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An Identification of Dramatis Personae Distribution in Malaysian Folktales for Structural Classification as a Preservation Means Of Malaysian Folktales

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Abstract

Malaysian folktales are one of the intangible cultural heritages that reflect and carry the lineage of the past generations to the present. It deserves to be preserved systematically but thus far; it is found such effort is scarce if not lacking in this country. Therefore, a study is conducted to preserve such valuable heritage through structural classification of the folktales. To achieve such classification, embedded narrative structures of the folktales are sought and utilized. Additionally, as a method to guide the analysis to excavate the narrative structures, 31 functions of folktale's morphology are adapted. Even so, before the functions are acquired, the folktale's dramatis personae and its spheres of action based on the morphology of folktale are utilized as methods to support in the identification of the functions. Atlas.ti, a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) is used to support the analysis of the folktales to obtain the dramatis personae and the functions because it increases the validity of the analysis conducted. To that end, this article presents the distribution of the dramatis personae identified to assist the classification process of the folktales and also the finding of the analysis implemented on the collected folktales which are the sequences of function that eventually form the structural classification.

Key words: Intangible Cultural Heritage, Folktale Identification, Malaysian Folktale Preservation, Structural Classification, Dramatis Personae Of Folktale, Morphology Of Folktale.

1. INTRODUCTION

Previously, cultural heritage denoted eclectic tangible objects but time changed such perception. At present, it also signifies intangible cultural heritage which is just as substantial as its counterpart (Bascom, 1965, Deacon et al., 2004). Intangible heritage assumes various forms and folklore being one of them, is an art that personifies social and cultural identity of society (UNESCO, 1989). Folklore too assumes many forms such as proverb, music, and also stories, which become the focus of this study in a kind of folktale (Chee Ying, 2005, Hussein et al., 2001). Bascom (1965) indicated that folktale, myth, and legend are the fundamentals of folklore. A folktale is a tale that is told and embellished for generations by different storytellers preparing it for current and future generations with its distinctive style (Dawkins, 1951; Porter, 2004).

Preservation of folktale, myth and legend are eminent in this digital epoch to avoid such priceless heritage from being swallowed by globalization and commercial entertainments (Dorji, 2009). Such heritage though seems irrelevant to some, may indeed impart good ethics, internal strength, attitude transformation, sensible verdict, benevolence, and mirrors culture's identity which becomes the foundation to develop a country of unsurpassed cultural values (Babalola and Onanuga, 2012; Kirmani and Frieman, 1997). Six phases are acknowledged as basics toward the folklore preservation effort: identification, conservation, preservation, dissemination, protection, and finally, international collaboration. The focus of this study is identification. In identifying folktale, there are several endeavors recommended. One of the significant recommendations is through a creation of identification and recording system as stated in the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore and such suggestion is apt to be accomplished via folktale classification system (UNESCO, 1989). Folktale classification system fosters systematic and centralized folktale identification, and this is in line with UNESCO's suggestion in safeguarding of intangible cultural heritages (UNESCO, 2003). Many nations have begun the movement of folktale classification such as China, Japan, Spain, and much more, but Malaysia is still behind on this matter (Abd Wahab, 2005). Therefore, this study examines the Malaysian folktales to produce a systematic classification system fitting to preserve the priceless intangible heritage. That said, before classifying, it is important to highlight the Malaysian folktales identified and selected to be analyzed for it is the impetus of the classification attempt. Hence, the following section elucidates on the finding along with the method to identify and select the Malaysian folktales.

2. FOLKTALE IDENTIFICATION

Before the classification commenced, it matters to identify and select the Malaysian folktales for this study because the folktales are the crux that erects the structural classification system in the first place. To (Abd. Wahab, 2005) ensure consistency in the folktale collected, (Babalola and Onanuga, 2012) safeguard the collection from contamination of other forms of folklore and also (Bascom, 1965) determine the presence of a cultural element, two qualifying factors were established. They are an operational definition and an ownership of the folktales. The qualifying factors are to sift the acceptance of the folktales as part of the collection.

