The Characters of Third Gender in the Eye of Malaysian and Thai Drama and Film: A Qualitative Analysis

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Abstract

Third gender is a common phenomenon in south East Asia ranging from Thailand, Malaysia and the developed nation of Singapore. The third gender is the term used by the Discovery Chanel to refer to the transvestites or the cross dresser or transgender. Like Thailand, Malaysia is of no exception in dealing with the issue of MakNyah which a local term for transvestites. Some streets in Malaysia especially Chow Kit Road and Bukit Bintang have witnessed, listened and embraced patiently the glamorous story of Maknyah, let alone shed their tears during hard times of police raiding their so called business territory.

Their lives have inspired some young film and drama producers to portray them in their production. In Malaysia, producing such dramas and films are not considered as very taboo since Malaysian is quite open in accepting them in the landscape of human behavior. Dramas such as Sotong 1 & 2 and Wali were well accepted and had received many compliments from the viewer, not denying that some quarters did sparked some retaliations. Whereas films such as Waris Jari Hantu and Dalam Botol were charting a quite sum of money despite negative comments from the masses.

These dramas and films have entered the Malaysian entertainment markets without much hiccups although they have portrayed a weird behavior of a subculture group in a Moslem dominated country. The characters of third genders in those dramas and films were very open and real, disposing the real colours of Maknyahs who are trapped in women body. Maknyahs are portrayed in many angles of life: as a husband and father who cross dressed, as transvestites who are possessed by evil spirit and inherits his grandmothers demon, as an oppressed gay boy who finally gets married and as a transvestite who undergo a sexual reassignments.

Similar real films were produced in Thailand such as the Beautiful Boxers and The Iron Lady. Both films hit stardom internationally upon being released to the viewers throughout the world. They were sought after by all transvestites all over the globe. The
Beautiful Boxer characterized Noom Toom the real Thai Kick Boxing champion who later opted to be a real transvestites throughout her life. The Iron Lady mesmerized transvestite achievement in group work especially in sports particularly Volley Ball.

This paper will disclose varieties of real characters of third gender in different cultures which can be a common ground for intercultural learning to everyone in this universe in discovering the unknown and mysterious world of third gender.