

# INTERTEXTUALITY IN SINGAPOREAN LITERATURE: AN ANALYSIS OF ISA KAMARI'S *SATU BUMI*

## INTERTEXTUALIDADE NA LITERATURA CINGAPURA: UMA ANÁLISE DO SATU BUMI DE ISA KAMARI

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se que o efeito da intertextualidade dá um tipo de padrão de autoria específico a um autor no desenvolvimento da criatividade. Em média, os romances produzidos por autores de Singapura referem-se a quatro formatos textuais iniciais ou hipotexto: texto tradicional, texto inicial do autor, texto de outro

**Abstract:** The development of Singaporean literature witnesses a phenomenon of relationship between its texts and some other texts, which is referred to as intertextuality (text within a text or dialogue between texts). It is assumed that the effect of intertextuality gives a kind of specific authorship pattern to an author in developing creativity. On average, novels produced by Singaporean authors refer to four initial textual formats or hypotext: traditional text, the author's initial text, another author's text, and non-creative text. In this context, a famous Singaporean novelist and poet, Isa Kamari, is one of the authors who tend to produce intertextual literary texts. However, the topic of intertextuality is rarely investigated in Singaporean literature. Therefore, this analysis aims to investigate the process and connection between texts in Isa Kamari's novel *Satu Bumi* (One Earth) published in 2009. The analysis utilizes the intertextual framework proposed by Julia Kristeva which represents the connection between hypotext (initial text) and hypertext (latest text) to explore the meaning, the proposed process, and the appropriateness of the author's works. This study found that Isa Kamari's *Satu Bumi* reveals themes and historical settings by referring to true stories that happened around the 1940s until the 1950s, namely the invasion and rule of Japan (1942), the story of Nadrah "the girl in the monastery" (1950), postal workers strike (1952), Hock Lee Bus Company riots (1955) and Malaya Independence Day 31 August 1957. The outcomes of this analysis suggest that intertextuality plays a key role in Isa Kamari's authorship strategy. These outcomes can be especially useful in the process of Malay historical development and identity.

**Keywords:** Intertextuality. Isa Kamari. Malay history. *Satu Bumi*.

**Resumo:** O desenvolvimento da literatura singapurense testemunha um fenômeno de relação entre seus textos e alguns outros textos, que é referido como intertextualidade (texto dentro de um texto ou diálogo entre textos). Supõe-

autor e texto não criativo. Nesse contexto, um famoso romancista e poeta cingapuriano, Isa Kamari, é um dos autores que tendem a produzir textos literários intertextuais. No entanto, o tema da intertextualidade raramente é investigado na literatura de Cingapura. Portanto, esta análise visa investigar o processo e a conexão entre textos no romance *Satu Bumi* (Uma Terra) de Isa Kamari publicado em 2009. A análise utiliza o quadro intertextual proposto por Julia Kristeva que representa a conexão entre hipotexto (texto inicial) e hipertexto ( texto mais recente) para explorar o significado, o processo proposto e a adequação das obras do autor. Este estudo constatou que *Satu Bumi* de Isa Kamari revela temas e cenários históricos ao se referir a histórias reais que aconteceram por volta da década de 1940 até a década de 1950, ou seja, a invasão e domínio do Japão (1942), a história de Nadrah “a garota no mosteiro” ( 1950), greve dos carteiros (1952), motins da Hock Lee Bus Company (1955) e Dia da Independência da Malásia, 31 de agosto de 1957. Os resultados desta análise sugerem que a intertextualidade desempenha um papel fundamental na estratégia de autoria de Isa Kamari. Esses resultados podem ser especialmente úteis no processo de desenvolvimento histórico e identidade malaia.

