

**THE SUBORDINATION OF CHINESE-MALAYSIAN
AS MINORITY GROUP IN MALAYSIA IN CHAN LING YAP'S
BITTER-SWEET HARVEST NOVEL**

UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

**BY
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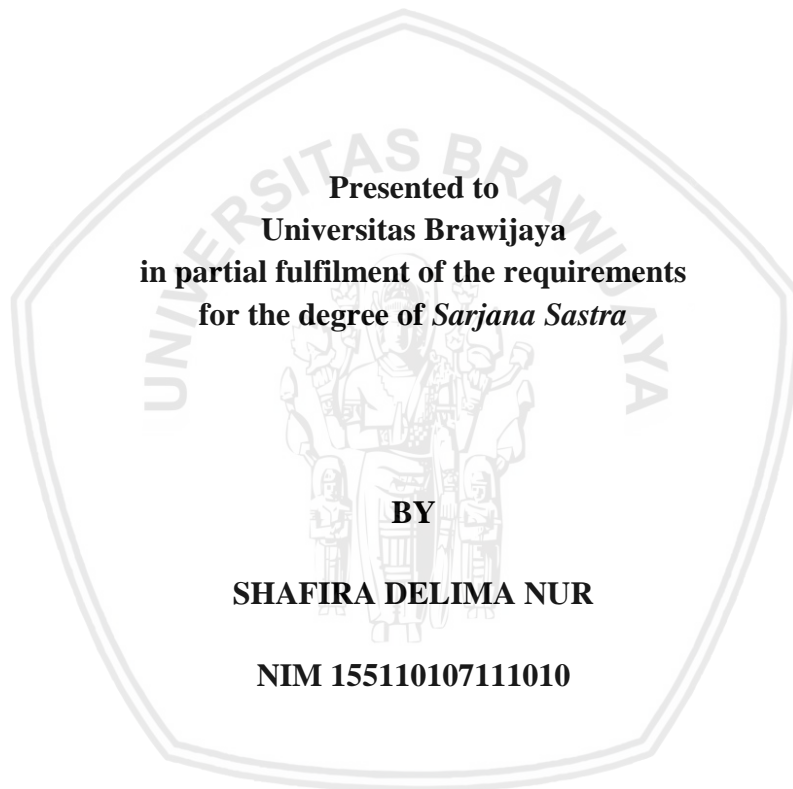


**STUDY PROGRAM OF ENGLISH
DEPARTEMENT OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE
FACULTY OF CULTURAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITAS BRAWIJAYA**

2019

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UNDERGRADUATE THESIS



**Presented to
Universitas Brawijaya
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of *Sarjana Sastra***

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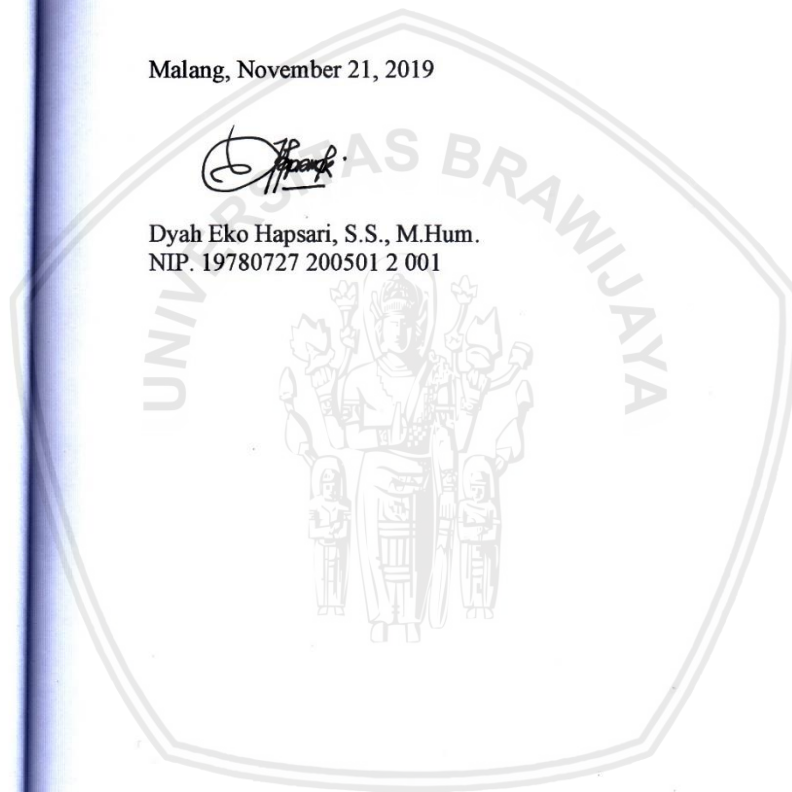
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ABSTRACT

Nur, Shafira Delima. 2019. *The Subordination of Chinese Malaysian as Minority Group in Malaysia in Chan Ling Yap's Bitter-sweet Harvest Novel*. Study Program of English, Brawijaya University. Advisor: Dyah Eko Hapsari.

Keywords: *Chinese Malaysian, Subordination, Minority, Bitter-sweet Harvest*

The *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel is a literature work written by a Malaysian author namely Chan Ling Yap. The majority and minority relationships are shown in this novel since the story of the novel is mainly about the two ethnics which are the *Bumiputera* and Chinese Malaysians. By having the race riot of May 13th 1969 in Malaysia as the background of the novel, the story revolves around the tension of the two ethnics and how it is causing disadvantages to the minority which is the Chinese Malaysians in the society.

This research has one main goal which is to discuss the subordination of Chinese Malaysians while being the minority group and also as the subordinate in the Malaysian society at that time. Furthermore, the socio-historical approach is applied in order to understand the behavior of the Chinese Malaysians as they are being the minority and how they deal with their own problems from the sociological point of view. While the historical point of view will explain briefly about the race riot of May 13th 1969 as it is the setting of the novel which also contains an important role in this novel.

The subordination of Chinese Malaysians in this novel are strongly associated with the status of Chinese Malaysians being the minority in the Malaysian society. The adjustment of the Chinese Malaysians to the *Bumiputera* culture and the lack of privileges that they hold compared to the majority which is the Indigenous Malaysians shows how the majority is having more power compared to the minority.

ABSTRAK

Nur, Shafira Delima. 2019. *The Subordination of Chinese Malaysian as Minority Group in Malaysia in Chan Ling Yap's Bitter-sweet Harvest Novel*. Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Universitas Brawijaya. Pembimbing: Dyah Eko Hapsari.

Kata Kunci: *Tionghoa Malaysia, Kelas Bawah, Minoritas, Bitter-sweet Harvest*

Novel dengan judul *The Bitter-Sweet Harvest* merupakan sebuah karya sastra yang ditulis oleh penulis berasal dari Malaysia yang bernama Chan Ling Yap. Hubungan antara mayoritas dan minoritas digambarkan didalam novel ini yang bercerita mengenai hubungan dua etnik yaitu orang Tionghoa Malaysia dan Pribumi Malaysia. Novel ini juga dilatarbelakangi dengan kejadian kerusuhan antar ras pada 13 Mei 1969 di Malaysia yang menyebabkan ketegangan antara dua etnik tersebut yakni Tionghoa Malaysia dan Pribumi Malaysia dan bagaimana kerusuhan antar ras tersebut, menyebabkan kaum minoritas layaknya Tionghoa Malaysia mengalami keadaan yang cukup merugikan mereka.

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mendiskusikan keadaan Tionghoa Malaysia sebagai kaum minoritas dan juga kaum yang berada di kelas bawah di lingkungan masyarakat Malaysia pada saat itu. Pendekatan sosiologis dan historis diaplikasikan pada penelitian ini untuk memahami sikap Tionghoa Malaysia dalam menghadapi masalah yang mereka alami sebagai minoritas dari perspektif sosiologi. Sedangkan dari perspektif sejarah, kejadian kerusuhan antar ras pada 13 Mei 1969 akan dijelaskan secara singkat, mengingat kejadian tersebut merupakan latarbelakang dan juga memiliki peran penting dalam novel ini.

Peran kaum Tionghoa Malaysia sebagai kaum kelas bawah didalam novel ini, berkaitan kuat dengan status mereka sebagai kaum minoritas di lingkungan masyarakat. Penyesuaian diri yang dilakukan oleh kaum Tionghoa Malaysia dengan kultur kaum Pribumi Malaysia dan juga ketiadaan hak istimewa yang kaum Tionghoa Malaysia miliki apabila dibandingkan dengan kaum Pribumi Malaysia merupakan sebuah indikasi bahwa kaum mayoritas memiliki kekuatan lebih dibandingkan dengan kaum minoritas.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge all kind of supports given by everyone whether it is emotional or spiritual that encourage me to finish this undergraduate thesis entitled **The Subordination of Chinese Malaysian as Minority Group in Malaysia in Chan Ling Yap's *Bitter-Sweet Harvest* Novel.**

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dyah Eko Hapsari, S.S., M.Hum. as my beloved advisor who has been giving me enourmous support since my first attempt to form this undergraduate thesis. Without her dedication and support, this undergraduate thesis would be not more than just a small idea. I also want to express my greatest appreciation to Yusri Fajar, S.S., M.A. as my examiner, because without his guidance and his insightful comments and suggestions, I would not be able to improve my thesis.

I also grateful for the encouragement and moral support given by all of my friends that are able to change my sorrow into joy. I am afraid I am not able to list each one of you. However, please do remember that each one of your support means the world to me when ironically, the world feels like come to an end for me.

I also want to thank my family whose existence is my number one priority. In addition, special thanks for my late grandmother, who truly loves me unconditionally. Last but not least, for myself who survive to this day and finish this undergraduate thesis willingly.

