

Keris Mas and the Establishment of the ASAS 50's in Modern Malay Literature

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v14-i8/22401>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBS/v14-i8/22401

Published Date: 26 August 2024

Abstract

This paper is based on observations regarding the significance of the role and influence of the Angkatan Sasterawan 50 (also known as ASAS 50) in shaping the practices of modern Malay literature. Consequently, this paper is dedicated to tracing the history of the emergence and strengthening of the ASAS 50 ideology within modern Malay literature. This is accomplished by providing a serious examination of the key figures of ASAS 50 since its inception. To achieve this objective, the paper utilizes close reading methods. This involves referencing and cross-referencing, particularly concerning Keris Mas, a significant figure in the development and preservation of the ASAS 50 literary ideology of "art for society." Additionally, this paper leverages Charles Wright Mills' theory of The Power Elite to analyze the power dynamics and influence of key figures in mapping the practices of modern Malay literature. The findings reveal that the consolidation of power and the ideology of ASAS 50 have been carried out seriously and consistently over several decades by Keris Mas. This can be illustrated through Keris Mas's authority as an important and influential literary figure in modern Malay literature. This is further evident as Keris Mas has dominated key positions within organizations related to Malay literature, particularly Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

Keywords: ASAS 50; art for Society, Modern Malay Literature, Keris Mas, Higher-Circles.

Introduction

ASAS 50 was founded on August 6, 1950, at Henderson Road, Singapore. ASAS 50 was officially registered on June 22, 1951. At the beginning of its establishment, ASAS 50 operated at No. 16, Namesu Avenue, Singapore. The idea of establishing ASAS 50 was initiated by Muhammad Ariff Ahmad better known as Mas, a teacher and literary fan of Sultan Idris's Maktab College. (1946-1949). As a fan of literature, Mas always admired the literary activities especially during the period of Japanese occupation until the time of the British colonization of the Malay Land. This admiration prompted Mas to acknowledge the literary figures who were active in both these periods as important groups that have carved the face of Malay literature in the Malay Land. Mas also gave a special title to this group of literary writers as "virtuous writers" because of the difficulty of these writers to work without being paid any fee. In admiration of

this group, Mas submitted a proposal for the establishment of a literary organization that could ensure the reputation of the literary group is preserved and can be used for the development of Malay literature. The proposal was further reinforced by Mas and several other authors such as Masuri S.N., Hamzah Hussein, and Jymy Asmara's visits to the Indonesian Consulate. At that time, Hamzah Hussein introduced the visiting literaries as the ASAS 50. The title ASAS 50 was used to distinguish a group of literaries from Singapore and the Malay Land, from the group of Indonesian literaries who referred to themselves as "Angkatan 45" (Generation). The phrase "Angkatan" inspired Mas to form a literary organization which he later named the Angkatan Sasterawan 50 (Generation of Writers 50) better known as ASAS 50 with its influence (Mas, 1979).

The combination of big names such as Keris Mas and Asraf, as experienced editors handling the Malay Envoy, the famous newspaper found at the time to have been a stepping stone to the consolidation of ASAS 50's influence. This is because the newspaper is a medium of general distribution that can strengthen the influence of some group or ideology in society (Ismail, 1973). Before that, the characters called "stars" (*bintang*) or "virtuous writers" (*penulis budiman*) had built up a brilliant reputation as literary activists in writing in the mainstream media. The group's efforts are worthwhile when it succeeds in attracting and influencing other authors to help the group strengthen its position through the establishment of ASAS 50. The strength of this group can be seen when Keris Mas, Usman Awang, and Asraf are appointed as the top committees of ASAS 50. This nomination is not an unusual thing, but it can increase public confidence in ASAS 50 (Salleh, 2017). Based on the concept in the Power Elite theory as discussed later, this situation explains the position of the ASAS 50 figures as a "higher circles" in the development of Malay literature at the time, has given the freedom to this group to lead the organization in particular in drafting the constitution, ideology, and literary concepts that embody the struggle of ASAS 50 in modern Malay literature (Ali, 1981). In the context of this discussion, special attention will be focused on the figure whose average accomplishment is the most significant in the growth and consolidation of the ASAS 50 literary ideology, namely Kamaluddin Muhammad better known as Keris Mas. This discussion will take advantage of a concept in The Power Elite theory which is the concept of "higher circles" to look at the power movements and the influence of Keris Mas in the institutionalization of the ASAS 50 ideology in modern Malay literature. This study can be considered important, especially in understanding how the ideology of ASAS 50 was formed and maintained by its figures, while also providing insight into how this ideology is created, upheld, and preserved in contemporary Malay literature. Indeed, this serves as the inspiration for this study.