**Palavras-chave:** Intertextualidade. Isa Kamari. História malaia. *Satu Bumi*.

## 1. Introduction

The early development of Malay literature is believed to be the basis for the formation of Malay authorship (Yusoff, 2008). It is said that old Malay literature is a worldview or personal symbol of the Malay community. Old Malay literature exists in various forms including folk literature, old Malay poetry, framed stories, historical literature, political literature, and legal literature (Hassan, 2018). The literature of that time shows the exchange of concepts along with the transition of time. It is often found in literature and translations from outside literature in poems and comforting stories for example. Through it, several Malay creativity processes were observed.

The history of the development of the modern Malay novel in Malaysia in 1925 has not shown a more focused direction. The novel *Hikayat Faridah Hanum* by Syed Sheikh Al-Hadi is often disputed and not certified as the first novel because it shows a coating from foreign literature (Middle East). However, the question of "authenticity", "imposition" and "influence" that occurs in *Hikayat Faridah Hanum* is considered by intertextuality experts as a mixture of a "mosaic of quotation, absorption and transformation" of various texts (Safei, 2010)

On the other hand, Saman (1993) states that every author is bound by two factors, whether explicitly or implicitly when determining the theme and issues in a work. Wellek and Warren (1970) also argue that the most influential factor in the process of creating a work of art is the author who revolves around his or her background. The relationship between a work and its audience is said to be closely related, and the presentation of social phenomena in a work is something relevant in the context of Umar Junus' creativity (1998). According to Hawthorn

(2000), every text produced by an author is influenced by other texts, "Kristeva defines the text as a permutation of text, an intertext in the space on the given text".

The development of Singaporean literature has found its audience with some bias and consistency among its writers, according to Safei (2006). Among what is shown is that there is a phenomenon of the relationship between texts that exists between the text that is read and some other texts. It is assumed that the effect of Deja Vu or already written gives a kind of specific authorship pattern to the author in developing his creativity. Novels produced by Singaporean authors on average refer to four initial text formulas or what is called hypotext. The four formulas in question are (i) traditional text, (ii) the author's initial text, (iii) another author's text, and (iv) non-creative text. The relationship between these texts is a phenomenon of 'dialogue between texts' or 'the existence of a text within a text as once stated by Bakhtin (1984) and Kristeva (1980)

In this context, it was found that Isa Kamari is one of the authors who tend to produce intertextual novels. Isa Kamari is a writer born in Singapore. He is a graduate of B.Arch. (Hons) from the National University of Singapore (1988), a Master of Arts from the National University of Malaysia and a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of South Carolina in the field of Political Science and International Relations. Isa Kamari has experience as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Archives and a member of the Singapore Language Council. He is also a member of the steering committee of the Singapore Art Festival and the Implementation of the National Art Gallery, MICA. In addition, Isa Kamari is also one of the members of the Special Committee for the Promotion of the Malay Language, Singapore's Ministry of Education. He is currently working as Principal Architect with the Land Transport Authority of Singapore, LTA.

Throughout his involvement in the mandala of Malay literature, he was a novelist and poet. Among the works produced by him are the novel *Satu Bumi* (One Earth), *Atas Nama Cinta* (In the Name of Love), *Menara* (Tower), *Kiswah* (The Cloth of Kaabah), the poetry collection *Sumur Usia* (*Well of Longevity*) and so on. He is also experienced in writing lyrics and producing song albums and documentary videos. All contributions in the field of Malay literature received due recognition, for example in 2006, Isa Kamari received S.E.A. Write Award in Bangkok, Thailand. In addition, his works have won prizes such as the National Book Development Council Book Award, the Literary Prize of Literature, and the Saadon Ismail Appreciation Prize.

The *Satu Bumi* novel, among others, is a novel that is the result of a non-creative compilation of text that is a historical event. Authors filter events that really happen in the real

world and pour them back into creative work with a mix of ideas, creativity, and innovation. The tendency of the author in representing the historical text is not intended to change the original historical event (Safei, 2010). On the other hand, through a new form, the author presents his ideas, impressions, and interpretations of history. The lively discourse debate and the height of the common sense of the Malay community in the work must be understood and interpreted by the audience. This view can be seen through the application of historical events in the composition of literary works such as novels.