Malang, November 21, 2019

The Author

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Malaysia, formerly known as Malaya, is one of the multi-racial and multi-ethnic country in Southeast Asia and located at the northern island of Borneo known as East Malaysia and also partly at the Malay Peninsula known as West Malaysia. As a multi-racial and multi-ethnic country, having various races, ethnics and cultures that are rich in traditions and customs and be able to make them as one cultural syncretism is no easy task, since each ethnic and race in Malaysia strongly maintain each with its own cultural identities. History plays an important role regarding to the relationship between ethnics. The British colonization in the past left a big impact on how the structure of the government is formed along with the demarcation of ethnical groups in Malaysia. Due to the British policy named "divide and rule", the British are successfully determine people and their job based on their ethnicity. The Indigenous Malays, also known as *Bumiputera*, are assigned to have jobs in agricultural and fishing, meanwhile Chinese and Indians, also known as Non-Malays would exploit the tin mines and open new lands for rubbers estate cultivation (Noor, 2009, p.162). This division of work clearly shows the gap between *Bumiputera* and the Non-Malays on how the former belongs to the lower class and the latter belongs to the higher class that becomes the origin of the unbalanced economy and later would strengthen the emergence of racism in

Malaysia. The word *Bumiputera* which literally means son of the soil, has its own history. Before the term *Bumiputera* was coined, there were similar terms called Malay and Malayness. In non-European contexts that is, by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, 'Malay' and 'Malayness' were associated with two major elements, namely: (i) a line of kingship acknowledging descent from Srivijaya and Melaka; and (ii) a commercial diaspora retaining the customs, language and trade practices of Melaka (Shamsul, 2001, p. 361-362). Sociologically speaking, the inhabitants of the archipelago in the pre-European era used the term 'Malay' in both objective and subjective ways. Kingship was used as an objective measure, Islam as both objective and subjective: it was an objective criterion to define the King and his subjects (Muslim and non-Muslims) whereas, subjectively speaking, anyone who claimed to embrace Islam could be counted as 'Malay'. Non-Muslims and non-Malays could be labelled as 'Malays', as long as they spoke and wrote 'Malay' and lived a 'Malay way of life' – meaning that they wore certain clothes, followed certain culinary practices, and became an integral part of the Malay speaking trading network (Shamsul, 2001, p. 362). Therefore, the identity of Malay or Malayness are strongly associated with their own culture. However, in 1963 the Federation of Malaysia initiated a new definition of 'Malay' and 'Malayness' based on the Muslim population in Sabah and Sarawak. Following federation, Article 153 of the federal Constitution was amended to extend the special privileges reserved for Malays (but not *Orang Asli*) to the 'natives' of Sabah and Sarawak (Hooker, 2003, p. 227). Together with Malays throughout the federation, they became known as 'Bumiputera' (Hooker, 2003, p. 227). Thus, the term *Bumiputera*

becomes a term to officialised the 'Malays' and became an important term especially after the NEP was implemented.

The impact of the British colonization still left its trace although Malaysia achieved independence through a negotiation with British in August 31st, 1957. The relationship between ethnics used to be in a harmony when each ethnic form an organization consisting of members from each ethnic such as United Malays National Organization (UMNO) in 1946. The Chinese founded the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) in 1949, and similarly, the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) was formed in 1946 (Noor, 2009, p.162), these organizations cooperate with each other that later on resulting in Malaysia's independence in 1957 until the racial riot of May 13 in 1969 happened in Malaysia. The violence was only the tip of the iceberg of a far more serious and deep-seated problem of a structural nature confronting the society as a result of its past (Noor, 2009, p.163). Due to the impact of the British's policy which is "Divide and Rule" in the past, the Chinese eventually dominate the economy sector while the poverty amongst the Malays is unavoidable. While the riots of May 1969 were inevitable due to past structural income and sectarian imbalances between the Malays and the Chinese, the immediate trigger was the outcome of the federal election (Noor, 2009, p.163). The election of May 10th 1969 is a general election in which the multiracial coalition or governing Alliance party comprised of UMNO, MCA, MIC led by Tunku Abdul Rahman and their objective was to win two-thirds majority of the seats in Parliament. While the Chinese-dominated opposition party comprised of Pan-Islamic Malaysian Party, the DAP or Democratic Action Party, Gerakan and PPP,

and their goals as an opposition party is absolutely to put a stop to the Alliance party to win the election and to prevent them to rule Malaysia as they wish. Eventually, the opposition party win the election thus the explosion of May 13 in 1969 happened between both ethnics, Malays and Chinese. Malays killed Chinese in the streets and in their homes, as well as burned down Chinese shophouses, while Chinese secret societies killed Malays in revenge (Jones, 2014, p.76). People from both ethnics are killing against one another and many innocent lives died in vain. Kuala Lumpur is shrouded in blood, fear and anger. Finally the government creates several policies to dampen the tense between Chinese and Malays such as curfew policy and economic policy that aims to reduce the poverty amongs Malays. Since then, the relationship between both ethnics, Chinese and Malays is not in the good terms. Although the relationship of both ethnics are constantly improving especially in 1990, there are few problems that need more attention regarding to the relationship of both ethnics.

Nowadays, many Malays are still unhappy with the economic power of the Chinese and their dominance in the corporate sector (Noor, 2009, p.164). Eventhough the implementation New Economic Policy make a rapid growth in terms of economy especially the economy of the Malays, the Malays are still dissatisfied and unhappy how Chinese still have the higher role for economy in Malaysia and they are scared that Chinese would use their economic power to pave their way into politics. On the other hand, the Chinese still resent the Malays' political dominance, their monopoly of the public and government sector (Noor, 2009, p.165). The Chinese are unhappy about the Malays' political dominance and

how the Malays use their political power to make such policies that would adverse them and make them feel discriminated. Politics is not the only matter that the Chinese are unhappy about, but also in terms of religion. In the cultural arena, the biggest challenge to the stability of ethnic relations is the interrelated issue of how Islam will reconfigures the Malay identity as the community confronts modernity and how the state will response to the Islamic reconfiguration of Malay identity (Guan, 2000, p.26). Since Malays is the most dominant ethnic in Malaysia, they want to make Malaysia as an Islamic country due to the fact that half of the population in Malaysia are Malays and Islam is practised by the majority of Malays. The Non-Malays which mainly consisting of Chinese and Indians are despondent about this matter since they are Non-Muslims and feel unease about any movement regarding to the Islamization of the society in Malaysia. Perhaps, Malaysia would still maintain their open cultural policy in the future in order to have a racial unity between all ethnics.

Literature is a form of human expression. People have been using literature for centuries to express their deepest feelings and as a reflection to society. However, Malaysian literature has its own journey in Malaysia. Especially Malaysian Literature in English has certainly made considerable progress (Quayum, 2001, p.1). Since the enactment of Language Act 1967, Professor Ismail Hussein, in his fierce advocacy of Malay literature as national literature, even went on to dismiss literature in “Chinese, Tamil, or English” as “foreign literatures” or “aimless literature,” because in his view they were written in “non-indigenous languages” and could not be “understood by all Malaysians” (Quayum and Wicks

cited in Quayum, 2001, p.3). Foreign writers or those who write in English, Chinese, and Tamil are having a difficulty to publish their works since foreign works have no support or sponsor from the literary establishment. In order to have these foreign literatures to be published alongside with the indigenous literature, most of the foreign writers would self-published their works. Ee Tiang Hong, Malaysian poet and one of the foreign writers in English, write a poem entitled *Exile* to express his dissatisfaction and choose to leave Malaysia in 1975. Fortunately in the mid 80s, foreign languages, especially English gained its acceptance and therefore pioneer writers such as Phui Nam, Lloyd Fernando and Lee Kok Liang start to publish their works again in the 80s and 90s. Nowadays, the new writers are also start to bloom with their literary works such as Tan Twan Eng who won the Man Asian Literary Prize in 2013 and also Chan Ling Yap who won the Popular Readers' Choice Award for the year in 2014 with her novel entitled *New Beginnings*.

Bitter-sweet Harvest novel is a novel written by Malaysian-born author named Chan Ling Yap. She was educated in Malaysia and then took Ph.D in the UK and currently work as a lecturer in University of Malaya. She is known for her previous work which is *Sweet Offerings* gained a lot praise and positive responses for its evocation in Asia. Followed by her newer works which are *Bitter-sweet Harvest* released in 2011, *New Beginnings* in 2014 and *A Flash of Water* around 2015 and 2016. Her four novels mainly revolves around politics, economics, and social changes in China and Malaysia. However, the four novels can be read separately without having to read them in order.

The story of *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel is mainly revolves around in the aftermath of May 13th riot 1969 which was a racial conflict between Chinese Malaysian and *Bumiputera*. The novel shows the tension involved in a relationship of two Oxford University students between a Chinese Malaysian woman named An Mei and a *Bumiputera* man named Hussein . However, their relationship is complicated since An-Mei, a Chinese girl decide to follow a Malay boy, Hussein to run away to Malaysia. Moreover, when An-Mei arrive at Malaysia she realizes that Hussein's family is not fond of her because she is Chinese and Hussein's family is a high-tier family who has a high role in Malaysia, especially in terms of politics. Hussein's family is not fond of the idea to ruin their reputation by having a Chinese girl to be their future daughter in-law. This is the beginning of how An Mei tries to survive in Kuala Lumpur along with her traumatized family caused by the riot, and how she is being mistreated by Hussein's Malay family, and also how the government of Malaysia seems to favor *Bumiputera* more than Chinese Malaysian. Both An Mei and her family have gone through a lot of struggles to build a new life and to survive.

This study will use socio-historical approach to literature to analyze certain aspects in the novel. Sociological approach to literature is that literature be viewed as social interaction in imagination, whereby possibilities of human behavior are explored in depth. (Merril, 1967, p.650). Therefore sociological approach to literature is focusing on the relation between a literary work and the elements within such as class, gender, ethnicity, cultural, economic, political, religious values within inside the literary work that will be explored in depth. While the historical approach

is focusing on the historical aspects in the literary work. Therefore, the Sociological aspect is expected to be more dominant in this study than the historical approach since there are a lot of changes on economy and politics which shape Malaysia into a nation that people acknowledge until the present day.

1.2 Problem of The Study

Based on the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel that revolves around the relationship of two people with different ethnics which are Chinese Malaysian girl named An-Mei and a man named Hussein as a part of *Bumiputera*, the researcher would like to dig into the subordination that An Mei and her family had to go through as Chinese-Malaysians in Malaysia at that time.