The Notion of Elite Circles in the Theory of Power Elites

The discussion at this stage is focused on a concept that exists in the Power Elite theory which is "higher circles". This concept will be discussed to understand how the power, position, and influence of the power elite are built and further preserved. As a branch of sociology, the understanding of the emergence and continuity of power and influence of the "power elite" through the "higher circles" can be used to understand how an ideology, idea, or idea is institutionalized, that is, legally accepted and considered true, carried out, and defended by the group or community involved.

In Power Elite theory, the concept of “Higher Circles” refers to a specific group with specific characteristics and powers and exercises its position and specialty in the social system. This group is at the top of the hierarchy of societies. This group consists of individuals or parts of society who have advantages in two aspects, namely, i) knowledge, and ii) political experience, both of which are better than societies in other groups. These two things make the “higher circles” look special, and even encourage the assertion of other groups of the community that the higher circles occupy the highest places in the social system. Such distinctions and positions allow “higher circles” to determine any decisions, including those that will have a major impact on society and the country (Mills, 1967). “higher circles” are also responsible for giving instructions in the context of their position on the main hierarchy of modern society organizations (Mills, 1967). This is based on the success of the power elite, which also consists of the higher circles, lowering the power of the three major institutions in the previous social system: family institutions, religious institutions, and educational institutions.

As has been mentioned, this transfer of power occurs when the institutions no longer play the role of individuals, religions, and students in their respective contexts, instead offering a service to strengthen the power and position of the “higher circles”.. For instance, the purpose of religious institutions such as the church is no longer to educate religious members or priests who play a role in raising the morality of the people but to commit and justify the acts of the military force committing murders as a moral act. Thus, the fate or life of an individual is no longer determined by family factors such as origin. On the contrary, fate and modern life are determined by the quantity of time allocated to a group (Mills, 1967).

Moreover, the failure of the central administration to educate people to be nationalistic through educational channels prompted leaders to re-evaluate and transform the existing education system. It aims to encourage the public to agree and implement any governmental decisions and actions. This is important to avoid a crisis caused by the imbalance of opinion and public approval of the “higher circles”. For instance, an army that puts a life of church doctrine above the life of a soldier will trigger a crisis in the army (Mills, 1967).

Furthermore, the power elite movement as described has led to the emergence of higher circles. This happens through the development of unit power in every institution that connects to the big three. Every institution associated with the Big Three also has administrative powers. This group also plays a role in determining one-on-one decisions centralized. As decision-making powers are increased by institutions associated with the big three, executive powers have been increased. This is happening in the context of the construction and movement of an institution (Mills, 1967). These increased powers of the institutions involved have influenced increased activity and linkage with other units. All of this is carried out in the role of the “higher circles”, and decided by the 'power elite'. Every decision made will determine the activities of society's life. These decisions made by the “higher circles” are not subject to domestic issues, but also involve the international world (the bombing of Japan by the United States.). According to Mills, the unity between the power elite and the higher circles (which will be discussed later) is an important resource that locks every section of the social system. All of this leads to a conclusion about the power and dominant nature of the 'power elite' which is considered important, especially in the assessment of the history of social structures (Mills, 1967).

The extension, Mills explains, when the power elite interlocutors reached their peak, a group of so-called “higher circles” emerged. This group plays the role of economic, political, and military elite repair. The chief executive of this group consists of wealthy corporate members and holding economic institutions. Members of the political council lead the political institutions. The military institution is led by a group of state soldiers. Each of these domains is linked to a particular corner in terms of power to form and consolidate the position of the “higher circles”. So the implications of the decisions made are the responsibility of this group (Mills, 1967).

Next, to consolidate position and power, the “higher circles” act is based on commonly agreed understanding and will. This group tends to share a lot of valuable things and experiences, compared to a community of other groups. With such characteristics, Mills defined this elite group as a distinct group of individuals with the most power, wealth, and prestige. This definition is considered to coincide with the way this group lives and its leadership. In the context of this group, Mills refers to “power” as something possessed by a consciousness of one's own will, even if rejected by others (Mills, 1967).