Isa Kamari is seen working on his sensitivity and creativity in displaying historical events for the public to see. Concern, awareness, and high sensitivity are obtained through various sources such as observation, research, personal experience, or reading which is filtered and processed through a creative process that leaves a deep impression on the reader. Therefore, the question concerning human life is certainly not separated from the authorship environment (Junus, 1996). So, this paper will show what, how, and why historical events are mixed by Isa Kamari into the narrative space of the novel *Satu Bumi*.

## 2. Literature Review

A study by Napiah (1991) titled “Tuah-Jebat in Malay Drama: A Study of Intertextuality” tries to examine the Tuah-Jebat drama using the principles of intertextuality, including transformation, modification, expansion, and conversion. *Hikayat Hang Tuah* is used as a hypogram for the writing of the study. It was found that the Tuah-Jebat story has received various interpretations and understandings, especially the concept of the Tuah-Jebat hero. However, the presence of hypotext shows a clear dominance in the Tuah-Jebat hypertext.

In 1997, Mohd Zahir Ahmad in his study "*Riwayat Kelantan: Analysis of Text, Intertext and Context*" discussed character conventions in the original text. The comparison of the characters in historical literary texts such as *Riwayat Kelantan*, *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*, *Sejarah Melayu*, and *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* is done using the principle of the convention. The results of the study show that religion is a binding feature that determines the stability or collapse of a government.

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation by Mohd Pozi Hj Masorori (2004) in "*Hikayat Shah Kobat: Analysis of Structure and Intertextuality*" reveals the presence of principles of intertextuality in the book *Hikayat Shah Kobat*. This study found the presence of hypotext and proved the existence of a relationship between the text in *Hikayat Shah Kobat* and other tales.

Research on "Elements of Visual Art in the Poetry of Latif Mohidin and Siti Zainon Ismail: A Comparative Study" by Sakinah Abu Bakar (2004) wants to see the authorship of Siti Zainon Ismail in two disciplines, namely literary art, and visual art. This study uses Haskell Block's approach (1958) prioritizing direct experience from the work itself. This study indirectly also uses the principles of transformation, modification, and expansion that exist in the theory of intertextuality. Found, the works of Latif Mohidin and Siti Zainon Ismail have their similarities and differences.

Safei (2009) through the "Comparative Study of Malay Intertextual Novels" conducted a comparative study of three authors from three countries namely Anwar Ridhwan (Malaysia), Suratman Markasan (Singapore) and Putu Wijaya (Indonesia). This study outlines four initial formulas of the novel's relationship with traditional texts, the author's initial text, other authors' initial text, and non-narrative text. The outcome of the discussion presents the unique and diverse tradition of Malay creative writing.

Looking at the research done by Wan Othman (2012) namely "Faisal Tehrani's Novels: A Study of Intertextuality and Dakwah", it was found that it utilizes three principles of intertextuality namely transformation, modification, and expansion in examining the research text. Wan Zaliha also continued his research by combining Malay Methodology theory to analyze six novels. The application of the two theories by the author is to find elements of preaching that are trying to convey to the audience. Observed that Faisal Tehrani wrote concerning the hypogram.

Tuan Rusmawati Raja Hassan's study titled "Intertextuality in S.Othman Kelantan's Novel" in 2014 focused on observing the relationship and process between texts in the production of S.Othman Kelantan's novel. This study refers to the authorship of S. Othman Kelantan which shows a tendency and consistency towards intertextual works. The four novels he focuses on are *Angin Timur Laut* (Northeast Wind), *Juara* (Champion), *Ruang Perjalanan* (Travel Space), and *Ustaz* (Religious Teacher). This study found that within the framework of intertextuality, the authorship of S. Othman Kelantan demonstrated his loyalty to the initial text in the short story genre which was later developed into a novel. This happened to *Angin Timur Laut* and *Ustaz* which are sourced from short stories of the same title. While the *Ruang Perjalanan* was developed from the short story "Aku dan Anakku" (Me and My Child) and the *Juara* from the short story "Pahlawan Lembu" (Bull Warrior). The writing style of S. Othman Kelantan shows his sensitivity in blending social experience into the *Angin Timur Laut*. Likewise, the author is sensitive to the current political climate; his convictions and ideologies are mixed

