

COLLECTION OF STORIES IN MALAY LANGUAGE AT LEIDEN AND ITS RELATION TO THE PAST AND CONTEMPORARY MALAY COMMON SENSE

Nik Rafidah Nik Muhamad Affendi^{1*} and Awang Azman Awang Pawi²

- 1- Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, 43400 Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia
- 2- Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia

Corresponding author: Nik Rafidah Nik Muhamad Affendi

ABSTRACT: This research utilizes the collection of stories in the Malay Language, available at Leiden University's KITLV (Koninklijk Instituut Voor de Taal-Lan-en Volkenkunde or more known of as The Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies). The purpose of this research is to examine the collection of stories in the Malay Language and aspects of the Malay psychology and its relations to the Malay common sense in the past and its contemporary interpretations. The research methodology used 15 collections of stories in the Malay Language published in the year 1871. This is because, it is able to trace the publishing of the collections of stories to Batavia particularly amassed by Tweede Druk. The research shows a large portion of the Malay common sense contained in these stories are relevant and reflects the soul and universality of antiquity and contemporary Malay.

Keywords: Malay story, common sense, psychology, antiquity and contemporary.

INTRODUCTION

The collection of stories in the Malay language was tracked at KITLV (Koninklijk Instituut Voor de Taal-Lan-En Volkenkunde or known of as The Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies). The collections of stories were amassed by Tweede Druk and published in Batavia in the year 1871. These stories should be read and understood by the new generation to know the Malay common sense. The Malay common sense relates to a number of things, such as culture, history and also religion. On this matter, Socrates too talked about sense. The core of Socrates' ethics equates sense with knowledge. According to him, knowledgeable people naturally will have a good common sense and stays positive in life. According to him, evil deeds come from unknowledgeable people. This is because they cannot make right judgement, (Mohammad Hatta, 1982:66) Based on the old Malay stories, it can be traced that the Malay community were concerned with forming good moral values. Various stories passed from generation to generation, illustrates the wisdom of the Malay in imparting messages to the community around them.

Upon inspection, the researcher found a majority of the Tweede Druk's collection was composed of stories depicting animals, with 27 out of 43 stories. This shows almost 63% of the collection used animal characters as symbol to convey the message to the community. The animal characters used, were familiar animals in the Malay world, such as frogs, cows, tigers, mosquitoes and chickens. The stories were simple and at the end of the story, the storyteller would make it known the lessons in the story. The stories contain the norms expected of them to create a harmonious community. Inadvertently, the traditional community had already established community ethics as an outline of the law. This is conveyed in a delicate manner. The stories in this collection were told in a concise manner, using simple language and at the end contained lessons to be learned and the animal characters used in these stories were able to reach the community including the children.

The portrayals of animals as characters in stories were part of the norm. In Asia, for example, the first Japanese children story, *Koganemaru* (1891), written by Sazanami Iwaya, portrayed animal characters. The story follows a dog's revenge on a tiger for killing its father. The story enchanted the Japanese children and Iwaya, beloved by the children were called 'Uncle Iwaya' and 'UUncle Fairy Tale' (David Henry, 2009:218-219). The story remains fresh in the memory of its readers and still has its place until now.

Meanwhile in the west, the handwritten story of *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland*, presented as a gift by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson to Alice Liddell in November 1864 as a Christmas present, also contains animal characters. The manuscript was later published with the title *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* and was fully illustrated by Dodgson. Thus, it can be seen that the character Alice with a long neck surrounded by animals. (Rose Lovell-Smith, 2007:27). The stories of Alice's adventures remain fresh and still accepted by the community until today.

Upon closer inspection, the stories collected by Tweede Druk were folk stories with animal characters. Folk stories were passed down from one generation to the next generation through oral tradition. The stories were then transcribed by the writers of the period. According to Ding Choo Ming (2013:166), the writers and transcribers during the early stages of the development were believed to be from the nobilities with high ranking positions, given the importance of transcription to the government administration and the position were passed down from fathers to sons, in a limited social and occupational mobility in a feudal community. He added, a majority of the manuscripts inherited since the 19th century were not original manuscripts but copies of previous copies before it. Thus, the stories in Tweede Druk's collection were believed to be copies of the transcription and printed. The stories, nevertheless, have existed long before it was written, kept alive hundreds of years ago through the oral tradition.

