on the country and the needs and ideals of the receiving society. The two existed on different planes, and the lack of congruence led not to anger or confrontation, but to emptiness. Ultimately, the strategy did not outlive the Vietnam war from which it was derived, and Thai development was left to state indifference and dominated by elite capitalism—guided from the royal seat of power in Bangkok.

For Indonesia during the late colonial period and the Old Order (1949–1965), development was a question of a lone hero inspiring her or his contemporaries to join in a collective and progressive effort for the betterment of village society. This was done with personal sacrifice, leading—at least by implication—to positive results. Individual initiators or influencers were in the forefront of the developmental ideals embraced by society, i.e., enlightenment through education or rural common sense, bound together by the collective commitment of their contemporaries.

Yet, times were changing. With the elimination of any challenge from the socialistic left and resultant growth of authoritarian rule, created and enforced by the New Order (1965–1998), development was institutionalized as a protocol for state organs, which were subsequently captured by scions of the Suharto political dynasty. Corruption and abuse of office were rife, although confined to the corridors of power centered in Jakarta. As a result, the literature of the period tended to reflect the backside of a development ordered and administered by servile officials. The final step was the introduction of alternatives to state-led development during the early Reform Era, taking the form of openings for private enterprise with resultant opportunities for individuals. Within this context, Indonesia has passed through a phase of 'local genius' (western cooperatives tailored to Indonesian realities) to yet another developing nation trapped in a neo-classic economic model.

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