metaphorically in *Juara*. The personal background and Islamic education that S. Othman Kelantan believed in greatly influenced the creation of *Ruang Perjalanan*. As well as a career in the academic field, also putting knowledge in *Ustaz*. This study summarizes the intertextuality of S. Othman Kelantan not only physically from short story to novel; more than that it crosses the environment and roots of its Malay-Islamic tradition.

It can be said that the previous research presented, proves the efforts of scholars who consist of theses and dissertations of the Doctor of Philosophy Degree utilizing the intertextuality framework in analyzing Malay literary works. However, research on works originating from Singapore is very limited. Therefore, this research is relatively new as there has not been a detailed intertextual study on the "relationship between texts" attempted in the novel by Isa Kamari. To fill the gap, this study examines one of Isa Kamari's novels, *Satu Bumi*.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### *Satu Bumi and the Unfolding of Intertextuality*

It is generally stated that the theory of intertextuality is the result of the early work of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (Masorori, 2004). Saussure continued the debate on the basic question which is the language sign which is represented by two parts, namely the concept (signified) and the sound of the image (signifier). Semiotics is only suitable for analyzing abstract and absurd works. Feeling that there is a weakness in the structuralism of Saussure's idea to analyze Russian works in his time such as Dostoevsky, Mikhail Bakhtin justified using another approach to interpret Russian works. Bakhtin began to apply linguistic aspects to literary genres around the 1920s (Mana Sikana, 1995). In the book *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), Bakhtin uses the dialogic concept. The basis of Bakhtin's "dialogue" theory is that past utterances influence today's utterances or no utterances without relation to other utterances.

Julia Kristeva is a figure who further developed Bakhtin's dialogic theory. Kristeva no longer uses the term "dialogic" but replaces it with "intertextuality". Julia Kristeva was born in Bulgaria in 1941. She was first exposed to the world of French literature in 1965. It is said that the '60s was an era of intellectual enthusiasm among structuralists such as Lucien Goldman, Roland Barthes, and Levi Strauss (Guberman, 1996). This development greatly influenced the thinking and writing of Julia Kristeva.

The concept of "intertextuality" was first introduced by Kristeva to the French literary audience in the 1960s through her writing "*Le mot, le dialogue et le roman*" (Safei, 2010). The understanding of intertextuality in this study is based on Kristeva's basic definition that "...any



text is the absorption and transformation of another" through *Semiotics and Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Kristeva then extended Bakhtin's dialogue process by detailing it to some basic principles such as quotation, absorption, transposition, and transformation (Julia Kristeva, 1980). Specifically, this relationship focuses on the position of hypotext (early text) with hypertext (latest text) and how hypotext affects the production of hypertext.

Kristeva also rejects Russian formalism which according to her is limited to transferring linguistics and its application in analyzing a text. Bakhtin's study of Doestoesky's work was later reviewed and transferred by Kristeva in *The Bounded Text*. This writing, among other things, states that the author did not create a work from their original thoughts, but instead assembled existing texts. Therefore, most texts have connections and interweaving with other texts.

The presence of intertextuality tendencies can be observed in Isa Kamari's literary works, specifically in the relationships between his non-creative text and novels. It is found that some parts of Isa Kamari's novels demonstrate the existence of "dialogue between texts," whether in terms of characters, settings, or specific issues that have been explored in previous non-fiction texts. This phenomenon leads to several interpretations of Isa Kamari's literary works.