The oral tradition was said to have a wider meaning, covering both the narratives and non-narratives and any form of oral expression of a particular culture. In short, folk literatures are a part of oral tradition that can be understood as an expression of a culture that uses language and have a direct connection to various aspects of culture such as religion and beliefs, law, leisure time needs, economic activities, family system and social value constructs of the community. (Zalila Sharif and Hamilah Haji Ahmad, 1993:77). This working paper primarily focuses on the Malay common sense. These aspects are related to the lives of the Malay community and can provide a general picture of the culture of the Malay community. Based on the researcher's interview with Aone Van Englehoven (2012), a lecturer with the Institute For Area Studies from Leiden University, these stories in Malay language accumulated at Leiden were picked during the western colonization of the east. These stories proved to be popular and widespread to countries over the archipelago at the time.

MALAY COMMON SENSE IN THE COLLECTION OF STORIES SELECTED

The Malay common sense refers to the wisdom of thought and behaviour of the Malay. The wisdom of thought of the Malay meant that the community was highly civilized since the ancient times. The stories collected were the community's social documents showcasing the Malay common sense. Stories were told symbolically. Various stories became the guidelines for the community for a viable life. S. Takdir Alisjahbana (1982:12) said that from time to time, new cultures cultivated in the community as a process to appraise the human character to achieve new integration and advancement, that will later become a source, from ethical attitudes and to human responsibilities. Meanwhile, old but relevant cultures can still be used and adapted to a new context. If examined, Tweede Druk's collection of animal stories contained chronological plots and were easy to understand. According to Suwardi Endraswara (2009:117) stories such as these, reflect the critical thinking of the creators of the folklore. Despite featuring animal stories, they actually contain allegories and metaphors of the human life. The psychologist' touch in stories such as these are more apparent.

Code of Social Conduct in a Community

Ethics in community relations in the traditional community existed long before, albeit indirectly. The Malay community of antiquity valued code of conduct in the relations within the community. Thus, the stories being spread, highlights the poetic justice befalling those who do not abide by these code of conduct. Stories such as these, becomes a sort of guideline to the community, for them to think wisely before committing to any act.

In minding the code of conduct within the community, they do not take any minute problems lightly, for fear it will bring about huge implications in the future. On closer inspection, these stories can be determined, to carry the dominant concept of 'good versus evil'. This is actually connected to the psychology of the community. It is human nature to want to be safe and secure. The community at the time valued good relationship between each other such as friendship, family relations and the relations within the members of the community.

A popular story spread at the time, was 'The toad and the mouse'. The story reminds the community not to ill-treat another for they will get what they deserved. The toad and the mouse were good friend. The toad invited the mouse on a trip. The mouse agreed and wanted to follow the overland route but was stopped by the toad. According to the toad the journey will be far and asked the mouse to join him in crossing the stream for it is much closer. The toad tied the mouse's feet to him so he could drag the mouse along. This seemed like a noble act on the toad's behalf for he is willing to help the mouse. Alas, the toad left the mouse to drown in the middle of the stream. This can be seen from the excerpt below.

And so the toad tied a length of string to his feet and the other end to the mouse's, and then off swimming. As they reached the middle, the mouse drowning, shouted, " O Toad, because of you I drowned, but you shall get your just dessert" And the mouse drowned and floated up, just then an eagle flew by, saw the floating mouse and snatched it, carrying the toad with it. (1871: 4-5)

The act contradicts what the community desired. The end of the story tells of a flying eagle snatching the dead body of the mouse floating on the river and dragging the toad along with it. At the end of the story, the storyteller states, 'Those who dig hole for others to fall, he will fall as well'. The ending clearly shows that those that are unkind will reap their consequences. Stories like this, give man something to ponder so as not to go beyond the boundaries of the culture and values. Ill-treating own friends.