Defining folklore let alone folktale is an intricate matter because accomplishing agreement on such issue is a work in progress since both terms are lightly used as beckoned by context (Bascom, 1965; Hunter, 2013; Utley, 1985; Uzun, 2011). Forming a standard operational definition of a folktale in this study is crucial for it shields the folktale collection from being contaminated by the different forms of folklore. As disclosed in Table 1, there are five formal features necessary to be fulfilled by the folktales. If the folktale does not meet any of the formal features' requirements in its body of narrative, it would be disqualified from being part of the collection.

The second qualifying factor (the ownership) verifies that the folktales collected did contain cultural elements and transcribed from oral storytellers of past generations in the literary form (Munan, 2007; Skeat and Gomez, 2012). The ownership chosen in the setting of this study are National, Perlis, Kedah, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Kelantan, Terengganu, Johor, Perak, Melaka, Sarawak, Sabah, and Penang. Toward determining the ownership of the folktales collected, substances of the literary sources were examined and scrutinized to seek any related information indicating that the folktales were transcribed from an assortment of Malaysian narrators and owned by Malaysia (state or national). Furthermore, whenever feasible, informal interviews were also conducted in the process of acquiring the sources to affirm the sources' cultural value to the study. It is significant to distinguish folktales that bear cultural value worth to be classified and preserved than contemporary tales of modern storytellers. Consequently, if a folktale collected is vague about its origin or ownership, then clearly it is not fit to be incorporated as part of the collection.

Based on the two qualifying factors established, the Malaysian folktales in literary form were scoured, identified and eventually collected from four diverse sources focusing on the Malay's and the Sabahan and Sarawakian native's folktales as a scope of this study. The literary sources discovered are 366 A Collection of Malaysian Folk Tales, Stories From Sarawak: Orang Ulu Stories, Stories From Sarawak: Orang Melanau Stories, and Malaysian Fables, Folk Tales, and Legends (Munan, 2006; Munan, 2007; Puteh and Said 2010; Skeat and Gomez, 2012). In total, 426 folktales were identified and collected, but only 269 select folktales met the qualifying factors and accepted. Once the folktales were acquired, the analysis of the folktales for the dramatis personae began and the method used is explained in the subsequent section.

Table 1. The formal features of the operational definition (Bascom, 1965; Sophia, 2015; Thompson, 1951)

Formal Feature	Explanation
Belief	The tale is fiction, and it is not certain whether it occurred or not in the past.
Time	The tale does not indicate an exact timeline of occurrences.
Place	The tale does not show any particular location of events or if it does, the location is fictional.
Attitude	The tale is a story without any religious, or ritual motivation. It ultimately delivers amusement and worth of moral.
Principal Character	The tale tells a story of adventure and voyage of human or non-human characters both of which able to assume diverse forms of appearances.

3. DRAMATIS PERSONAE ANALYSIS

The identification of dramatis personae in the folktales is necessary because mainly it helps in the entailing analysis to identify the functions in the same folktales. Propp (1998) clearly underlined that knowing the distribution of the functions among the dramatis personae is vital since it aids in the identification of functions in the folktale. Such concept is reinforced by Lwin (2010) by plainly claiming that the knowledge of the dramatis personae distribution in the folktales helps tremendously in the extraction of the functions from the folktales. In total, seven dramatis personae were fabricated in the morphology of folktale as the principal roles in the folktale (Propp, 1998). The distribution of the functions based on the dramatis personae created seven spheres of actions. The spheres of actions are available in Table 2.

Based on the sphere of actions in Table 2, it is relatively easier to locate and extract the functions of the folktales as shown in Table 4. To cite an instance, the identification of the dramatis personae Hero and its places

in the folktale provides one with a way to identify the functions that involve the Hero in its implementation such as Absentation and Violation. Each of the said functions correspondingly involves the Hero taking leave from home with a specific purpose (e.g.: an order by the stepmother to pluck a magical flower high in the mountain) and violation of a prohibition that caused the Hero complication in the first place (e.g.: a prohibition to not answer any calls from mysterious voices during the journey to obtain the magical flower but the Hero answered against the prohibition).