1.3 Objective of The Study

This research will discuss further about the life of Chinese Malaysians by analyzing the subordination of An Mei and other Chinese character as the minority in Malaysian society at that time in the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework that applied to analyze and interpret the data. The socio-historical approach to literature is chosen because the setting of the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel is in the aftermath of the race riot of Malaysia which is in 1970s, therefore the historical aspect plays a significant role in the novel as well as the sociological aspect. Since the race riot of May 13th in Malaysia left many unpleasant traces and aggravate the relationship between Chinese Malaysian and *Bumiputera* as shown in the novel, the race and ethnic relations between Chinese Malaysian and *Bumiputera* will be discussed further along with the racial and ethnics discrimination experienced by Chinese Malaysian in the novel.

2.1.1 Socio-Historical Approach to Literature

As one of the country in South East Asia whose population live with cultural diversity, there are certain problems that a nation has to confront caused by the differences that each race or ethnic possess whilst maintaining equality for all races and ethnics. Thus there will be no race or ethnic that left behind or feel discriminated. Unfortunately, the emergence of race riot in May 13th 1969 in Malaysia is one real evidence that sometimes people, human beings with different

roots or cultural background are having a struggle to build a harmonious relationship.

Regarding with the relationship between *Bumiputera* and Chinese Malaysian in the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel, it will be reviewed from the sociological and historical aspect. Sociology approach to literature is an approach that literature be viewed as social interaction in imagination, whereby possibilities of human behavior are explored in depth (Merril, 1967, p.650). Therefore, the social interaction that portrayed by the characters in any form of literature and their behavior toward each other in any situation will be explored in depth. By understanding the interaction between characters and their human behavior, it will lead to comprehend the message that any form of literature trying to convey. Studies in the sociology of literature benefit the possibility of comparing, in as specific terms as a with possible, the literary treatment of topic objective findings concerning the same phenomena, i.e., the literary treatment of separation, death, or divorce, with factual studies of these topics (Barnett & Gruen, 1948, p.323). Sociological approach to literature can be a reflection to society by understanding human interactions, it is able to compare certain situations in reality and in literature works. In literature, certain phenomena or conflict which can be internal or external, happen to some characters and depict how the characters live through the conflicts. There is a huge possibility that these conflicts are the embodiment of the conflicts that occur in a real society. The sociology of knowledge-that branch of sociology which deals with the effects of social and cultural backgrounds upon the forms of thought and expression - offers a fruitful technique for the correlation of literature

and society (Kern, 1942, p. 505). Thus, having sociological approach to literature is a personal reflections for those who enjoy literary works in any form to learn about the knowledge of human society and their behavior. In addition, historical approach to literature will be applied to this study. At its heart, the historical approach to policy analysis is the telling of a story based on credible sources (Hoefler, 2012, p.21). At this rate, the historical event in a literature work only considered as a historical background and it is usually written in an accurate view of what really happened to provide such informations of the circumstances of a certain time.

The socio-historical approach to literature is applied in this study because of the historical setting of *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel, which set in 1970s and the lives of people, especially the minority group in Malaysia are quite fascinating to discuss. This study will have two perceptions on the novel which are from the sociology point of view and historical point of view. Historical point of view will mainly give an explanation about the historical background as the setting in the novel which is the stimulus and the sociological point of view will discuss about the human behavior of the characters in the novel which act as the response.

The sociological aspect in this study is expected to be more dominant than the historical aspect since the historical aspect only functions as the background or the setting of the novel that which is associated with the real event of the race riot May 13th 1969 in Malaysia. Meanwhile, the sociological aspect emphasizes the impact of the race riot May 13th 1969 that has changed the social structure in Malaysia. For example, the Malaysian government which controlled by the

Bumiputera who had several establishment of few policies that benefits the majority group like *Bumiputera* and disadvantage the minority group like Chinese Malaysian. In conclusion, the sociological aspect is expected to be more dominant in this study, since there is a dominant social group that controls the value system in the society.

2.1.2 Race and Ethnic Relations

Race and ethnicity are two different concepts which is often misunderstood by many people. Discussion of ethnicity is complicated by the variety of related terms used to designate similar phenomena, such as race, tribe, nation and minority group (Wan & Vanderwerf, 2009). The terms of race and ethnic are often mixed yet they have different meanings. Race is a construct based on observable physical characteristics (e.g., skin color) that have acquired socially significant meaning (Banton, Loury, Omi and Winant cited in Blank, Dabady & Citro, 2004, p.27). Thus, race is something that can be identified with physical characteristics of someone which are i.e. eye color, eye shape, hair color, nose shape or skin color. Therefore, race is a concept where people are being divided into certain groups based on their physical traits or characteristics. Cultural factors, such as language, religion, and nationality, have more often been used to refer to ethnicity—that is, groups of people who share a common cultural heritage, such as various European immigrant groups in the United States (Bobo, cited in Blank, Dabady and Citro, 2004, p.27). That being the case, ethnicity refer to groups of people who identify themselves that share the same cultural background such as language, religion, nationality or traditions.

Regarding to the race and ethnic relations between Chinese Malaysian and *Bumiputera* as shown in the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel, it is one complex relationship that needs to be explored in depth. Race and ethnic relations are best conceived as particular instances of more general processes of group formation, boundary maintenance, identity structuring or whatever (Rex & Mason, p.11, 1999). Therefore the interactions or the relations of certain race and ethnic can be considered as a whole process of discovering identity of their own and their group and also acknowledging the differences that each ethnic offers while maintaining their own distinctions in the society. Sometimes people from different race, roots and ethnics to have a conflict against each other, because they are trying to maintain their own identity as a certain race or ethnic while attempt to blend in to the society in order to be considered as a part of society they live in. Thus, in reality ethnic conflict is no more than a hidden class conflict, and by overcoming class inequalities ethnicity will diminish as a factor of social antagonism (Malesevic, 2004, p.18). The conflict that exist in a race and ethnic relations can be created by the inexplicit hidden class in a society which demarcate between one race and ethnic to another race and ethnic. One certain race and ethnic may hold more power in terms of i.e politics, economics or education which causes another race and ethnic to be considered as a group of people that belongs to lower class. In Hall's view (1980) race and ethnicity have a decisive impact on class consciousness; they are reciprocal relationships, they affect each other and what is important is their articulation, not their separateness (Malesevic, 2004, p.37). Articulation is shaped around the 'moments of arbitrary closure', which means that the dynamics of social

processes are (artificially) impeded once one identifies a single element as an explanatory master key (Malesevic, 2004, p.38). Therefore, a racial unity in a race and ethnic relations will be achieved when an articulation between all races and ethnics are made, through a single element which can be established in any form between each race and ethnic despite of their background.

In the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel, the race and ethnic relations is suitable to explore the relationship between Chinese Malaysian and *Bumiputera* that being portrayed by the characters named An Mei and Hussein. Especially, their relationship after the race riot of May 13th 1969 happened. Due to their differences which separated by race, ethnic and religion the romantic relationship of both characters are not going well, especially the disagreement of both families who strongly oppose their relationship because of their races.

2.1.3 Racial and Ethnic Discrimination

It is not uncommon if there are two or more races and ethnics live along together in a country, discrimination is a phenomenon that cannot be separated with their lives. It is common for a multi-racial and multi-ethnic country to have a discrimination conflict against certain ethnic since usually there is a majority ethnic group that dominate a country and have a desire to fully control the country without the interference from other ethnics or races.

Racial discrimination is differential treatment on the basis of race that disadvantages a racial group and treatment on the basis of inadequately justified factors other than race that disadvantages a racial group (differential effect) (Blank,

Dabady and Citro, 2004, p.55). The differential treatment based on certain races that disadvantage them in a particular domain such as economics or politics or education can be determined as a racial discrimination. Perhaps in the economic domain, some companies would rather hire someone based on his race than other race instead of considering the quality of the applicant himself. These companies believe that hiring someone within the same race or certain would bring them more good than harm. The racial and ethnic discrimination are mainly experienced by the minority group in a multi-racial and multi-ethnic country. There is a common perception that racial discrimination usually expressed with verbal racial slurs or any kind of insults that involves verbal act. While it is true, *Verbal Antagonism* or verbal racial slurs is not the only type of racial discrimination. There are Avoidance, Segregation and Extermination. *Avoidance* entails choosing the comfort of one's own racial group (the "ingroup" in social psychological terms) over interaction with another racial group (the "outgroup") (Blank, Dabady and Citro, 2004, p.57). *Segregation* occurs when people actively exclude members of a disadvantaged racial group from the allocation of resources and from access to institutions. The most common examples include denial of equal education, housing, employment, and health care on the basis of race (Blank, Dabady and Citro, 2004, p.57) which can also lead to physical attacks where people attacked because of their race. *Extermination* or mass killings based on racial or ethnic animus do occur and they typically encompass histories of institutionalized prejudice and discrimination (Blank, Dabady and Citro, 2004, p.58). Meanwhile, ethnic discrimination can be manifesting itself in these matters will largely occur on the level of the system, i.e.

in policy on foreigners. If this policy were to be too strict, it could perhaps be said that foreigners as a group are a target of ethnic discrimination (Lindstedt, n.d., p.145). For example, if a country ruled by a majority ethnic group, there is a huge possibility that the policies made by the government would benefits the majority group and disadvantages the minority group.

The racial and ethnic discrimination theory will explore more about the discrimination experienced by Chinese Malaysian in the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel. Hence, the historical background of May 13th 1969 in Malaysia as the set of the novel and the rise of the majority group like *Bumiputera* portrayed by Hussein's character and her family that dominate Malaysia and be able to stay in the country, meanwhile the minority group like Chinese Malaysian portrayed by An Mei's character and her family struggle to survive and need to move out of the country because of safety reason. This theory will discuss the racial and ethnic discrimination experienced by Chinese Malaysian in depth.

2.2 Previous Studies

There are two studies that disseminate similar approach and object in their studies that can be compared to see the similarities and the differences with this study.

Saiful Matondang from State Islamic University of North Sumatra wrote an article entitled *The Revival of Chineseness as a Cultural Identity in Malaysia* in 2016. In the article, Matondang talks about the revival of Chinese Malaysians and their cultural identity as the second largest ethnic group in Malaysia while adapting

some of the *Bumiputera*'s cultural aspect, especially after the race riot of May 13th 1969 happened in Malaysia with ethnohistory approach which combines the historical aspect and the present situation of Chinese people in Malaysia. While Matondang's study is based on Chinese Malaysian and their revival of their cultural identity, this study's notion is also about Chinese Malaysian but with different approach and object. Moreover, this study discuss about the survival about Chinese Malaysian as a minority group based in the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel.