Apart from that, there are stories depicting the code of conducts within the family unit. The children were taught to heed their elders. An example can be seen in the story "The Kid and the Tiger". The mother goat ordered the kid not to open the door and venture out until she returns. The kid heeds her advice and was saved from becoming the prey to the tiger. This can be seen from the excerpt below.

As the mother goat were about to go out to look for food: she told her son, she said close the door after me, and don't you venture out, remember what I told you till I return. (1871: 10)

At the end of the story, the storyteller tells that children who heeded their parents will be save and misfortune to those who don't. Stories like these are still being published until now albeit in a different version, for example "The Hen and the Wolf" and carrying the same message. On this matter, Mohd. Koharuddin Mohd. Balwi (2005: 83) The process of cultural learning starts in the early stages within the family itself. Children were taught to heed the parents, behaving themselves, respects their relatives and to act within the confine of the rules and code of ethics established.

There were also stories in the Malay language that were published in the 19th century but are still being used and published until now and they portray good relations within each members of the community. An example of a story that portrays good relations within the members of the community would be "The Dove and the Ant", which tells the story of a dove saving a drowning ant by dropping grass to it. Not long after that, a hunter was about to shoot the dove and the ant repaid the kindness by biting the hunter's leg. This can be seen in the excerpt below.

... and so it saw that the ant fell into the river and was drowning, the dove took pity on his plight, and dropped a blade of grass into the river, and the ant climbed onto it and to the safety of land. Not long after, came a hunter who saw the dove and wanted to shoot it down. As he was aiming his bow and arrow, the ant bit the leg of the hunter and he moved from the pain and was heard by the dove who flew away. (1871: 2-3)

The community at the time calls for its members to always help one another regardless of class and position. The ant being such a tiny animal were likened to everyday man in the community whilst the dove, being of much bigger size, faster and can fly anywhere it wants were those in positions of power. However there comes a situation where the everyday man can help and be of use to those of higher position than him. At the end of the story, the storyteller states "Always help the weaker for we might need their help in the future". Another example of a similar story would be "The Tiger and the Mouse".

At the same time, we can also see stories portraying the ill consequences befalling those who were selfish. One of them is the story "The Riding Horse and the Work Horse". In this story, the riding horse was indifferent to the suffering of the work horse, having to carry huge load of burden. The work horse asked the riding horse to carry some of the burden but was ignored. This can be seen in the excerpt below.

..."O brother, would you help me carry half of the things I'm carrying, for I am old and lacking in energy, and if no one comes to my rescue I will surely die". And the riding horse answered "O brother, I musn't ever carry any burden, I am only to be ridden by soldiers and their armours and you should know, there are those who suffer and those who has it easy and each should learn to bear their own burden". The work horse went silent, and it was not long after that it fell to the ground and perished from the burden he was carrying.

The self-concept of the riding horse clearly shows selfishness. Due to his selfish attitude, the work horse eventually died and the load was transferred to the riding horse. The storyteller states at the end "If we don't help those in need, surely one day the same will befall onto you".

Based on the stories above, the community in the day put high values on good relations with each other as in friendship, family and within the members of the community. Victory sides with those with positive values. The community at the time was against selfishness and any ill intent. Those with negative characters usually will receive retributions in accordance to the act committed. These stories spread far and wide, because they realised there will be chaos in the community without social control. On closer inspection, the community at the time was already indirectly outlining the law within their own community. They also inculcate positive thinking in order to produce positive behaviour in the community.