One of the most important things that has been observed from this research is the existence of influence buildings and ASAS 50 rankings in modern Malay literature that are in line with the Power Elite theory. (Mills, 1967). In connection with this, the observation found that the high position achieved in the social system is due to the success of ASAS 50 drafting the initial strategy to be at the level of “higher circles” in modern Malay literature. This refers to the strategy of building a good name and reputation in literary activities, especially in the press, so that this group can be referred to as a ‘virtuous writer’, and even nominated as a ‘celebrity’ by literary fans (Hassan, 1973). Based on such a reputation, the group has gained strong support and help from fans such as Mas and Jymy Asmara to realize the ASAS 50 foundation agenda led by the then-celebrity Keris Mas. In the context of Power Elite, Mills explains that the presence of a celebrity can strengthen the position or influence of an elite group in the social system. It's a point of deterrence from the influence of celebrities to gain publicity, just as it facilitates something that a group or ideology is known and done in society (Mills, 1967).

The Role of Elite Circles in The Constitution of ASAS 50

There are three objectives of ASAS 50 which are embodied in the Constitution, namely (i) expanding and enhancing the quality of Malay literature and culture, (ii) protecting the rights and interests of members and all authors, and (iii) introducing literary innovation without leaving the old one behind. To realize the first objective is to expand and improve the quality of Malay literature and culture. ASAS 50 has been found to have listed four things to do with each skill. First, study literary-related writings such as stories, dramas, books, and academic articles about cultures and civilizations that can enhance human thinking and ways of thinking. Second, producing stories, dramas, articles about literature and culture, narratives, and others that can convey new ways of thinking for dissemination and publication. Thirdly, organize and hold lectures and debates on a wide range of issues from the literary aspects to the benefit of members. Fourthly, organize activities related to language and literature. Next, to realize the second objective of ASAS 50, which is to protect the rights and interests of members and authors, ASAS 50 lists five actions to be taken. First, encourage good relationships between writers and publishers. Second, determine the rate of remuneration corresponding to the value of the work. Third, help the writer in terms of incentives and

finances. Fourthly, if a member writes something involving any legislative action, then legislative assistance will be provided. Fifth, study the law of the state relating to publication (*By-Laws of Angkatan Sasterawan '50, 1951*).

The Constitution of ASAS 50 also divides his qualifications into three categories: Ordinary Membership, Honourable Membership, and Lifelong Membership. The Ordinary Members are composed of authors who seek to comply with the objectives and laws enacted and determined by the Honourable Members, who are made up of the 'Cecil Street' group (the "higher circles" in ASAS 50). Disciplinary action or expulsion from the association will be imposed on ordinary members who disobey the Constitution of ASAS 50. The Lifetime Members are composed of authors who pay a five-year qualification fee and can apply for a lifetime membership. In the context of discussions about "higher circles" and 'power elites' in ASAS 50 and Malay literature in particular, the position of the Honourable Member in the ASAS Constitution 50 is significant. In this case, the Honourable Member refers to the Supreme Management Committee. The honorary members consist of the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary, the Assistant Secretary, and the Sun, and six members of the committee. The election is based on the reputation and position of the Honourable Member who is considered to be superior to that of the other members. This gives the Honourable Members the authority to select candidates consisting of linguists and literates to join the organization. The selection is based on common interests and goals with the objectives and struggles of ASAS 50. More importantly, the Honourable Member plays the role of draftsman of the Constitution of ASAS 50, and the direction of the ASAS 50 (*By-Laws of Angkatan Sasterawan '50, 1951*).

The presence of the Honourable Member as described above is to adhere to the concept of "higher circles" in The Power Elite theory as discussed earlier. This is because the reputation of the Honourable Member is considered to be greater than its reputation and the ability of other members has given a great deal of credit to the Honorable Member for being in the most comfortable position in ASAS 50. With this position, the Honourable Member is entitled to determine the characteristics of the writer that he wishes for each of his professions. This is as Mills described the 'higher circles', the highest group in the society and the power to determine the state of the society below it (Mills, 1967: 9).

In this connection, the Honourable Member has the opportunity to determine the characteristics and things that are required of the author of ASAS 50. First, ASAS 50 writers must be modern to gain a high status in their society. Second, the world of ASAS 50 writers must be wide and profound taken from the realities of life and the new sciences. Thirdly, the ASAS 50 writer must engage with the situation of his people covering literary language, culture, economy, and the whole of his life. Fourthly, the author of ASAS 50 must present a modern and advanced mind-flow. Fifthly, the author of ASAS 50 must uphold and defend human values. Six, the author of ASAS 50 must be passionate about nationalism, that is, fully engaged in the struggle for independence and the advancement of the nation, which is political involvement. Seventh, the author of ASAS 50 should act as a thinker. Eighth, the author of ASAS 50 must be free to state the truth (Salleh, 1981).