The second study is an undergraduate thesis entitled *A Southern Legacy: Culture of Honor Depicted in The Novel The Little Friend by Donna Tartt* written by Iusvaldio Ramadhan from Brawijaya University in 2018, which discusses about the culture of honor and the romantic and gothic depiction in the South in *The Little Friend* novel by Donna Tartt. While Ramadhan's study has a different object in his thesis, there is a similarity with this study which is the approach. Both of this study and Ramadhan's thesis are using socio-historical approach to literature to analyze and interpret the data.

2.3 Research Method

There are several steps of methodology used to form this study in sequence. The first step is deciding the material object and followed by deciding the approach. After that, the researcher gathers the data and then analyzes and interprets the data. The final step is to draw a conclusion.

2.3.1 Deciding the Material Object

In this study, *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel is chosen as the material object because there are no previous studies that discusses about this novel before this study, therefore it can be considered that this study is relatively new. Also, this novel is telling a story about the life of Chinese Malaysian, and it is fascinating to explore the other side of the life of Chinese that live in Malaysia since there are only a few novels or studies that discusses this matter, especially the life of Chinese people in one of the countries in South East Asia.

2.3.2 Deciding the Approach

Socio-historical approach to literature is chosen to be the approach of this study with the consideration of the context of the novel. The setting of this novel is the aftermath of the race riot of May 13th 1969 the condition of the relationship between *Bumiputera* and Chinese Malaysian are being portrayed through the characters of this novel and how *Bumiputera* have more privileges than Chinese Malaysian. Hence, the socio-historical approach is a suitable approach to analyze the sociological and the historical aspect of this novel.

2.3.3 Gathering The Data

The researcher gathers the data by reread the novel to learn about the context of the novel thoroughly. While the researcher reread the novel, the researcher is also selecting the noteworthy events in the novel in order to have the supporting data that later will be analyzed and interpreted.

2.3.4 Analyzing and Interpreting the Data

The last step is to analyze and interpret the data. After the entire data are collected, they will be analyzed and interpreted based on theoretical frameworks. The socio-historical approach will be the root of the theoretical framework since it is suitable to analyze the main sociological and historical aspect of the novel. The race and ethnic relations theory will be used to analyze the relationship of *Bumiputera* and Chinese Malaysian and their behavior towards each other, while the racial and ethnic discrimination theory will discuss about the discrimination experienced by the Chinese Malaysian characters in the novel.

2.3.5. Drawing Conclusion

In the final chapter of this study, the researcher will draw a conclusion which contain the researcher's insight after conducting this research.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Stories about the life of minority groups are surrounded with injustice, inequality, discrimination and chaos. The fact that these circumstances are often occur on the minority groups in society is quite tragic. The *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel by Chan Ling Yap is one of the literature manifestations on how the discrimination on the minority group occurs amongst the majority group that exists within a country. Malaysia, with a population of 26.75 million, is a multiethnic society comprised of Malays (54.2%), Chinese (25.3%), Indians (7.5%), and others (13.0%) (Noor, 2009, p.161). Although Malaysia is a country that rich of different ethnicities and races, it does not rule out the possibility that there would be any conflict or clash between ethnics and races inside the country. Although the relationship of both ethnics which are *Bumiputera* and Chinese Malaysian are in a better terms than their previous relationship in the May 13th era, nowadays there are still inequality between both ethnics and races because not all of ethnics and races in Malaysia share the same power in terms of economy and politics. The problem of discrimination in hiring and promotion is highly contentious, fuelled by mutual claims of bias, specifically, against non-Malays in the Malay controlled public sector and against Malays in the Chinese controlled private sector (Lee & Khalid, 2016, p.2). Not only in terms of economy and politics, but also in terms of education. Public universities and the public sector implement forms of positive

discrimination, or affirmative action, conferring preference on *Bumiputeras* in general, and Malays in particular (Lee & Khalid, 2016, p.2). The *Bumiputera* and Chinese Malaysian, both of them have their own preference and bias point of view which impact to the circle of Malaysia's politics, economy and education.

In the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel, An-Mei and her family is one loving Chinese family living in Malaysia. The novel mainly tells about the life of An Mei and her family as a part of minority group which is Chinese in Malaysia at 1970s. The aftermath of the racial riot of May 13th left some impacts for both Chinese and *Bumiputera*. However, the Chinese Malaysians, including An Mei and her family, feel aggrieved on how the *Bumiputera* dominates the country. The Chinese Malaysians soon acknowledge the discrimination towards them, therefore some of them are fleeing the country with their expectations to have a better life. Although An Mei's family decide to move to another country which is United Kingdom, a place where An Mei pursues her education, the situation is getting more complicated when An Mei makes a decision about following her love interest, a young *Bumiputera* man named Hussein, to go back to Malaysia. Her decision engenders a quite chaos in her family resulting in one of her family members to go back to Malaysia and hold such hopes to bring An Mei back to United Kingdom and reunite with her family.

The discrimination is shown in the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel through the struggles of the Chinese Malaysians to survive in the aftermath of May 13th riot in Malaysia in the aspects of culture, economics or politics.

3.1 Chinese Malaysians' Subordination in Religion, Name, Clothes and Wedding

3.1.1 Culture

Culture is a word with thousands of meanings yet it is unable to be truly defined. However there are few definitions that can help to understand the meaning of the word itself. Culture is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, cited in Spencer-Oatey, 1870, p.1). When one enters an organization one observes and feels its *artifacts*, this category includes everything from the physical layout, the dress code, the manner in which people address each other, the smell and feel of the place, its emotional intensity, and other phenomena, to the more permanent archival manifestations such as company records, products, statements of philosophy, and annual reports (Schein, cited in Spencer-Oatey, 1990, p. 111). Thus, culture can be simply defined as a pattern of a particular group in a society which can be in the form of several things such as art, custom, law, belief or knowledge. These following things such as art, custom, law, belief or knowledge are becoming the characteristics of a particular group and the members inside the group itself. Usually the members of the group are voluntarily accept these things, therefore it can be acclaimed as their own culture.

Based on the historical aspect, Malaysia's culture is influenced by many spectrums that came from different ethnics. Instead of rejecting the new culture that has been crossing over Malaysia, the country is rather accepting it. The acceptance

of the *Other*, who came as traders, travelers, religious preachers, and so on, from Arabia, India, China, and other parts of the Malay archipelago (some of whom came to settle locally), became something rather natural, as part and parcel of the public culture of the indigenous people, reflecting the fact that the Malay society then was already relatively open and accommodative, not exclusivist (Embong, 2002, p.40). Although at some point, Malaysia was heavily influenced by the Indian that also brought Buddhism and Hinduism along with them. A few religious literature were found in Malaysia such as Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita and Bharatayuddha in which was translated originally from Indian language to Malay language. Be that as it may, it is a historical fact that Indian influence lasted for many centuries in the Malay world, with Hindu-Buddhist artifacts still to be found today and with many Sanskrit words enriching the Malay vocabulary and lexicography (Embong, 2002, p. 42). Not only Buddhism and Hinduism that left their traces, but Malaysia also heavily influenced by Islam which was brought by the traders and replaces the position of Buddhism and Hinduism. Although these traders had been in contact with Southeast Asian networks since the 9th century, it was not until the Persian expressions of Muslim kingship were circulating in India and then Southeast Asia, that Malay and other local elites began to adopt Islam (Hooker, 2003, p.61).

The culture of Malaysia are varied, since there are lots of different ethnics and races that may produces different cultures as well such as languages, foods, names or clothes. Nevertheless, in the post-independence of Malaysia, the country faced several struggles regarding to the national culture or identity and also economic matter. In post-independent Malaysia, ethnic relations became entangled

and influenced by the rival ethnic communities' struggle over the cultural constituents of national identity, the share of political power, and the distribution of economic wealth (Guan, 2000, p. 2). After the race riot in Malaysia in 1969, the position of *Bumiputera* became more dominating in the state, especially after the implementation of the National Culture Policy in 1971. The Malays are Muslim, speak the national language (*Bahasa Malaysia*) or English, dress according to the Islamic codes which emphasize modesty and head coverings for women, traditionally eat rice and curries and strictly avoid eating pork (Smith, 2003, p. 120). Thus, the culture of *Bumiputera* is strongly associated with Islam as their religion which also influences their lifestyle.

The *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel explains how the Chinese characters in the novel including An Mei and her family have to go face several struggles in order to survive as a minority group in Malaysia. The existence of racial discrimination and ethnic discrimination are conspicuous to the Chinese Malaysians. Although, An Mei and her family are facing the same problem, sometimes an argument between them is inevitable due to the the dissimilarity of ideas on how An Mei insists to stay in a relationship with Hussein, while her family has the opposite thought.

3.1.1.1 Religion

As a multi-racial and multi-ethnic country, Malaysia is full of various ethnicities, races and religions. The correlation between each race, ethnic and religion itself are very closely interrelated to each other in Malaysian society. Various ethnic groups use religion as their ethnic symbol and strive to include it

whenever they have opportunities (Guan, 2000). Since religion is a part of a certain ethnic group's culture, therefore the members of this ethnic group will try to keep their religion as their ethnic symbol to maintain their own culture in the midst of multiple ethnics and races. Religion has long been regarded as an 'associate' to promote ethnic tolerance although it is not mentioned in the religious principles (Noon, 2007; Tokunaga, 2007; Kohara, 2007, cited in Idris, et al., 2016, p. 14). It is important to instill the awareness that religion alone without society effort cannot ensure the sustenance of ethnic tolerance (Idris, et al., 2016, p.14). Another important thing is the role of intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is better than extrinsic motivation in terms of promoting racial tolerance (Navaratnam, cited in Idris, et al., 2016).

The National Culture Policy was implemented in 1971 to amplify the symbolic presence of Malay culture and Islam in the public space perspectives (Guan, 2000, p.6) Therefore, after the race riot in May 13th 1969, the preeminence of Malaysian culture was getting stronger than any other ethnicities in Malaysia with the aid of the implementation of The National Culture Policy in 1971 and reached to the point where if there was anyone against the domination of Malaysian culture, they would be punished under the Sedition Act. Thus, in the 1970s until 1980s, the revival of Islam that happened amongst *Bumiputera* at that time along with the fact that many people agreed with the culture policies in which mostly were supported by *Bumiputera*, were pushing these culture policies and amplified them to the whole country. Hence, these pressures that arise in Malaysia resulting in the emergence of the "Islamicization" of the society. Simply put, the state allocated

funds and established institutions to research on and propagate Malay arts and cultures, “altering them where necessary to fit current ideological and religious sensibilities” (Carstens, cited in Guan, 2000, p. 20).