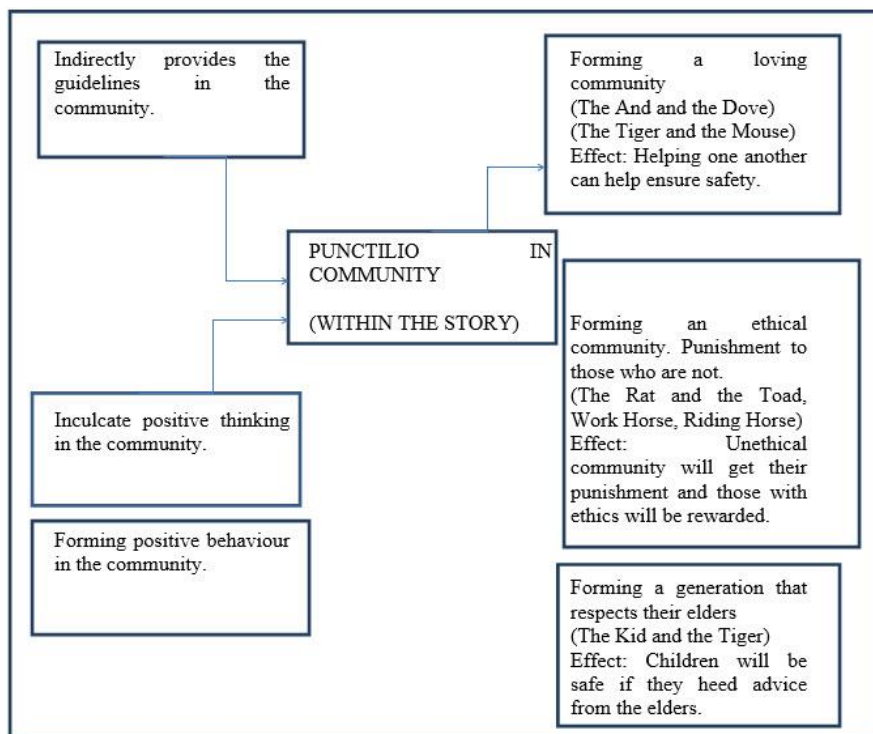


Diagram 1. Multiflow Chart Showing Cause and Effect in Community's Ethics and Relations

The diagram above illustrates the power of thought contained in these stories. The implicit and explicit elements in the code of ethics in a community were delicately presented. They were laying the ground rules in the community in a smart, consistent and indirect manner and outlined the parameters of what should and should not be done, in order to establish a highly civilized society. According to Abul Fatah Hasan (2006: 17), research in the field of parapsychology proved that the mind could perceive things beyond reach and this is called clairvoyance.

Sustainability of the Thought Culture in Story Selected

The collection of stories belonging to Tweede Druk (1871) proved that many stories were spread within the Malay community. The stories contained thoughts concerning humanity and were spread around so the community can think and gain insights from the stories depicted. The storyteller instills a culture of rational thinking, thus directly states the cause and effect of such negative act, such as, snobbery that can destroy humanity. This can be found in the story "The Rooster".

The story revolves around the fight between two roosters vying for control of the pasture. One was defeated and sought refuge in the coop while the other flew on top of a nearby house and crowing of his victory. An eagle flying above heard the rooster and snatches him away. This story subtly warns the community against acts of snobbery lest it will bring about their own fall.

Thus can be seen the act of the winning rooster, crowing on a high perch attracts the eagle, and bring about his own demise out of his arrogance. According to Othman Puteh and Aripin Said (1990), the story originates from Pahang. In producing their work, the Malays have high creativity full of soul, values, wisdom and kindness, evident in their common sense. Apart from "The Rooster", other story circulated at the time was "The Tiger and the Mosquito". The tiger got angry hearing the pesky mosquito hovering near him. Because of his anger, the tiger becomes emotional and cannot think rationally. He insulted and chased the mosquito away. The mosquito, angered by this,

bit the tiger’s mouth and flew into the tiger’s ears and nose. The tiger, angry and now in pain, fainted. The mosquito wanted to give the tiger a lesson. A tiny animal can bring down a larger animal. Alas, the mosquito proves to be just like the tiger, and forget oneself once in a position of power. It flew around telling of his victory and is to be the new king of the jungle. Because of his arrogance, he got stuck to a spider’s web and was eaten. The mosquito ended with the same fate as the rooster because of his arrogance. Based on these stories, the storyteller meant to lampoon people who tend to forget themselves once they get in position of power. Thus the storyteller reminds at the end “Upon doing good work, let’s not forget to be humble, for although we have done great, we could still fall with just a single bad deed”. The lesson was presented delicately using animal characters as symbolism. Other stories depicting destruction brought upon by arrogance include “The Frog and the Cow” and “The Mouse and the Elephant”.