According to Yusof and Hashim (2010), fiction based on historical facts offers various interesting opportunities to the writer. The way a writer imagines an event may differ from how it is usually imagined. A writer may create new personalities and motivations for the main characters and change or challenge previous interpretations of the events and characters. Fiction does not necessarily have to follow boring historical facts, and Isa Kamari has successfully processed those facts in a highly creative manner.

Scrutinising *Satu Bumi*, it is a novel that depicts the tragic love story of a Chinese girl who is cared for by a Malay family. The love that blossoms between Swee Mei and her adopted brother, Jati during the Japanese rule often faced various suspicions and political upheavals in the Malay Peninsula and Singapore. This historical novel explores the question of rights and power and unravels the meaning of true humanity. It was found that the author combined his educational background, career, and experience in architecture with imagination and creativity in the process of producing the novel *Satu Bumi*.

The position of the novel *Satu Bumi* is intertextual because it is influenced by the writings of A. Ghani Hamid and Sulaiman Jeem entitled *Yaacob Mohamed (Dalam Api, PKMM, UMNO, PAP)* (1990). This biography contains 44 chapters, beginning with writings by Lee Kuan Yew, Sulaiman Jeem, Abdul Ghani Hamid (organizer), Asmah Awang (widow) and Sidek Saniff

(Senior Parliamentary Secretary), followed by the chapter "About the Family" which tells about Yaacob Mohamed's background.

Isa Kamari's writing "Who Owns This One Earth" is also a peritext that drives the production of the novel *Satu Bumi* (Kamari, 1999). Through this writing, the author expresses some problems about culture, religion, descent, homeland, rights, power, defection, greed, cruelty, and justice which ultimately lead to the conflicts in this novel.

For example, Isa Kamari started the novel *Satu Bumi* with the question of "Malay people" by his daughter which is placed in the preface, page 6. As in the case of Isa Kamari's daughter, the word "Malay" is written in all her official and unofficial documents. "Malays" share a "kinship" with each other and are not Chinese, Indian, or European. "Malay" is a continuing and changeable social contract that depends on circumstances and purposes. One can trace their ancestry, whether fully or not, to Arab, Indian, Chinese, Sumatran, Javanese, Balinese, Lombok, Bawa, Borneo, Makassar, or other areas in Indonesia and still be considered Malay for almost any purpose. Even Europeans who marry Malay women and convert to Islam are considered to have "entered the Malay community". If they divorce later on, they are not necessarily considered to have "left the Malay community". This depends on their future relationship with the Malay community and their adherence to the Islamic faith.

Rahim (1998), in her book, *The Singapore Dilemma: The Political and Educational Marginality of the Malay Community*, argues that three "interconnected strands shake the identity of the Singapore Malay". These three strands are the identity of the greater Malay world, awareness of Islam, and the socio-economic marginalization of the Malay community.

So who exactly are the Malays and what does it mean to be a Malay in Singapore today? A "Malay" in Singapore is someone who considers themselves Malay and is generally accepted as Malay. This is one of the issues that the author tries to unravel in the novel *Satu Bumi*.

In addition, the creative process of *Satu Bumi's* novel also departs from his wife Sukmawati Sirat's doctoral thesis entitled "Malay Political Leadership Trends". It turns out that the results of his wife's study provide a new perspective that political leadership plays a very important role in the formation of a society's culture and identity. However, this paper only debates the intertextual relationship between the novel *Satu Bumi* and the biography of *Yaacob Mohamed (Dalam Api, PKMM, UMNO, PAP)* (1990). It is shown through the portrayal of characters and settings by the author.



i. Leader character

Based on this hypotext, it was found that Yassir's character is the reincarnation of Yaacob Mohamed. Some quite clear intertextual processes are shown by the author toward the two figures in question. Isa Kamari is seen still maintaining the character of the political figure in Yassir, for example on page 186;

“...In silence, Yassir felt respected because the Bukit Timah branch UMNO torpedo at that time had hit the target of the attention of politicians in Singapore. But Yassir politely declined their invitation. "Continue your ambitions in PAP. Let me be with UMNO. I will try to close the relationship between PAP and UMNO so that one day we can work together”...”