In the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel, An Mei as a Chinese Malaysian woman who wants to get married with her Malay boyfriend, Hussein, needs to convert her religion into Islam if she wants her marriage and Hussein becomes valid in the eye of the *Bumiputera*. In Malaysia, where there is a stark division of jurisdiction in family law between civil and syariah courts, non-Muslims can only marry Muslims after conversion to Islam (Khambali, 2011, p.1). There are various causes of prohibition, i.e.-consanguinity (blood relationship), affinity, fosterage, unlawful conjunction (of wives) slavery, paganism, difference of religion etc. Some prohibitions, according to the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah, are of perpetual nature which is based on the ground of consanguinity, affinity, fosterage; while others are of temporary nature interdicted by certain relationships or conditions which are susceptible of termination and these prohibitions exist so long as the relationship or condition exists (Khadduri & Liebesny cited in Sharmin & Azad, 2018, p.3). At this rate, the marriage between Hussein and An Mei will be not valid if An Mei does not change her religion into Islam. Another reason for An Mei to convert her religion is because Hussein comes from politicians family. Since Hussein wants to be a political figure in Malaysia, having a Chinese Malaysian woman as the new member of his family would make him as a disreputable young politician especially in the eye of the *Bumiputera*, considering the relationship between *Bumiputera* and Chinese Malaysians is not in a good terms at that time. Therefore, it is important

having people from certain group that shares the same culture and root with the vast majority of Malaysia's population which is the *Bumiputera*, as politicians that would lead the country in the future. Hence, Rahim also known as Hussein's father, makes a decision and gives an order to Faridah, Hussein's mother to make sure that An Mei would be able to enter Islam that is intertwined with their culture.

“.....I say, let him have her, tire of her and then we can get on. In this case, it is too late to obstruct this marriage. I have given my word. Your role is to make sure she converts to the Muslim faith. She is to be presented in the future as a devout Muslim imbued with our culture. You make sure she learns it.” (Yap, 2011, p. 134).

That being the case, the process of An Mei entering Islam, while sitting next to Hussein on their wedding by reciting the Al-Qur'an is shown in the following line.

“She closed her eyes tighter, reminded of the *Khatam Al-Koran* that had been conducted in the mosque the previous day. Surrounded by women folks, she had recited the last few pages and verses of the Koran. It signified that she had completed reading the Holy Book and that she, An Mei, now renamed Noraidin, was transformed into an adult responsible for bringing up her own children and family in the Islamic way. She trembled in memory of the Imam's interrogation. She had lied about her circumcision. With the support and agreement of Hussein, she had betrayed the faith even as she had professed to grasp it.” (Yap, 2011, p. 137-138).

Religion, as a socially sustained system of transmitted beliefs, values, norms, symbols, and practices, can be conceived as itself constituting culture—that is, a form of culture—in the same way that ethnicity, region, and socioeconomic status define distinct cultural systems, each with its own beliefs, values, norms, symbols, and practices (Cohen, cited in Saroglou & Cohen, 2011, p. 1310). It can be simply put that when someone convert into another religion, religion is not the

only thing that he converts into but also the culture regarding to the religion itself and the values surrounding it. Thus, religion can be expressed in cultural guise which also implies studying the human nature in general. Religion is determined by culture, but religion also influences culture (Beyers, 2017). The fate of religion and culture is, thus, interwoven (Beyers, 2017, p.2). In the case of An Mei, when she converts to Islam as her religion by reciting few pages and verses of Koran, she is transformed into a Muslim women with a responsibility to guide her family in an Islamic way. Regarding to the use of terms, in particular use of Islam as the name of the religion, Islamic as an adjective, and Muslim as a noun or adjective. The term Islamic is accurately applied only to that which pertains directly to the faith and its doctrines (such as Islamic values, principles and beliefs, Islamic worship, Islamic law). The term Islam connotes the faith as an ideal (Douglass & Shaikh, 2004, p.2). Therefore, leading a family in an Islamic way is a duty for An Mei as a Muslim woman. The term “Islamic way” means that she needs to guide her family members with Islamic values, principles and beliefs or anything that is Islam related which is also imbibed with Hussein’s family culture. Religious conversion is the process by which a person commits to the beliefs of a new religious tradition and shifts away from their previously held religious beliefs (Stark and Finke cited in Snook, et al., 2018, p.1). As a Chinese Malaysian woman that makes a decision to convert her religion to Islam and having a new identity as a muslim woman, there are many expectations coming from Hussein’s family for An Mei. Being a good Muslim is one of them.

He swallowed hard as he said those words, remembering his mother’s caution: “You are expected to be a good Muslim, pray five times a day. And

your wife as well. Modesty is the most important thing for a woman and your wife should best follow my example.” (Yap, 2011, p. 143).

Salat is one of the five pillars of Islam. Performing *Salat* is compulsory to every Muslim. It comprises of five prayers perform in one day (*Fajr, Zuhr, Asr, Maghrib* and *Isha'a*) (Aris, et. al, 2017, p.1). Mainly, for each and every action performed in *Salat* has its own meaning and the action or ritual in *Salat* can be translated and applied in Muslim's actual life. For example, *rukuk* shows that human can only serve Allah and would never bow to anyone other than Him while *sujud* signifies human's complete submission to Allah (Aris, et. al, 2017, p.2). Thus, Hussein and An Mei are expected to be good Muslims by Hussein's mother and in order to fulfill that, they need to pray five times a day as the embodiment of fulfilling both of their faith as muslims and having Islam as their religion according to Hussein's mother. This expectation coming from Hussein's mother that contain on how Hussein and An Mei as his wife should behave as muslims, is also one of the aspect that exist in Hussein's family culture.

Nevertheless, being a muslim woman can be quite obstinate for An Mei. Although her lips already reciting few pages and verses of *Koran*, she still has anxiety in her by taking deep slow breaths, despite of officially having Islam as her new religion.

“She trembled in memory of the Imam's interrogation. She had lied about her circumcision. With the support and agreement of Hussein, she had betrayed the faith even as she had professed to grasp it. Hussein reached over and held her hand. Gritting her teeth, she steadied herself, taking deep slow breaths.” (Yap, 2011, p. 138).

The conversions to Islam among non-Muslims are generally seen as good news by the Muslims. However, looking at it at a bigger picture, issues involving the Muslim converts are actually various and complex (Sahad, et. al, 2013, p.219). Islam newly-converts often face the psychological dilemma which requires a great deal of attention, understanding and support from the society (Abdullah, et. al., cited in Sahad, et. al, 2013, p.219). During the conversion process, An Mei is having a hard time to fully grasp of her own reality that she is entering Islam as she trembling during the Imam's interrogation, lied about her circumcision and feels as if she betrays her own faith as muslim despite the fact that she is already becoming one. Fortunately, An Mei does not have to face the conversion process alone, since Hussein is holding her hand as a symbol of the full support that he gives to her. Although An Mei is trembled in the conversion process, at least she has Hussein as her support system. Psychological challenges faced by the new Muslim brothers and sisters, such as the challenge of understanding Islam as a religion, psychological pressure from their family, foster family and society as well as psychological pressure to adapt to the new religion (Jaafar, Rahman, Abdullah cited in & Sahad, et. al, 2013, p.219).

It is quite interesting to highlight that in Malaysia, the conversion into Islam is always associated to marry Muslim partner. It is a common phenomenon to highlight that conversion to Islam due to marriage not only related to the Chinese society but also the other non-Muslim ethnic groups such as Indians, Orang Asli and the natives of Sabah (Khambali, 2011, p.1). Religion conversion in terms of interfaith marriage is not only concerning two people with the same religions to

legally unite as a married couple. It takes more than religion in interfaith marriage for a married couple to be united as a whole family. It is because the interfaith marriage in Malaysia is usually understood as the change of ethnic identity (Khambali, 2011, p.2). As Rex and Mason said, how race and ethnic relations can be a process of identity structuring, this statement is strongly related to the situation on how An Mei converts her religion into Islam. This can be seen in which the conversion to Islam is synonymous to “*masuk Melayu*” (become Malay) (Khambali, 2011, p. 2). For that reason, when someone non-*Bumiputera* convert into Islam, she needs to adjust and adapt herself with the new belief, rules and customs that is in accordance with her new religion which is Islam. In addition, she also needs to adjust with the aspects of Malaysian culture including language, name, tradition, custom and clothes because technically her ethnicity is Malaysian because of the interfaith marriage. It is therefore, the concept of interfaith marriage in Malaysia frequently lead to religious conversion into Islam when one of the partners of non-Muslim decides to marry Muslim (Khambali, 2011, p.8). It can be concluded that the majority which is *Bumiputera* has the highest position in the society of Malaysia. It can be proven from on how the minority such as Chinese Malaysians have to convert to Islam if they want to marry a muslim and also follows the *Bumiputera*'s culture and its characteristics.

3.1.1.2 Wedding

Marriage is a part of each person's individual life to form a personal relationship with his or her partner and to culturally unite them as they make their relationship to be recognized publicly and legally. However, some of marriage may encounter several problems and challenges such as interfaith marriage or mixed marriage. Interfaith marriage can be defined as a marital union in which the partners believe and belong to different faith or religious traditions (Islam, 2014, p.39). Yet, this definition is not necessary applied in Malaysia. It is because, in Malaysia, a non-Muslim who wishes to marry a Muslim must convert into Islam before the marriage can be recognized as legally valid (Khambali, 2011, p.2). The more applicable meaning for interfaith marriage as practice in Malaysia is a marriage in which a partner from the non-Muslim has changed his/her religion into Islam as a requirement to allow him/her to marry the Muslim partner (Khambali, 2011, p.2). This shows how the *Bumiputera*'s culture is a dominant entity in the society of Malaysia, since the non-*Bumiputera* have to go through such a process that needs to be in accordance with the *Bumiputera*'s culture in order to arrange a marriage with *Bumiputera*.

