



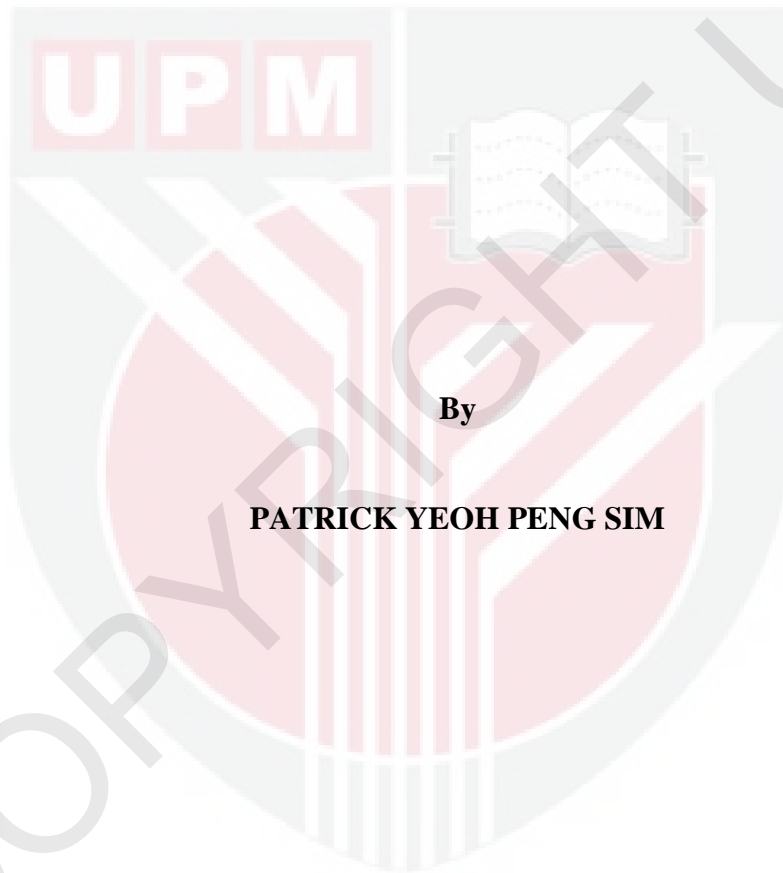
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***SEEKING SOCIO-CULTURAL RELEVANCE
IN SARAWAKIAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH
THROUGH SYNCHRONIC THEMATIC CLUSTERING***

PATRICK YEOH PENG SIM

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**SEEKING SOCIO-CULTURAL RELEVANCE
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By

PATRICK YEOH PENG SIM

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
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August 2012

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Chair: Arbaayah Ali Termizi, PhD

Faculty: Modern Languages and Communications

This study investigates the extent and nature of local Sarawakian literature in English (SLIE) across genres from folktales and Praise Songs translated into or retold in English, to anecdotes, short stories and poems written originally in English by Sarawakians, particularly from the 1960s to the first decade of the 21st century. It first of all attempts to define Malaysian Literature, followed by Malaysian Literature in English (MLIE) and discusses the relevant political factors that led to the classification of National Literature and Sectional Literature. Sarawakian Literature in English (SLIE) is then defined, followed by a discussion of the possible factors that led to Sarawakian literature in English to be practically completely ignored in