Yaacob Mohamed's relationship with his teacher, Abdullah Othman, became the starting point for his involvement in the Malaysian political scene (p. 27). In 1949, the youth once joined the UMNO party. However, due to a disagreement regarding the goal of merging Singapore and Malaysia, he and some friends left UMNO and joined the PAP.

The relationship or "dialogue between texts" from the aspect of portraying characters is shown by the author through the transformation process. It was done to show the author's appreciation of the political figure. Yassir's character is maintained until the last chapter. Nevertheless, the author also made modifications to the novel by showing Yassir's character as a grave digger. The author's justification when doing this renovation work is to relate it to the behavior of "excavating rights and power" (p. 9) and "for the sake of truth and self-respect, this excavation must continue, on this one earth (p. 164). Thus, this philosophy is continued symbolically by the character of Yassir.

ii. Background and Meaning

This novel is classified as a historical novel by its publisher based on the presentation of Singapore's historical and political background. Some events happened in history filtered by the author through the representation of certain episodes. For example, the story of the arrival of Japan in Singapore in 1942 was recorded by the author in chapter 2, page 37;

“...The news was delivered by her husband, Malek, who had heard the conversation of the village people. According to news, Jati had taken up arms, against the Japanese army led by Yamashita, shortly after he fled the village...”

History has recorded that on December 8, 1941, the Japanese army led by General Takumi landed on Sabak Beach, Kelantan. The Japanese occupation of Malaya and Singapore began with the temporary end of British rule when Singapore fell into Japanese hands on February 15, 1942 (Onn, 1946). The portrayal of the character Jati who also fought against the

Japanese colonialists in Singapore connects *Satu Bumi* with its hypotext. Tomoyuki Yamashita's name is also recorded in the *History of Singapore* (1980). The opposition to the Japanese eventually led Yaacob Mohamed to support the struggle of the Young Malay Union (KMM) led by Ibrahim Yaakob and the Indian National Army (INA) led by Subhas Chandra Bose from India. Through these intertextual works, the author is seen trying to find answers to the issues of "gluttony" and "cruelty" committed by the colonialists.

The author also included the story of Nadrah or Bertha Hertogh, a child born in the Netherlands who was left by her mother, Adeline Hunter under the care of Che Aminah when she was five years old in Java. This was after his father, Sergeant Adrianus Petrus Hertogh, was captured by the Japanese army. While under Che Aminah's care, Natrah was educated in Islam and Malay customs. However, there was dissatisfaction when Natrah was brought back to the Netherlands and apostatized. It is recorded by the author in chapter 7 page 112;

“...That layer of anger creates a paralysis of desire. Her soul is empty without a face. Like the figures of the mob in December 1950 who lost their sense of reason and brightness of soul when the Tiger Standard newspaper reported the news that a Dutch girl had knelt before a statue of the Virgin Mary in a monastery. The girl who was decided to be sent back to the Netherlands by the High Court after she was defended by a Malay family and converted to Islam caused anger and provoked mental rage...”

After Natrah was forcibly taken home, her life was surrounded by the police all the time. She was also forced to do things that were beyond her will, such as forgetting her husband, her adopted family, and things that touch elements of the Islamic religion. This was acknowledged by an English officer who was assigned to look after Natrah when she was placed in the Social Welfare Department in Singapore, Tom Eames Hughes, who later wrote the story in his book titled *Tangled Worlds: The Story of Maria Hertogh* (1980). The riots that took place in Singapore in 1950 were said to have been triggered by the actions of Singapore's local media which violated the sensitivity of the Islamic religion. They seemed to create a provocation by displaying the picture of Natrah kneeling in front of the statue of the Virgin Mary several times. Malays, Indian Muslims, and people of Indonesian descent in Singapore feel challenged when Natrah is placed in a church. They think this is a 'Jihad War', a holy war to save the religion and dignity of Islam. Among other things, this revision of history is done by the author to clarify the problems of religion and ancestry that are taken lightly by non-Muslims.