This gives the authority to shape the constitution and define the direction, ideas, and concepts of the ASAS 50 literature that has been voluntarily given to the 'Cecil Street group of celebrities members of Keris Mas, Usman Awang, and Asraf. These names are highly regarded and important in society in general, and literary society in particular. The admiration and reputation of celebrity artists on ASAS 50 members' glasses have pushed the Celtic Street group to the top. In their hands, ASAS 50 moves to fight, and spread its priestly ideology in the future development of Malay literature.

Furthermore, the use of the expression "literature" popularized by ASAS 50 also plays an important role. According to Salleh, ASAS 50 lists its authors as literate. Three factors motivate ASAS 50 to choose the term 'literature' as a specific title to cover the meaning and role of ASAS 50. First, the title of literary distinguishes ASAS 50 and its followers from other authors. This is because the title of "literator" (*sasterawan*) brings with it the responsibility to produce works that can talk about great thoughts, and important themes such as humanity, sociality, and divinity. The responsibility is accused of not being borne by writers other than the literary. Secondly, the title of literary writer gives high prestige to ASAS 50 as the leader of modern Malay literature. This title is also special because it can raise the prestige of a career as a writer in the eyes of the public, and once increases the self-confidence of the literary when carrying out activities related to literature and the state. (Salleh, 1999). Thirdly, the title of literary distinguishes the literary activities carried out by previous authors (before the emergence of ASAS 50), from those carried on in the ASAS 50 era and beyond. This is because, the term 'insect' used in the literary context before the emergence of ASAS 50 (the classical literary era) is considered to have connotations of traditional, classical, and non-modern meanings. In that regard, the selection of literary writers in itself reflects the ASAS 50 desire to perform differently from the previous group of authors. By choosing the word "literator" (*sasterawan*) and rejecting the title "poet" (*pujangga*), ASAS 50 also rejects some of the features contained in the concept of the *pujangga*. It refers to the rejection of ASAS 50 of the characteristics of the monastery, the palace, and all aspects contrary to the context of modern times. (Salleh, 1999). This is done to emphasize ASAS 50 as a key figure in the contemporary Malay literary movement, following current developments. As a group of modern authors, ASAS 50 presents concepts, styles, and literary activities different from those of the previous authors. This distinction encompasses aspects of value and taste (Salleh, 1999). The creation of the expression "particularity" was done to create a myth about the privilege and height of prestige of ASAS 50, "higher circles" in modern Malay literature. These titles are chosen and used to distinguish ASAS 50 from previous authors, or who differ ideologically from them. This is because, as described above, the title 'literate' comes with characteristics such as modernity and great thinking, which are allegedly not owned by other groups of authors. In the context of the Power Elite, what this does is a strategy to strengthen power and position, as well as extend the influence of "higher circles" or "power elites" in their social environment (Mills, 1967).

In addition to the significant role of the laureates conceptualized by ASAS 50, they also serve as defenders of society's values and morals. Thus, the literary is required to incorporate the aspects of values and morals practiced in the realities of society into literary works. To meet these demands, the literary must portray in explicit regarding the moral realities of the society he represents. It is not a mistake for a literary writer to produce literary works about "moral illnesses" such as adultery and prostitution if these are the things that happen in society. This

is because the purpose of the literary writer to produce a work that displays moral illness is to tell about the realities of society's life, rather than to arouse the sexual integrity of the reader (Keris Mas, 1963). In this context too, Keris Mas calls on the literature to have the courage to produce works that can highlight the real real life of society, that is, a life flooded by evil, and an exhibition of human sexuality (Keris Mas, 1965). Besides, Ismail, through his early plans in the first issue of the Languages Council magazine (1957) also concluded that the important role of literature is to change the values and ways of thinking of the people (Ismail, 1957). Connect this thing, Mohd. Taib Osman also affirmed the important influence of the ASAS 50 fairy on the formation of modern Malay literature (Osman, 1974).

All of this elucidates ASAS 50's elevated status in modern Malay literature, propelling the group to an elite and influential position within society. This is achieved through the promotion of a literary ideology centered on societal themes such as struggle, independence, poverty, social system decay, and oppression as evidenced in works from the 195s onward (Sidang Pengarang, 1981). In depicting these stories of societal decay, ASAS 50 refrains from passing judgment on the values of the lives of the majority lower class within the social system (Tong, 1981). The inclination to align with community-defined values and morals has cemented ASAS 50's position and prestige among its represented community. Consequently, ASAS 50 solidifies its standing in modern Malay literature's upper echelons.