mainstream discourse on Malaysian literature in English (MLIE), looking at the issue from political and socio-cultural perspectives. Significant and relevant factors that have led to differences between Sarawakian literature in English and mainstream Malaysian literature in English are investigated and explained. The catalytic role of the Borneo Literature Bureau (BLB) in the development of SLIE is also explained. The study takes a thematic approach in reading, analysing and interpreting the selected multi-genred texts, linking them within ‘synchronic thematic clusters’ or ‘landscapes’ to achieve a more focused socio-cultural commentary of Sarawakian society, past and present. The texts studied are divided into ‘derivative’ and contemporary or original Sarawakian literature in English, and analysed using the hermeneutics approach, for a better understanding of their relevance to the main study objective, which is to prove that Sarawakian literature in English is socio-cultural commentary. This study shows that while Sarawakian society may have changed and developed over the past century or so from the advent of White Rajah rule in 1841 to the early years of the 21st century, the different eras are linked by common themes of affinity with the land and Nature, a strong pioneering spirit, harmonious communal living and the will to survive under sometimes difficult circumstances. This pioneering study on Sarawakian literature in English arrives at the conclusion that Sarawakian literature in English not only exists but is also fairly substantial although it differs from mainstream MLIE in many literary, social and cultural aspects. It is hoped that this pioneering study will be a catalyst for further research in Sarawakian Literature in English.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sastera.

**MENDAPATKAN WAJARAN KOMENTAR SOSIO-BUDAYA DI DALAM
KESUSASTERAAN SARAWAK DALAM BAHASA INGGERIS MELALUI
"SYNCHRONIC THEMATIC CLUSTERING"**

Oleh

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Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa walaupun masyarakat Sarawak mungkin telah berubah dan membangun semenjak beberapa kurun yang lalu iaitu sejak kemunculan Peraturan Rajah Putih pada tahun 1841 sehinggalah ke awal kurun ke-21, namun perbezaan era masih dapat dihubungkan oleh tema yang sama iaitu tanah dan alam, semangat perintis yang kuat, kehidupan komunal yang harmoni dan semangat untuk terus hidup walaupun terpaksa berhadapan dengan kesusahan. Kesimpulan yang dapat di buat mengenai kajian Kesusasteraan Sarawak dalam Bahasa Inggeris adalah kesusasteraan yang bukan sahaja wujud, malahan sumbangannya cukup besar walaupun berbeza dengan aliran kesusasteraan yang utama di Malaysia dalam kebanyakan karya-karya sastera, aspek sosial dan budaya. Didapati bahawa penulis (karyawan) Sarawak tidak begitu prihatin terhadap isu - isu seperti identiti kebangsaan, profil perkauman, diskriminasi antara jantina, feminisme dan pasca

kolonialisme. Seperti karya-karya lain, mereka lebih menumpukan kepada komentar sosio-budaya dan juga keprihatinan mereka adalah lebih bersifat serantau berbanding dalam Negara, dan mereka juga bersikap lebih peribadi dari secara awam. Kajian ini meninjau tentang asal-usul kesusasteraan orang Sarawak dalam Bahasa Inggeris yang meliputi kelompok-kelompok cerita dongeng yang telah diterjemahkan dalam Bahasa melalui anekdot, cerita pendek, dan puisi yang secara asalnya telah dikarya dalam Bahasa Inggeris oleh rakyat Sarawak, khususnya dari tahun 1960an, sehingga kini. Kajian ini juga dibuat bagi mengkaji sebab-sebab yang memungkinkan kemunculan kesusasteraan rakyat Sarawak dalam Bahasa Inggeris hanya dalam tempoh 50 tahun yang lalu. Ini diikuti dengan kajian tentang kemungkinan sesetengah faktor yang telah menyebabkan kesusasteraan tempatan orang Sarawak hampir tidak diendahkan dalam perbincangan utama aliran kesusasteraan di Malaysia dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Melihatnya dari sudut perspektif politik dan sosial dan kebudayaan, signifikasi dan faktor yang mendorong kepada perbezaan diantara kesusasteraan Sarawak dan kesusasteraan utama Malaysia dalam Bahasa Inggeris akan dikaji dan dijelaskan. Kajian ini dibuat menggunakan pendekatan tematik dalam pembacaan dan pemahaman dari teks-teks pilihan dalam pelbagai genre, mengaitkannya dengan ‘thematic clusters’ untuk mencapai fokus yang lebih teliti dari sudut sosio-budaya penduduk Sarawak yang dahulu dan sekarang. Teks yang dikaji dibahagikan kepada ‘derivative’(bahan terbitan) dan ‘original’(bahan asal) kesusasteraan Sarawak dalam Bahasa Inggeris dan dikaji menggunakan teori rangka kerja ‘hermeneutics’ bagi lebih memahami kewajaran kajian, yang mana ianya bertujuan untuk membuktikan bahawa kesusasteraan Sarawak dalam Bahasa Inggeris adalah komentar yang berbentuk sosio-budaya.