In the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel, the relationship between An Mei, a Chinese Christian woman and Hussein as a part of *Bumiputera* and having Islam as his religion is finally comes to the next step which is marriage. The wedding ceremony of An Mei and Hussein are celebrated in Kemun, Hussein's residence with Malaysian customs. At the time of the wedding being held, An Mei sat next to Hussein surrounded with the ornaments of the *Bumiputera*'s wedding customs.

An Mei sat next to Hussein on the *pelamin*, a raised ornate dais, beneath a canopy of drapes and silk flowers of different hues, yellow, blue and gold. She looked down at her feet. She felt nothing, a coldness clutched at her heart. She stared at the Mehndi, the intricate light orange and deep brown, henna-stained patterns on her hands and feet. They were a symbol of love and fertility, she had been told. (Yap, 2011, p. 136).

Contrary to popular belief where people usually found to be happy and having a good time for an occasion that happens once in their lifetime, An Mei feels the opposite. Instead, she felt emptiness and coldness in her heart. It is ironic how a wedding ceremony can make oneself to feel such things. However, An Mei's emptiness can be caused by several factors. The transition period experienced by the converts attests their inner conflicts adapting to their new surroundings (Kassim, Abdullah & Baba, 2013, p.2). Their parental faith may no longer be relevant, but adopting a new religion and living in the same society with different traditions of the old religious faith would lead to traumatic inner conflicts which are invisible (Kassim, Abdullah & Baba, 2013, p.2). These opposite feelings of An Mei that she experiences can signify the inner conflicts that she has. Although she already converts to Islam and acquire Islam as her new religion and by having a wedding ceremony with Malaysian culture is one way to emphasize her new identity, she still might have a problem of adapting with her new surroundings. An Mei has been living as Chinese Malaysian woman in her whole life and suddenly she's becoming a part of *Bumiputera* and oblige to acknowledge Islam as her new religion in order to be bound with Hussein, a man who is a part of *Bumiputera*. These coldness and emptiness of her heart are the results of her trying to adapt with the new culture in the same society. By living in the same society and having to live a life that she is

not familiar with, which is the Bumiputera's culture with its traditions and customs that she needs to embrace all of sudden, An Mei definitely feels oppressed and for that reason the inner conflicts that involve these coldness and emptiness of her heart is one evidence that indicate it.

The adaptation that An Mei going through produces not only the coldness and emptiness of her heart but also how she feels disconnected during the wedding ceremony as well.

“In her mind, the wedding had been surreal; the music, the recitations, the formality, the guests she did not know or recognise. She felt disconnected from it all. She was ushered like a puppet on a string through each stage. She felt like an onlooker even up to the moment of their departure for the honeymoon.” (Yap, 2011, p.140).

Besides traumatic inner conflicts, the new muslim converts also faces a lot of challenges on the adaptation process of their new religion. In one study, according to Suhaila Abdullah (2006), certain problems faced by Chinese Muslim converts after their conversion to Islam, especially Malaysian Chinese Muslim converts (Kassim, Abdullah & Baba, 2013, p.2). Some of these problems are the place of residence, culture shock and transformation of identity, identity crisis and acceptance by Malay society (Kassim, Abdullah & Baba, 2013, p.3). In this case, An Mei might experience culture shock and feels disconnected with the wedding ceremony that supposed to be mesmerizing, because the of the customs of the wedding is based on Malaysian culture which feels foreign to her as she grew up as a Chinese Malaysian woman. The unfamiliar atmosphere as a manifestation of culture shock felt by An Mei can be caused by the differences of Malaysian culture and her previous identity as a Chinese Malaysian woman. Cultural (or culture)

shock is a multifaceted experience resulting from numerous stressors occurring in contact with a different culture (Winkelman, 1994, p.121). Since converting into Islam also means that An Mei needs to adjust herself with the Malaysian culture as a sign that she is now considered as a part of *Bumiputera* and having a wedding ceremony that conform with Malaysian's culture such as music, recitation or even the formality which feels brand new to An Mei, all of these can lead to culture shock. Cultural shock is caused in part of cognitive overload and behavioral inadequacies, and because cultural interactiveness is based on understanding and behavioral adaptation, cultural shock is best resolved by a social learning approach in which new attitudes and cognitive information are integrated into behavioral transformations (Winkelman, 1994, p.121). In addition, these new customs and traditions on An Mei's surroundings may explains how she feels disconnected during the wedding ceremony. She feels unfamiliar with the Malaysians customs, yet she needs to pass this process in order to be with Hussein and also as a symbol to be a part of his family as a Malaysian woman.

3.1.1.3 Name

Every single human being in this world has a name. Without a name we, as human beings would not be able to interact or refer to a person that we want to. Names in any culture have the role of identifying an individual, group, race, ethnicity, etc. Names have referential role in one side, and are markers of social identity on the other (Baye, cited in Menuta & Gewta, 2014, p.75). Therefore, names have the role as identity of someone in the society. A person's name is very much a part of who s/he is. Our names reflect our sense of identity, who we are in

relation to the world around us. This identity can be social identity, socio-cultural identity, cultural identity and ethnic identity (Norton, cited in Chen, 2013, p. 963). Once someone's name is changed, there is a possibility that their identity might have changed as well, since their names are having relations with their identities in general. In the early 1960s, Chinese who converted to Islam were able to change their name and their ethnic identification from Chinese to Malay on their official documents such as their passport and identity card (Joy, 2005, p. 11). Nonetheless, after the implementation of the new regulation in 1996, adapting islamic name is no longer an obligation for muslim converts. However, name changing is still compulsory in some other states due to the different requirements of the *Jabatan Agama Islam* in different states (Joy, 2005, p. 12). The rules for a Malay name contain of a given name followed by "Bin" which means "son of" or "Binti" which means "daughter of". Malay names usually do not have any surnames following Arab culture. It can be seen that Malaysia is also heavily influenced by the Arabian culture especially Arabic language that came along with the arrival of Islam into Malaysia. The education of Arabic language can be found even before Malaysia's independence by the existence of Islamic boarding school or *Pondok*. The existence of this cottage (pondok) study can be channeled from the days of the Pasai Kingdom, Malacca, and Aceh especially in the 17th century AD (Shafie cited in Teh, Firdaus & Nasir, 2019). Therefore, it can be concluded that most of Malay names are influenced by Arabic language that came along with Islam into Malaysia.

In the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel, the Chinese characters like An Mei and Jenny have to change their names into Malaysian name in order to marry their loved

ones that are Malaysian men. In this situation, Hussein's aunt, Jenny experiences the interfaith marriage at first hand before An Mei. Hence, Jenny also changes her name into a Malaysian name.

“You know *Datin Zainab*?” asked the girl. An Mei shook her head. “I mean”, the girl hesitated, not knowing if she could be so familiar as to use the Datin's name, “*Datin Zainab*, Jenny?” An Mei smiled, her first in many days. “Yes! Yes!” she said. It came back to her that Zainab was Jenny's muslim when she converted, although she never used the name with her friends.” (Yap, 2011, p. 63).

Jenny changes her name into Datin Zainab clearly implies her conversion into Islam and becomes a muslim as well. Name changing is important in both the construction of Muslim identity and maintaining Chinese identity in the process of religious conversion for Chinese Muslim converts (Joy, 2005, p.101). There are few problems that Chinese-Malaysians faces after being new muslim converts according to Suhaila Abdulla (2006) such as fear of losing Chinese identity, acceptance and usage of Islamic name, confusion of converting to Islam or becoming *Melayu* (Kassim, Abdullah & Baba, 2013, p.3). In this case, Jenny may have problems with her acceptance and usage of Islamic name and the confusion of becoming a muslim and *Melayu*. Since conversion is a gradual and complex process, a convert might gain various reactions from one's friends and family. These converts experienced different reactions from their friends. Generally, the respondents reported that usually their Chinese friends had stronger negative reactions towards their conversion. Malay friends were reported as more supportive and welcomed their decision of conversion (Joy, 2005, p.95). This could be the reason that Jenny never uses her Malaysian name, *Datin Zainab*, around her friends.

It is because she might not get the affirmation and approval from her friends if she uses Malaysian name.

The change of name also experienced by An Mei. Her marriage with Hussein, a *Bumiputera*, also costs her identity which makes her to change her religion, including her name.

“.....It signified that she had completed reading the Holy Book and that she, An Mei, now renamed Noraidin, was transformed into an adult responsible for bringing up her own children and family in the Islamic way....” (Yap, 2011, p. 137-138).

As soon as An Mei convert her religion into Islam, she also changes her name into Malaysian name, *Noraidin*. The change of name symbolizes the very first step of changing identity of converts in a public manner (Joy, 2005, p.65). At this point, An Mei is already signified as a muslim woman with *Noraidin* as her Malaysian name. Since then, An Mei has been called as *Noraidin* by the family members of Hussein including Ahmad, Hussein’s family housemaid.

“Ah! Noraidin,” he said, his voice, soft, menacing but as smooth as silk.” (Yap, 2011, p. 148).

Hussein also called An Mei as *Noraidin*, when he speaks to Ghazali, his assistant, as he wants to call An Mei after he finishes his political speech.

“Have you called Noraidin for me? Did she tell you why she has not answered my calls nor returned them. When will I be free to talk to her in the midst of the mad schedule that you have arranged for me?” (Yap, 2011, p. 152).

As for An Mei's family, Ming Kong and Mei Yin, An Mei's father and mother keep calling An Mei with her Chinese name instead of An Mei's Malaysian name. It is shown as Ming Kong and Mei Yin have a conversation talking about An Mei.

“Can't you sleep? Asked Mei Yin, putting herself up to a sitting position. “No! I did not mean to disturb you. I thought I was keeping very quiet.” “You were. I couldn't sleep either. I keep thinking of An Mei.” (Yap, 2011, p.168)

In the process of attaining a new religious identity yet maintaining their ethnic identity, Chinese Muslim converts constantly negotiate with the others on their identities boundaries. These negotiations mostly take place under the structure of daily routine in the post-conversion life (Joy, 2005, p.33). These following lines shows how An Mei adapting with the new religion that she has by having herself to be called as *Noraidin*, her Malaysian name when she is around Hussein's family. Albeit, when she is around with her own family, she is called as An Mei, her Chinese name. Negotiation between religious and ethnic identities is demonstrated when Chinese Muslim converts established their religious boundaries which defined their new religious identity, these actions include change of name, which symbolized the very first step of changing identity of converts in public manner (Joy, 2005, p. 110). Thus, the usage of her Malaysian and Chinese name can be implied as the negotiation of An Mei's identity, how she maintain her identity as a Chinese Malaysian woman around her family but also as a Malaysian woman around Hussein's family.