Keris Mas: Laureate-Celebrity of ASAS 50

The discussion continued with an examination of Keris Mas, considered the most significant figure in ASAS 50. He is revered as a star and celebrity within ASAS 50 and is closely associated with the advancement of modern Malay literature. The 1981 National Arts Awards report honored him with the highest government award for literature. As the leader of the "Cecil Streets" group, Keris Mas has successfully guided ASAS 50 and played a pivotal role in shaping modern Malay literature (Laporan Panel Anugerah Sastera Negara, 1981). The same report identified Keris Mas as a key literary figure in the development of modern Malay literature. Consequently, he is often hailed as a role model by his contemporaries and subsequent writers (Mas, 1981). Additionally, he was recognized for his unwavering efforts to reform modern Malay literature by the National Laureate Awards Panel Report of 1981 (Negara, 1981). The report also acknowledged Keris Mas's endeavors to strengthen and introduce a new genre of modern Malay literature through short stories or "cerpen" (Negara, 1981). This shows that before founding ASAS 50, Keris Mas strategically built a reputation that earned him prominence within the literary community. This recognition was further solidified by government acknowledgment detailed in reports from Panels of the National Laureate Awards.

Keris Mas or his real name is Kamaluddin Muhammad, born on June 10, 1922, in Kampung Ketari, Bentong, Pahang. After graduating from Grade V, Keris Mas was sent by his father to Sumatra to study religious sciences at Tawalib School. Next, Keris Mas continues his studies at Kulliahtul Muallimin Al-Islam College. In this college, Keris Mas follows the Islamic study course delivered by the graduate teachers of Al-Azhar University. Most of the teaching staff at the time was composed of young and radically enthusiastic teachers (Keris Mas, 1979). Through these teachers, Keris Mas studied the thinking of Islamic figures such as Ibn Khaldun and Muhammad Abduh. In addition, Keris Mas also learned lessons about the thinking of Indonesian fighters such as Hatta and Sukarno. This interest of Keris Mas is driven by the

emphasis of the minds of these figures on the educational aspects of the people (Mas, 1979). Besides, Keris Mas also had the opportunity to follow the general subjects taught in the colonial schools of the Netherlands at the time (Mas, 1979). General subjects are taught by teachers from Jakarta. The teachers of these general subjects carry out their teaching duties while nurturing the spirit of national struggle among the students. Keris Mas acknowledges that the lessons learned from these teachers make him an idealist, and ambitious in teaching (Mas, 1979). In addition to focusing on learning, Keris Mas is also active in community activities at the college. He is a member of the Islamic College Students' Association and the Training Student Association of Islamic Colleges. Keris Mas is also involved in the publication of the association's official magazines. Besides these two magazines, Keris Mas also wrote short stories for the leading Panji Islam magazine in Java at the time (Mas, 1979). Keris Mas graduated from Kulliahtul Muallimin Al-Islam College and obtained a college diploma in Islamic education in 1939. Despite having a degree in religious education, Keris Mas is unlikely to meet the expectations of families who want to see him as a religious teacher in the village (Mas, 1979: 2). According to Keris Mas, he had to turn away his family's hopes to his aspirations of learning new sciences other than religious sciences. Furthermore, Keris Mas enrolled at Pittman College (Singapore) to take the matriculation examination for entitlement to the University of London in 1940. At Pittman College, Keris Mas took five subjects including English language and literature (Mas, 1979). However, Keris Mas failed to complete his studies due to the outbreak of World War II. This incident once destroyed his ideals to obtain a certificate from the London Matriculation (Mas, 1979).

Keris Mas's esteemed educational background has afforded him the advantage of earning respect among literary enthusiasts, particularly during his time in Singapore. This is because the majority of writers in Singapore lack the higher education credentials that Keris Mas possesses (Muhammad, 1974). Keris Mas's strategic approach to building his reputation through his educational background aligns with Mills' assertion in *The Power Elite* regarding society's tendency to favor individuals, groups, or communities perceived as superior in various aspects, including political experience (Mills, 1967).