Talking about strikes according to *Kamus Dewan* (2007) refers to the act of not moving and not wanting to work. A strike according to the Trade Union Act 1959 is a stoppage of work by a group of workmen acting in combination or a mutual understanding refusal by several

workmen to stop work or to accept employment and includes any act or omission by a group. Strikes often occur due to dissatisfaction among the people or workers towards a government (politics) or company (industry). It usually involves a group of people. A strike among postal workers in 1952 in Singapore is shown by the author in chapter 10, page 140:

“..Not only riots but strikes among workers as well. For example, the postal workers' strike in 1952. There was a lawyer who defended and became a mediator in demanding the rights of the postal workers, most of whom were Malays...”

Lee Kuan Yew in the book *Memoirs of Lee Kwan Yew* (1998) stated that he was approached by three Malays and one Indian representing the Postal and Telecommunications Uniformed Staff Trade Union, complete with postmen's uniforms at the Laycock & Ong Office to seek legal advice. They are demanding salary revisions due to the higher cost of living in Singapore. British expatriate officers were given a salary of \$1000 a month, while postmen refused to be raised even if it was only \$10 a month. This strike has resulted in difficulties for local citizens who have to pick up their letters and parcels at the Post Office. The people's struggle against the colonialists who oppressed them is seen as a protracted polemic. After a series of negotiations, finally, an independent commission under Sir Edward Ritson was established. Ritson then suggested that the expatriate family allowance be abolished. The government also agreed with the Joint Action Council to approve a fairer salary scale. The author of *Satu Bumi* also brings the issue of "justice" to the attention of his audience so that they act equally in all matters, including the treatment of groups of different statuses and positions in society.

Then in 1953, another riot broke out involving the Hock Lee Bus Company. Bus workers from the Hock Lee Amalgamated Bus company in Singapore went on strike from 23 April to 12 May 1953, after negotiations to improve working conditions failed. This strike triggered violent clashes in the streets between the workers and students who supported the strike and the authorities. This event is described by the author in chapter 12, page 154;

“...He had been doing so since the riot at the Hock Lee bus company on May 12, 1955. He was afraid to go out to work. But who will help his fate if he just stays at home? A group of 200 members of the dismissed Bus Workers Union went on strike at the company. The atmosphere became uncontrollable when a group of 2000 Chinese high school students came to the strike site and showed sympathy and support for the strikers...”

Bus workers of the Hock Lee Amalgamated Bus Company, in Singapore, began a strike on 23 April 1955 to demand better working conditions but were rejected by the employer who wanted to protect its business interests. This workers' strike escalated into a battle between the Singapore Bus Workers Union, the Hock Lee Workers Union, and the Singapore Chinese

Secondary School Students' Union with the authorities on 12 May 1955, which left 4 dead. The strike has led to the nationalization of transport enterprises in Singapore. Isa Kamari raised the issue of rights among subordinate workers. Although they are workers, they have rights that need to be protected by their employers.

Referring to the issue of the establishment of Singapore, 1819 is often regarded as the year of the "founding of Singapore" by the British. As written by C.M. Turnbull at the beginning of his book *A History of Singapore*, "The modern era of Singapore began on 30 January 1819 when the Temenggung of Johor signed a preliminary agreement with the representative of the East India Company, Sir Stamford Raffles, to allow the British to establish a trading post" (Turnbull, 1989: 1). The agreement did not grant rights to own land or to legislate. These rights only came later (Turnbull, 1989: 21).