3.1.1.4 Clothes

Clothes is one of the essentials that we, as human beings naturally wear in our daily life while doing our daily activities. Without the existence of clothes, we would not be able to provide protection for our skin against the hot or cold weather. However, clothes is not only functioning as a protection for our skin, but also as one of the elements in a culture. The diversity of clothes may varies depending on the culture and the society surrounds it. Clothes can be varying due to gender, religion, social life, age, ethnicity, caste, social class and occupation (Wickramarachchi, n.d., p.3). Thus with the varieties of gender, religion, social life, ethnicity, caste, social class and occupation, the possibillity of the differences of clothes may vary depending on certain factor that exists within a culture.

In the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel, after An Mei becomes Hussein's wife, not only that she is expected to be a good muslim by praying five times a day, but she is also expected to wear certain clothes type of clothes since she has become a muslim girl which is the modest clothes including hijab by Hussein's mother, Faridah. She tells An Mei that she should wear hijab immediately as soon as after she officially becomes Hussein's wife.

“Just remember to behave like a good Muslim girl. And keep your *hijab* on in public. We do not want you to flaunt your face in public.” (Yap, 2011, p. 141).

The terms veil and hijab are often used interchangeably, but the hijab has an Islamic significance that distinguishes it from the veil (Ruby, cited in Siraj, 2011, p.716). The veil, which is often perceived in the west as a headcovering, does not reveal the intricacies of the practice. The term hijab, however, encompasses

women's behaviour/attitude, and studies have found that a vital feature of the hijab is modest behaviour (Ruby, cited in Siraj, 2011, p.716). Being a muslim women, modesty is one of the values that An Mei needs to embrace immediately. The various expressions of the hijab in different spatial contexts stem 'from the formal symbolic and practical aims of hijab: to preserve modesty and conceal the shame of nakedness' (Watson cited in Siraj, 2011, p.728). By the time Faridah tells An Mei to wear hijab, she also says that she and her family do not want to see An Mei to flaunt her face in public. This might be because the hijab itself is the symbol of modesty and to conceal the shame of a woman's nakedness. Regarding to An Mei's new identity as a muslim girl, Faridah wants her to cover her "nakedness" and not to flaunt them in public because not wearing a hijab is the equivalent of not concealing her nakedness and not showing her status a muslim woman. Also, since the hijab itself is a symbol of modesty, which also mean that Faridah certainly wants An Mei to dress and behave modestly with An Mei's new identity as a muslim woman.

Faridah's desire of wanting An Mei to dress modestly is not only delivered directly to An Mei, but also through Hussein. Faridah warned Hussein about how An Mei should wear modest clothes and follow her as the example for An Mei.

He swallowed hard as he said those words, remembering his mother's caution: "You are expected to be a good Muslim, pray five times a day. And your wife as well. Modesty is the most important thing for a woman and your wife should best follow my example." (Yap, 2011, p. 143).

In physical terms, modesty is connected with the *awra*, an Arabic term meaning 'inviolable vulnerability' or 'what must be covered' and consisting of the private body parts of a human being (El Guindi, cited in Boulanouar, 2006, p. 135).

We may consider the areas of *awra* as ‘navel to knee’ for men, and ‘women’s whole bodies excepting her face and hands’ (Al-Qaradawi, cited in Boulanouar, 2006, p. 135). Therefore, based on this concept the meanings of dressing modestly for women is to wear clothes that would cover their whole bodies including their neck and hair, except their hands and face. For that reason, An Mei is expected by Faridah to wear clothes that would cover her whole body including her hair with a hijab. These expectations of wearing modest clothes coming from Faridah is quite difficult for An Mei to accept. Thus, there are several protests coming from An Mei at first, since the idea of wearing modest clothes for her is quite difficult to do and to accept. An Mei keeps questioning on why she should wear modest clothes everyday especially on certain occasion such as when she wants to swim or even going to work.

“So? Does it mean that I will always have to wear the *hijab*? Does it mean that I must not swim because a swimsuit is considered indecent or play netball because I would be wearing shorts?” An Mei shuddered. Faridah’s word still haunted her. (Yap, 2011, p.143).

The definition of a ‘good’ Muslim is subjective, as people judge religious individuals in different ways according to their personal understandings of what ‘good’ Muslims should be. For some, this relies heavily on the outward appearance of individuals and their commitment to religious acts, whereas others judge the genuine nature and level of religiosity of Muslims by their devotion to the five pillars of Islam and their show of patience, attitudes, humility, modesty and good manners (Alydreessy, 2016, p. 155). According to Faridah, besides of praying five times a day, one is considered as a good muslim is if she wears dress modest clothes. However, the following line shows An Mei’s concern about Faridah’s idea on how

she needs to behave and dress modestly everyday. The modesty of hijab for women does not only constitute the covering of the body, but general behaviour, manners, speech and appearance in public. Dress is only one facet of the total being. It is therefore, hijab is taken as a symbolic application presenting an understanding of the general status and rights of women in Islam (Sintang, et.al., 2016, p.35). Thus, the fear that she has on the idea of the obligation to dress modestly in public, even when she wants to swim instead of wearing shorts is a horror for An Mei expressed with her shudder. Hence, the post-conversion period of transition can be considered the most challenging part of life for the new Muslim women (Sintang, et.al., 2016, p.37). Instead of taking it as an advice or suggestion for An Mei to wear modest clothes, she takes Faridah's words as something that haunts her. This means that An Mei is actually apprehensive with Faridah's idea and not ready to compromise with the new customs of her life since Faridah's idea seems very demanding regarding to her new identity as a muslim woman.

It is not an easy task for An Mei to immediately wear modest clothes in a short amount of time. At first, she chooses not to wear modest clothes in public, even when she goes to work until she meets Hussein's family's maid, Ahmad. She got caught by him for not wearing modest clothes in public.

“Ah! Noraidin,” he said, his voice, soft, menacing but as smooth as silk.
“*Tetapi, bagaimana tak pakai Baju Negara? Apa-lah terjadinya tudung awak?*”

She did not reply. His lips curled.

“Let me repeat in English in case you do not understand. Why are you not wearing your *baju*, your National dress? What has happened to your headscarf?” (Yap, 2011, p. 149).

Baju Negara or known as *Baju Kurung* is the traditional dress worn by Malay community in Malaysia. Generally, *Baju Kurung* is widely used in the Malay community in the Malay Archipelago (Aris, 2014, p.12). The word "*kurung*" means to "encase the body" of the wearer, which corresponded with Islamic dress guidelines for women (Hassan, 2016, p.65). Since the majority of Malaysia are the *Bumiputera* with Islam with their beliefs, therefore based on their perspectives with the modesty concept as the main reference, women should cover their whole bodies except their face and their hands. Thus, *baju kurung* is designed for women with the intention for them wear it as modest clothes to cover their bodies and not flaunting them in public when they are not at home. Although the *baju kurung* was designed specifically for women, the men's *baju kurung* became known as "*Baju Teluk Belanga*" during the era of Sultan Abu Bakar Seri Maharaja in 1862 (Shawal, cited in Hassan, 2016, p.65). Hence, *baju kurung* can be considered as the reflection of the Malaysian's society culture.

Judging by the following line, it seems that An Mei does not wear modest clothes known as *Baju Negara* nor hijab. Change requires a process of resocialization. It is more difficult than the process of socialization in the previous world because it is affected by existing meanings within the individual self (Joy, 2005, p. 106). For some of the converts in the present sample, transition to the new province of the Islamic world view is not necessarily accompanied by a complete change of their social and ethnic world (Joy, 2005, p. 106). In this case, it is difficult for An Mei to adjust herself to the new world that she is getting into. Perhaps, since the Islamic world is new to An Mei, her complete change or transition into a muslim

woman does not necessarily happens over a night. By considering each factor into the account such as the requirement to wear hijab and to wear modest clothes in public that symbolize an identity as a muslim woman, certainly for An Mei it is a tough decision to change completely since she has not compromise with Islam as her new religion and accept her new identity as a muslim woman. However, no matter how much they felt they were prepared to commit themselves, some aspects still remained hard to digest and observe since Islam brought a lot of restrictions to them (Joy, 2005, p. 76). In fact, by knowing that An Mei is not wearing modest clothes in public shows that this part of Islam, is hard to digest for An Mei since it feels like a restriction for her.

However, after getting caught by Ahmad in which he reports the last incident where An Mei does not wear her modest clothes when she was in her office to Faridah, An Mei finally negotiates with herself and wear modest clothes when she is going to work.

For a week now, she had gone to the office dressed as instructed. She had ignored the stares and sudden hush of conversation when she passed. Her boss understood her situation, though privately he admitted with a wry smile that he was not delighted, amused may be. (Yap, 2011, p.155).

For Chinese Muslim converts, new significant others such as their Muslim counterparts may play an important role in shaping their new religious identity in the post-conversion period (Joy, 2005, p. 109). Faridah certainly plays an important role in influencing An Mei to wear hijab. At this rate, An Mei starts to learn to live her life as a muslim woman by wearing modest clothes as instructed by Faridah earlier, although the responds that coming from her surroundings is not really

pleasing for her. Although the reaction of the converts' family and friends and the magnitude of objection might vary, their main concern was often about reactions from the 'Chinese community' (Joy, 2005, p. 95). It may seem concerning for An Mei because when she wears her hijab, she needs to face the stares and the sudden hush of conversation from people around her.

3.2 Chinese Malaysians' Subordination in Politics and Economy

3.2.1 Politics

The race riots between Chinese Malaysians and *Bumiputera* on May 13th 1969 in Malaysia left many traces in which can still be seen until the present day. Several policies were established by the government with the expectations to dampen the tense between both ethnics. Politics is a crucial element in the incident of May 13th in Malaysia. Although, Malaysia has made a rapid progress on the economic area and social development, there are few problems that need to be solved such as economic inequality between ethnics in Malaysia. Unfortunately, these policies that are meant to solve these problems have exacerbated the relationship between Chinese Malaysians and *Bumiputera* especially in terms of politics and economic.