Next, Keris Mas entered the workplace in Singapore as a clerk at a printing warehouse named Dai Nippon Insastsa (later known as Malaya Publishing House) during the Japanese occupation (Keris Mas, 1979). A career as a clerk in a publishing and printing company is in line with the ideals of someone who wants to be a journalist or a writer (Mas, 1979). However, Keris Mas realizes that the misery experienced by the Malay community is the result of the Japanese military atrocities. This awareness was reinforced by the recommendation of the Young Malay Union (KMM) to him, that the Malay people should not cooperate with the innocent and untrustworthy Japanese. This is why Keris Mas no longer shares his freedom aspirations with Dai Nippon Insastsa (Mas, 1979). At the same time, the national spirit in Keris Mas' soul continues to encourage him to always think and dream about the struggle for independence. These are the dreams that publish his desire to write a novel (Mas, 1979).

In the political sphere, Keris Mas began to be active when the Malay Land returned to British colonization by joining the Malay National Party (PKMM) along with Ishak Haji Muhammad (Pak Sako). When in PKMM, Keris Mas was a good friend of Mr. Sako and Burhanuddin Helmy. Both of these nationalistic figures are acknowledged to have influenced his thinking about Islam and the West. For Keris Mas, the Malay people need Islamic reform. At the same time,

the Malay people need Western influence to be a strong, fair, and dignified nation (Mas, 1979). Keris Mas's allegations of his affinity with Burhanuddin Helmy, and Ishak Haji Muhammad have been manipulated to strengthen his position and reputation as “higher circles” among the community. This is because Burhanuddin Helmy and Ishak Haji Muhammad are known as intellectual figures and freedom fighters respected by the community (Rosdi, 2010). In this connection, Keris Mas was found to have promoted himself as a literary who not only has the advantages of education but also in terms of close association with important and popular figures. The advantages of this Keris Mas are far ahead of the members of the ASAS 50 and other literary enthusiasts. This is what motivates the literary community to regard Keris Mas as a star, which can attract public attention to ASAS 50 (Abdul Aziz, 2005).

To further strengthen the status and respect of Keris Mas as a “higher circles” is the political experience he has in particular. This refers to Keris Mas's experience in the Malay National Organization (PKMM), a left-wing nationalist party that seeks independence for the Malay Land from the invaders. This has been added to the post of Chief of Explanation of the PKMM entrusted to the party to Keris Mas. As Chief Explanation Officer, Keris Mas is closely associated with the community through dialogue sessions and speeches. The speed of dialogue and speech has made it easier for Keris Mas to communicate and interact with the community. This situation makes Keris Mas easily supported and welcomed by the community. His reputation and popularity as the Chief of the PKMM's Description was strengthened by the influence of the Keris Mas scrolls that became the reading material of the society at the time, especially among the youth. (Keris Mas, 1979). Keris Mas has used his reputation and public belief in him to better understand the lives and thoughts of the Malay people, especially those in the village. Through this, Keris Mas was able to identify the mental constraints that caused the Malay people to retreat, be passive, and not have a high spirit to defend the homeland. Keris Mas subsequently concluded that the main factors of the Malay decline were passive attitudes, bonds of feudalism, and the teachings of *khurafat* (Keris Mas, 1979). In 1948, Keris Mas withdrew from the PKMM. This withdrawal took place when the party was unable to co-operate with the right to oppose the Malayan Union's demands for independence. However, the question of the attitude and soul of the weak people to rise from colonization remains fresh in the minds of Keris Mas. These are the questions that arose when Keris Mas was involved in the field of press after his withdrawal from PKMM (Keris Mas, 1979).

According to the aforementioned observations, Keris Mas gained popularity and a reputation as a prominent figure within the Malay community prior to returning to Singapore. This recognition stems from his educational background, associations with influential figures and freedom fighters, and direct involvement in political organizations advocating for Malay Land liberation. These factors afford Keris Mas an advantage over other writers in Singapore, endearing him to the general public and earning him respect (Abdul Aziz, 2005).

Furthermore, to strengthen his position as a “higher circles” in modern Malay literature, Keris Mas used his educational background, experience and social background, as well as his deep interest in literature to attract the attention of the publishing company. The appointment of Keris Mas as Malay Ambassador to Singapore at the age of 25 was a milestone for Keris Mas to strengthen his position in Malay literature, once expanding his influence amongst the community (Mas, 1979). In the Malay Envoy, Keris Mas gets guidance from A. Samad Ismail