Besides that, the storyteller also imparts thought on the widespread evil among the community. This can be traced in the stories “The Tiger and the Kid” and “The Two Dogs”. The story “The Tiger and the Kid” showcases the story of evil power abusing the weak. This can be seen in the excerpt below.

As the little kid was drinking by the riverbank, there came a hungry tiger. And the tiger said: “How dare you finish the water I was about to drink? The kid answered: “Do not be cross, your majesty, for I would never finish the water you are about to drink as my share of water was below yours”. Said the tiger again: “You are still finishing the water, and I know you tried to slander me last year”. Answered the kid: “Your majesty, how could I slander you last year, for I wasn’t even born then”. Said the tiger: “If not you then it must be one of your siblings”. Said the kid: “I have none, sir”. The tiger said: “Well then, it must be one of your kin that slandered me, for I know you and your kind have always had ill-wishes towards me, and today I shall take my revenge on you”. The kid was then taken deep in the jungle and eaten by the tiger. (Pg: 12)

The next story “The Two Dogs”, tells the story of a dog taking the property of others without any remorse. There was a dog that in the beginning was only staying at a friend’s place to give birth to her litter but end up taking the place over. At the end the storyteller states, “Do not entrust anything to those with bad intentions, for their words can’t be trusted”.

Then there are stories that encourage the community to think thoroughly before taking any actions. This can be found in the stories “The Cat and the Mouse”, “The Dog and the Egret”, “The Crow and the Dog” and “The Fox and the Rooster”. As an example for the researcher, can be found in the story “The Cat and the Mouse”. A cat, loved by the owner, was so well fed that it no longer hunts for mice. The mice should be thankful, however, while the cat was asleep one day, the King of the rat decided to kill the cat and attacked the cat together with the other rats. The cat woke up, captured and killed all the rats. The storyteller was saying “If your enemy is not bothering you, don’t you go around poking him”. Another story that suggests one to thinking wisely before making a decision is “The Fox and the Rooster”. The fox did not easily fool the rooster. Thinking smart and not falling for the tricks of its sworn enemy saved the rooster. The storyteller tells us “The most corrupt of the corrupts are the one who corrupts with deceit”. And thus, the stories were passed down from generation to generation so that they always think and find the best solution in leading a viable life. And in this, common sense plays a major role.

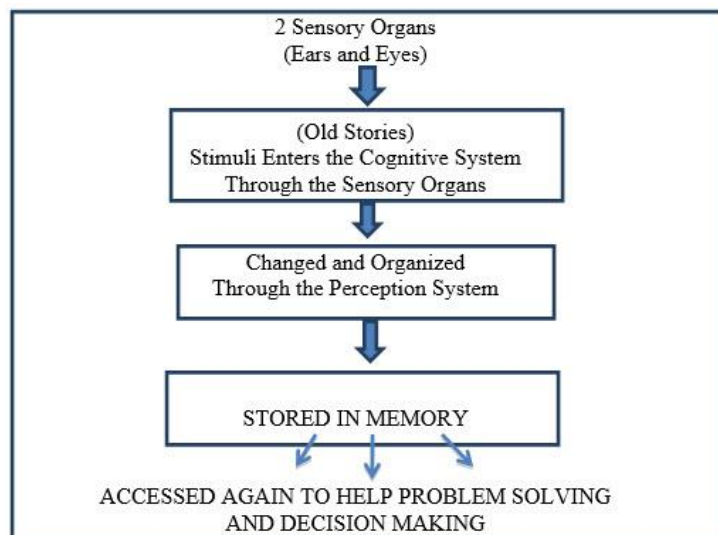


Diagram 2. Adapted from Dynamic and Active Cognitive Process Flow (Mahmood Nazar Mohamed, 2001:173)

Summary

Through the telling of these stories, cultural inheritance, such as the social norms and rational thinking can be passed down among today's generation. Apart from entertaining, these stories can create a harmonious and ethical community. These stories encourage togetherness in community living and being able to depend on one another. The thoughts contained in old stories can still be applied today and contemporary in nature.

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