The process of establishing Singapore as a permanent and full British possession was completed in 1824 under the administration of Dr. John Crawfurd, following the signing of two treaties: the Anglo-Dutch Treaty in London in March 1824, which divided the Dutch and British spheres of influence into two separate zones across the Strait of Malacca, and the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance between the East India Company, Sultan Hussein, and the Temenggung in August 1824. Under the treaty, Sultan Hussein and the Temenggung ceded Singapore and all islands within ten miles of its coast to the East India Company and its heirs in perpetuity; agreed to settle on the land allocated to them; agreed not to deal with external parties without the Company's permission; and acknowledged that if they decided to withdraw from Singapore, the Sultan would receive compensation of \$20,000, while the Temenggung would receive \$15,000. Turnbull believed that this strategy failed to drive out the Malay leaders who continued to reside in Singapore and that this situation was a source of embarrassment for the British administration. However, the treaty succeeded in preventing them from taking over the future of Singapore.

On the other hand, this strategy had a larger impact, namely, destroying the official functions of the Sultan and the Temenggung, causing them to lose their main sources of finance and significantly reducing the number of island areas where they were allowed to operate (Wake, 1975, p. 65-67). As a result of the British's increasingly unilateral actions from 1819 to 1824, Singapore was no longer part of the Malay Kingdom under Sultan Hussein and the Temenggung, who each had administrative rights, traditional resources, and land. Singapore had become a British settlement, and their roles there were minimal. They had almost no power there.

According to *Kamus Dewan* (2007), "Merdeka" means free from captivity and protection, while "kemerdekaan" refers to a sovereign state with the highest authority, without the grasp and

interference of foreign powers. Once upon a time, before Malaya gained independence, history recorded that the country was colonized for about 446 years. Starting with the fall of the Malay kingdom of Melaka to the Portuguese in 1511, followed by the Dutch, British, Japanese, and Siam. The effects of colonization by these countries have left a strong influence, especially the British influence in the administrative, economic, and educational systems. Undoubtedly, the issue of independence is not overlooked in contributing to Isa Kamari's inspiration for writing, as seen in chapter 12 on page 191;

“...But the anger faded after he returned from the capital. August 31, 1957, was declared by the Honorable and Sovereign as independence day. Malaya is sovereign again. The roof of Tuanku's house has also been patched...”

Among the efforts to achieve the independence of Malaya was initiated by the first Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj. He led a delegation of Malayan ministers and political leaders in the independence negotiation mission in 1956 in the City of London. As a result of the negotiations, the London Agreement was signed between the Malay Rulers, the Alliance Party, and the British government. The British then agreed to make Malaya independent in August 1957.

However, it is said that Singapore's independence agenda was not included in the negotiations in the City of London. The same was the case when Singapore was marginalized in the Federation of Malaya in 1948. Since the separation between Singapore and Malaya in 1946, the lion city country continued to be under British rule. As a citizen of Singapore, the events that happened at that time raised a question about the fate of the motherland and should the blame for the separation of the two earths be placed on Tuanku. One thing is for sure, Tuanku is felt to have neglected the trust towards Singapore (p. 193).

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study explored the process and connection between texts in Isa Kamari's novel *Satu Bumi* using the intertextual framework proposed by Julia Kristeva. According to the study, Isa Kamari's *Satu Bumi* reveals themes and historical settings by referring to true stories that happened around the 1940s until the 1950s. Additionally, the analysis suggests that intertextuality plays a key role in Isa Kamari's writing strategy. It is also clear that Isa Kamari tries to find answers to questions (personal background) about culture, religion, ancestry, homeland, rights, power, possession, cruelty, and justice on the island of his birth. However, these questions are also national dignity issues that are yet to be fully resolved in hypertext. Moving from the

collection of imagination, creativity, innovation, and reality in the literary content, the author makes *Satu Bumi* a hypotext that is better positioned in hypertext. Thus, the outcomes of this study can be especially useful in the process of Malay historical development and identity.



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