(renowned for his resistance against the invaders and for utilizing the press as a tool in the people's struggle.) (Salleh, 2017). This once more adds to Keris Mas' credit among the average community that also respects A's firmness. Samad Ismail is a journalist with the soul of the people (Jaafar, 2019). In the Malay Embassy, Keris Mas explores the realities of the life of Singaporean citizens, and once expands the existing network of communications and associations. At that time, Keris Mas extended the scope of society to various layers and backgrounds such as politicians, workers, social, and cultural activists, religious fighters, and artists (Mas, 1979). Based on existing experience and reputation, Keris Mas was promoted to editor at Utusan Melayu Sdn. Bhd. After a few months as a journalist. The appointment of Keris Mas as an editor at a leading publishing company in a short period has given a firm assurance and position to the existence of Kerish Mas in modern Malay literature as a 'higher circles', or star. This is because the new position held has given the authority and a significant role to Keris Mas to handle two important publications at the time, namely the Envoy of Time and the Mastic. This opportunity gave Keris Mas the space to expand the ideology of literature that he held, and his influence by writing and publishing essays and short stories actively in the Apostles of Time and Mastic with various pen names (Mohd. Tahir, 1998). With authority as editor in two premier publications at the time, Keris Mas chose to be selective about the works he wanted to broadcast. This is done by stipulating that the works that are disseminated must comply with the establishment of Keris Mas (as an editor), in particular on matters involving the Malay community (Mas, 1979). The tendency to use power as an editor of famous newspapers and magazines to determine works worthy of publication has raised criticism against him. In this case, Keris Mas is accused of being unfair. The accusation was made by Hamzah Hussein, who condemned the actions of the Envoy of Time and Mastic who viewed the works of other publications as inadequate (Hussein, 1981). However, Hamzah Hussein's accusations did not claim the stability of Keris Mas as an increasingly recognized and respected literary figure in the literary community, through his position as a well-known newspaper editor. This is because newspapers and magazines are important media for shaping the influence and position of things in society (Ismail, 1973).

Keris Mas continued to expand his influence by holding author positions in several newspapers and other magazines after building up a firm position as an author in the Malay Embassy. In 1953, Keris Mas was involved as an author in the Malay Raya and Malay Weekly newspapers. In 1955, he emigrated to the National Newspaper. In 1956, he moved to the Malay Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. In 1957, Keris Mas began his service at the Language and Library Chamber, a significant language and literature institution in Kuala Lumpur. The consolidation of Keris Mas' position as a "higher circles" and 'power elite' in modern Malay literature occurred when he was appointed as the author of several magazines in the Language and Library Chamber from 1956 to 1962. In 1962-1966, Keris Mas was appointed Chief Author of the Language and Library Council. The chief author's post is the highest in magazine publishing. This is because the Chief Author has the right to determine the direction and completion of the media publications that are underneath it. The magazines that were under the supervision of Keris Mas at the time were the Language Council, the Community Council, and the Arts Council. These three magazines are the most important periodicals responsible for bringing people closer to the Council of Languages and Libraries. The magazines run by Keris Mas are expected to be a container to gain public support for the Language Council and the Central Language Council (Hussein, 1957). The position and authority given to Keris Mas by the Council of Languages and Libraries have been used to

extend the influence and ideology of literature that it has held to the literary public and the general public. This can be seen from the actions of Keris Mas expressing ideas that he believed could advance modern Malay literature, including those involving other institutions such as educational institutions. In this regard, Keris Mas called for the creation of a basic framework for the study of Malay literature at the university level. Keris Mas emphasized that it was the responsibility of literary bodies such as the Department of Malay Studies at the University of Malaya, and the Council of Languages and Libraries to provide the “basic framework” (the Keris Mas statement itself) (Mas, 1964).

Keris Mas also called for the establishment of the Construction and Art Development Division at the Language and Library Council in 1971. Gesaan Keris Mas has been welcomed, even he has been appointed as the head of the first Construction and Art Development Division. Through his tenure in the Language and Library Chamber, Keris Mas has pursued the agenda he initiated through ASAS 50, namely to advance the Malay language through the replacement of the Jawi script with the Rumi script as the official Malay script. This statement has been submitted by the Congress of Malay Languages and Inscriptions of Semalaya for the first time (*Kongres Bahasa dan Persuratan Melayu I-IV*, 2007). Besides, it is the demand that the Malay language with the Rumi script be made the national language. As a figure of the “higher circles” among the society, and further strengthening the position of the 'power elite' in modern Malay literature, Keris Mas urged that the proposals he presented be accepted as a form of revolution (its expression) with the circulation of the times (Keris Mas, 1971). Next, in his last note as Chief Author, Keris Mas urged the public, politicians, and scholars to fight for the slogan “the language that embodies the spirit of the nation” (*bahasa jiwa bangsa*) which is the word of the *Dewan Bahasa magazine* (Keris Mas, 1977). Keris Mas' position as a “higher circles” in modern Malay literature continued after his retirement in 1977. This can be seen from the appointment of Keris Mas as a Guest Writer (*Penulis Tamu*) in the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka is a recognition given by the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka to national laureates appointed based on their experience and expertise in a particular field, and outstanding career experience. In addition, Guest Writers are selected based on important ideas or contributions that have been made to the development of science. As a guest writer, Keris Mas was given a grant facility to produce quality work. In 1979, Keris Mas was appointed a Guest Lecturer at Malaya University and was given responsibility for running the Creative Writing Course. The appointment at this educational institution gives Keris Mas space to extend the influence and ideology of literature he is fighting for to the students and the new generation of Malay literature (Mas, 1972).