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It is also with great pleasure and with a sense of belonging that I thank many of the academic staff of the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communications for their friendship as well as their interest in my particular area of research that has encouraged me to labour on in my quest to make a modest contribution to the field of Malaysian literature in English by pioneering research on Sarawakian literature in English, hereto ignored in mainstream discourse on our nation's literature in English. To Associate Professor Dr Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya, Associate Professor Dr Shameem Rafik-Galea, Associate Professor Dr Rosli Talif, Encik Rohimmi Noor and Cik Zainor Izat, among others, thank you for being both mentors and friends.

To Cecilia - spouse, companion, friend and critic – I will always be grateful for giving me the space to be myself.

Patrick Yeoh Peng Sim

August 2012

APPROVAL

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 3 August 2012 to conduct the final examination of Patrick Yeoh Peng Sim on his thesis entitled “**Seeking Socio-Cultural Relevance in Sarawakian Literature in English Through Synchronic Thematic Clustering**” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1997 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The committee recommends that the student be awarded the Degree of Master of Arts.

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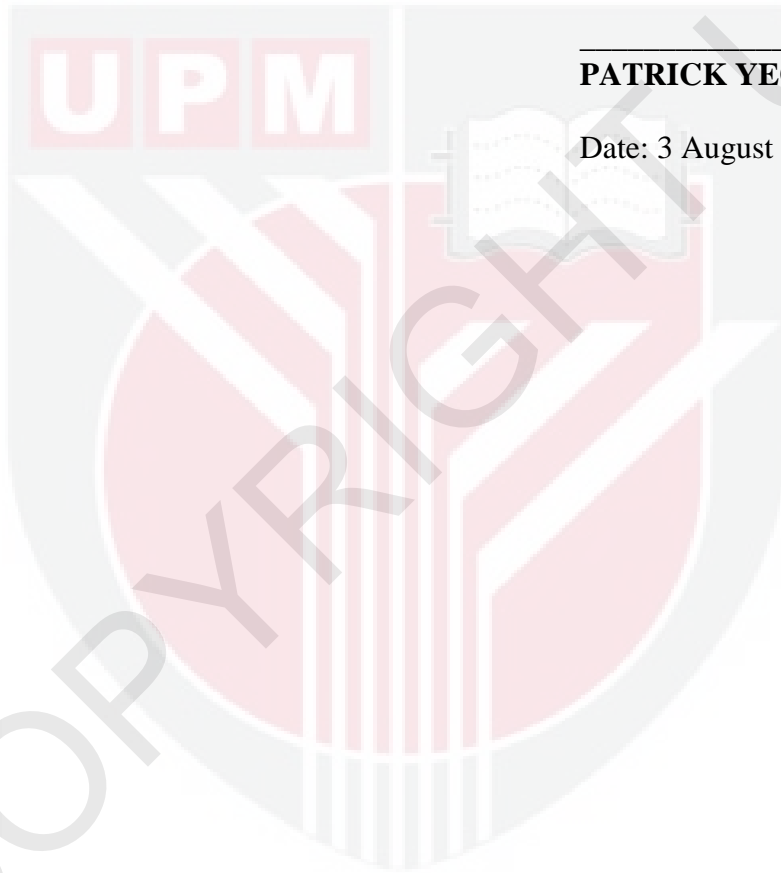
Date:

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

PATRICK YEOH PENG SIM

Date: 3 August 2012



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