In the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel, Hussein is portrayed as a *Bumiputera* that comes from a wealthy politician's family that holds a high position which is quite the contrary to An Mei and her family. An Mei comes from an ordinary Chinese Malaysian family where she and her family have no special privileges or high

positions. Therefore, considering the relationship between Chinese Malaysians and *Bumiputera* is in the bad terms due to the race riot of May 13th 1969, Faridah is worried that An Mei might becomes an obstacle in Hussein's career as a politician.

“In politics, you can be in one minute and out, the next. His recent success might be a distant dream in the fuure, if people here in Kemun realise that he has dumped Shalimar for Noraidin, someone who has no roots here and is not even a practicing Muslim.” (Yap, 2011, p.189).

Shalimar is a *Bumiputera* and also Ahmad's little sister. She is a muslim woman and apparently is more suitable to be Hussein's wife because both of them share the same roots, according to Faridah. Ethnic conflict has one of the most prominent issues in the country where there are multi ethnic citizen and also become a global concern, it is difficult to resolve ethnic conflict due to the differences in issue and background (Shamsuddin, Liaw, Ridzuan, 2015, p.137). Thus, the aftermath of the race of riot has caused a big gap in the relationships between Chinese Malaysians and *Bumiputera* and certainly also influencing the relationships between Hussein and An Mei. Due to the several factors including the differences of background, root, race and ethnic, these factors has caused a major issue in their relationships including Hussein's position as a politician. From the perspective of the Malays, increasing Chinese electoral victory was a disaster, as Malay political control was seen as the Malays' counterbalance to their own impoverished economic situation (Noor, 2009, p.163). Although An Mei is currently a muslim convert, she is not a *Bumiputera*. She does not share the same roots with Hussein or Faridah which is the main issue. By taking the bad relationships between Chinese Malaysians and *Bumiputera* into the account, having a Chinese Malaysian which is

An Mei person that comes from minority to hold a politics position as high as *Bumiputera* which is Hussein is not a good idea. Since Chinese Malaysians already have a stable economic to begin with, giving them more political power would be a disaster for *Bumiputera* since political power is the only power that these *Bumiputera* have at that moment.

Since the May 13th incident, *Bumiputera* are known to have more political power than other minority groups in Malaysia which resulting in many new policies that benefits *Bumiputera* more than other minority groups, including Chinese Malaysians. An Mei's aunt, Nelly, has a son and a daughter named Jeremy and Jane that stay in Singapore. At the time when Jeremy heard about the Malaysia five year plan, he immediately discuss about it with Nelly.

“I just have this gut feeling. You must have heard of all the new policy ideas that have been bandied about under the New Malaysia Five Year plan. Does Hussein agree with them? The Plan aims to give Malays greater access to universities and employment by extending the special quota systems to guarantee their entry. I am uneasy about all this talk of increasing the percentage wealth of the Malays. How can it be achieved except through redistribution from the other ethnic groups?” (Yap, 2011, p. 191).

After the aftermath of May 13th, a strategy has been developed to overcome the socio-economic problems and economic equality. The May 1969 riot called the government's attention to the fact that economic development without corresponding attention to social development could not guarantee social justice, equality, harmony, stability nor well being of the people (Aziz, 1996, p.77). In short planned economic changes may produce unanticipated social consequences which will react on the development strategies (Aziz, 1996, p.77-78). Thus the intention

of the emergence of five year malaysia plan is to develop the economic situation in Malaysia. Since Chinese Malaysians has a strong position in terms of economy while the *Bumiputera* remains poor in Malaysia at that time, the government has a strategy to develop the economic equality for both ethnics. As the following line states, the five year plan is including giving the *Bumiputera* greater access to education and increasing the percentage of wealth which later would lead to another policy called NEP or New Economic Policy. However, there is an impact of the establishment of this plan. As Jeremy said, he feels that this policy is dicriminated against Chinese Malaysians since it gives a lot of advantages to *Bumiputera*. However, the five year plan is just the beginning to introduce NEP or New Economic Policy which also made because of the race riot of May 13th.

3.2.2 Economy

Economy is one of the main aspects in a country that acting as a system which provides the employment and livelihood of people. Therefore, it is important for a country to maintain its economic equality which would generate sustainability for all. However, after Malaysia's independence in 1957, the economic inequality was becoming conspicuous between the three main ethnics where Chinese Malaysians hold the biggest wealth proportion than the other two main ethnics which are the Indians and *Bumiputera*. Poverty was largely prevalent among them since the Malays occupied the rural area and the Indians in the estates whereas the Chinese were concentrated in urban locations of the country (Kahn, cited in Mokhtar, et. al., 2013, p.12). Since economy was the root of the race riot of May 13th, the government lead by Tun Abdul Razak as Malaysia's second Prime Minister

at that time, decided to establish a new policy with the expectation to eradicate the poverty and to reform the structure in Malaysia where there will be no longer discrimination against each race in the society of Malaysia. The NEP, scheduled to remain in operation until 1990, aimed to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty as well as to restructure Malaysian society so that race was no longer identified with economic function (Hooker, 2003, p. 235). Hence, the NEP was published as the response due to the race riot of May 13th that mainly happened between the Chinese Malaysians and the *Bumiputera*.

In the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel, after An Mei has officially become Hussein's and a politician's wife, clearly she will follow Hussein's steps and accompany him as he is taking care of his political matter. However, as they are on their way back in their car to Kemun, An Mei mentions something about the New Economic Policy.

"I overheard some of the debate during the cocktail party. Are you supporting this New Economic Policy? There is considerable unease in the country. In fact, Jeremy says that..."

"Stop quoting Jeremy to me. It is none of his business. He is not even a Malaysian. Anyway, you should not involve yourself with this." (Yap, 2011, p. 195).

The New Economic Policy was discussed at the cocktail party by Hussein and his political colleagues. The plan of NEP is mainly to eradicate the poverty regardless of the races and also to reform the economic structure where the income distribution would be distributed fairly amongs the ethnic groups in Malaysia, however in reality the NEP benefits the *Bumiputera* more rather than providing the

economic equality amongst the races and ethnic groups. In reality, at the operational level the NEP became all about quotas and massive government intervention on behalf of the bumiputera community (Chin, 2009, p.168). For that reason, Hussein does not want any interference from outsiders or anyone outside his political groups to discuss or to scrutinize concerning NEP including his own wife, An Mei. Although technically she is now a Malaysian woman, Hussein does not want her to be involved in this matter could be mainly because An Mei's root is Chinese Malaysian, and it seems like she does not support the NEP as she asks Hussein if he is supporting this policy and mention that there is considerable unease in the country in the following lines. Hussein's response to An Mei's action as he does not want her involvement, can also caused by how the concern of NEP itself is actually benefitting *Bumiputera* more, rather than creating equality amongst all ethnic groups.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1 Conclusion

The *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel mainly focuses on the life of a multi-ethnics country located in Southeast Asia, which is Malaysia. The multi-ethnics life in a country is often correlated with the majority and minority. Although, the population of Malaysia comprised of three main ethnics which are the *Bumiputera*, Chinese and Indians, the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel portrays *Bumiputera* as the majority and the Chinese Malaysians as the minority in the society with the May 13th 1969 riot incident in Malaysia as the historical background of the novel.

The *Bumiputera* characters are depicted by a young man named Hussein and his family. While a young woman named An Mei and her family are the embodiment of the Chinese Malaysians characters in the novel. Both families are coming from different background. Hussein and his family, as *Bumiputera* are involved in the political matter in Malaysia. Therefore, they have more privileges as *Bumiputera* which is a part of majority and also have a higher position in the society. On the other hand, An Mei and her family as the Chinese Malaysians are less privileged since they are the minority and have no position in the political area of Malaysia, therefore they just act as ordinary citizens in the society that have no interference in the political matter. Moreover, Hussein and An Mei are lovebirds, yet they are obstructed by their differences such as their cultural background, lifestyle, ethnic and race. The race riot on May 13th 1969 has aggravated the

relationship between *Bumiputera* and Chinese Malaysians which add the impossibility for Hussein and An Mei to continue their relationship to the marriage. However, the marriage between the two is eventually held at Hussein's residence with many terms and conditions for An Mei. The problem arises when An Mei as the Chinese Malaysian woman and as a part of the minority, has to sacrifice her cultural background including her religion and lifestyle in order to be together with Hussein, a *Bumiputera*.

A country with various ethnics and races can create a beautiful diversity as they live peacefully side by side. However, in Malaysia there is a huge gap between one and another caused by the differences of their ethnic and race. The majority and minority relationships appear as their relationships are divided by a wall relating to their populations. In Malaysia, *Bumiputera* are the majority in the society while the Chinese and the Indians are the minorities since their populations' combined are less than *Bumiputera*. The *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel portrays the life of *Bumiputera* and the Chinese Malaysians at the race riot that happened in Malaysia in May 13th 1969 and how *Bumiputera* have more privileges and advantages compared to the Chinese Malaysians as the minority. While *Bumiputera* live with their privileges that supported by their status as the majority in the society, the Chinese Malaysians has to adjust with their culture which is represented by An Mei as the Chinese Malaysian character in this novel, when she has to change her whole identity including her religion and her lifestyle to be in accordance with *Bumiputera*'s culture. The majority and minority relationships are not only exist in the Malaysian

society, but also there is a possibility that this kind of relationships could happen anywhere in a society where there are various ethnics and races in one area.

4.2 Suggestion

While the researcher read the *Bitter-sweet Harvest* novel, there were a lot of spectrums added into one novel wrapped with a story about Malaysia and its diversity. Culture, politics and economy has been discussed thoroughly in this research. There is one element that can be analyzed in the future which is also about the culture aspect of the Chinese Malaysians in this novel. The way how they mix English with Chinese language in their daily life and also the process of the adjustment of An Mei when she changes her identity into a Malaysian. Also, it will be interesting to discuss about the law since Hussein is divorcing An Mei unilaterally and how An Mei fight for the child custody after her divorce with Hussein, considering the law in Malaysia is divided into Civil law and Syariah law. It will be quite fascinating to discuss about these circumstances with sociological approach in the future.

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