Further explaining Keris Mas' position as “higher circles” and “power elite” in modern Malay literature is his involvement as a panel in a variety of adventures and literary awards. The power and influence of Keris Mas in the evaluation of the book and the literary prize can be seen from his success in dealing with the controversy of Salina's novels. In this case, Salina's novel which joined the 1958 Novel-DBP Competition was not awarded any prize by the judging committee. This is the tail of a part of the panel that rejects Salina for being considered immoral and pornographic. However, Keris Mas arose to defend Salina as a good Malay novel, and important in the development and progress of modern Malay literature. (Keris Mas, 1979). More importantly, Keris Mas defended Salina for adhering to the ideology of literature that was pioneered and advocated: “art for society” (Keris Mas, 1979). The urging of Keris

Mas as an experienced figure, positioned in modern Malay literature has succeeded in breaking the arguments of the panels against giving the prize to *Salina*. As a result, *Salina* was awarded the Consolation Prize and published by the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in 1961. This defense of Keris Mas against *Salina* has given the novel space to go through a literary journey that is much longer than the other novel that won the contest. In addition, the defense of *Salina* also contributes to the merit of his writer to be given a certain reward or reward. More significantly, *Salina* was later accepted as an important novel in the history of modern Malay literature (Zariat, 2014).

At this point, it becomes evident that the issue at hand pertains to power and the impact of the "power elite" in shaping historical narratives, as Mills suggests: "Power has to do with whatever decisions men make about the arrangements under which they live and about the events which make up the history of their times" (Mills, 1967). In this context, Keris Mas's authority and influence as a "power elite" have facilitated *Salina*'s ascent to a prominent position in contemporary Malay literature, despite her initial rejection by the panel.

Furthermore, to strengthen the position and influence of Keris Mas, the government has given several awards and recognitions. It began with the government's recognition of Keris Mas through the Hadiah Pejuang Sastera in 1976. In 1981, Keris Mas was honored as the first recipient of the Literary Award (now known as the National Laureate Award), the highest award given by the Government of Malaysia to literature. This award is given to literary figures who have played pivotal and meaningful roles in the development of Malay literature. The ideas and efforts of Keris Mas to introduce the ideology and concepts of his literature through ASAS 50 are considered "the light of the future development of modern Malay literature" (*Laporan Panel Anugerah Sastera Negara*, 1981). The Award Panel argues that the awarding of the National Laureate Award to Keris Mas is a manifestation of the government's recognition of the status and influence of Keris Mas as the "power elite" of modern Malay literature. The average scholar and literary critic who received recognition for the position also justified the award of the Art Award to Keris Mas for his role in popularizing modern Malay literature amongst society. (Husin, 1981). In 1987, Keris Mas was chosen by the government to represent Malaysia as the first recipient of the ASEAN Prize for literature, enriching Keris Ma's position and reputation as the "higher circles" in Malay literature in the Asian region (Ruhiyati, 1976).

Conclusion

Indeed, Keris Mas has gained social recognition as a powerful elite in modern Malay literature. This is obtained through the manipulation of Keris Mas's educational background, political experience, and association with intellectual and nationalist figures. The accusation of the power and influence of Keris Mas also emerges through his role in the selection of works, and in the controversy as discussed. All of this has led to the government's acknowledgment and recognition of the firmness of Keris Mas in modern Malay literature.

Contribution

This paper effectively illustrates the influential role of authority and steadfastness in perpetuating certain literary ideologies. Moreover, it adeptly employs political theory to examine the intertwining of politics and literature, specifically through the authoritative and resolute influence of Keris Mas in modern Malay literature.

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