That said, each of the 269 Malaysian folktales identified and accepted was thoroughly analyzed and examined regarding its body of narrative to identify the presence and distribution of the seven dramatis personae. The main conundrum is whether all seven dramatis personae occurs in the 269 folktales analyzed resulting in an equal distribution or the opposite of it which subsequently leads to unequal distribution. Knowing the patterns of distribution of the dramatis personae is salient because it affects the identification of functions in the folktales for the structural classification. The analysis was aided and supported by Atlas.ti. The CAQDAS, which contained the accepted collection of folktales, not only makes the analysis process organized, transparent, and replicable but also elevates the validity of the findings (Friese, 2014; Hwang, 2008). Regardless, with the dramatis personae and the spheres of action established, the following section exhibits the findings and the discussion of the analysis.

Table 2. The spheres of action of the dramatis personae (Lwin, 2010; Propp, 1998)

	Dramatis Personae	Sphere of Action (Function Distribution)
1	Hero	The Seeker-Hero, who departs on a search, reacts to the demands of the Donor and married at the end. The Victim-Hero performs all but the departure on a search
2	Villain	The one who struggles with the Hero
3	Donor (Provider)	The one who prepares and/or gives the Hero with the magical agent
4	Helper	The one who helps, rescues, solves and/or transforms the Hero
5	Princess (a sought-for person) and her Father	The one who exists as a goal and usually recognizes and marries the Hero as the reward (the Princess) and/or punishes the Villain (the Father). Both the Princess and her Father cannot be precisely portrayed from each other based on the function. Most of the time it is the father who provides challenging errands due to hostile feeling toward the suitor (the Hero). He also often punishes (or commands punishment of) the False Hero.
6	Dispatcher	The one who sends the Hero off
7	False Hero, Antihero or Usurper	The one who claims to be the Hero, frequently searching and responding like the Hero.

4. DRAMATIS PERSONAE: FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the dramatis personae and the spheres of action in Table 2, the Malaysian folktales were analyzed to obtain the findings that guide the identification of the functions in Table 4. The findings acquired shows that the seven dramatis personae were adequate and applicable in analyzing the folktales. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3 in descending order based on the number of folktales per dramatis personae's group.

The distribution and emergence of the seven dramatis personae in the Malaysian folktales are clear as shown in Table 3. It is apparent that the various combinations of the dramatis personae produced opulent 52 assortments of groups. Also, from the mixtures of groups, it can be seen that the seven dramatis personae do not apply to all 269 folktales analyzed. As a maximum, two of the groups comprise six of the dramatis personae in sundry combination that is Group 6 and 34. Group 6 consists of the dramatis personae distribution of Villain, Donor, Helper, Princess/Her Father, Dispatcher, and Hero whereas Group 34 Villain, Donor, Helper, Dispatcher, Hero, and False Hero.

To inspect both of the distribution in detail, it is conspicuous that the similarity is high, but two dramatis personae divide the two groups: the Princess/Her Father and the False Hero. Commonly, the folktales in both groups narrate about the emancipation of the main character from the tyranny of the villain aided by the Helper and the Donor. However, there is a tinge of differences in the distributions that segregates the folktales in the two groups apart. To cite one folktale from Group 6 as an example, The Green Horse is missing the False Hero dramatis personae in its narrative structure. Nobody in the folktale pretended to assume the Hero's personality, and the Hero did not don the role of unconventional heroic qualities as an antihero. The folktale mainly narrates the tale of the Hero who liberated himself from the Villains and endeavored to win the Princess from the Father and thrived in the end. As for Group 34, the folktale of Bawang Puteh Bawang Merah absences the dramatis

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personae Princess/Her Father but contains the False Hero in its place. The absent of the former dramatis personae is due to the fact the leading female character was not a classic folktale's princess but a Victim-Hero instead. With the help of the Helper and the Donor, she strived to free herself from the oppression of the Villains. The role of males such as the father and the prince were trivial and insignificant for they appeared for a very short while at the start and the finale of the folktale respectively. Primarily, it concentrates on the Hero's effort to set herself free from the Villains and finally rewarded with a happily ever after marriage just like Cinderella of the west. Meanwhile, the False Hero dramatis personae embodied one of the Villains who briefly assumed the Hero's role in marrying the prince instead but failed and punished eventually.

Even though the two groups above have the most dramatis personae, unfortunately, they do not represent the majority of the Malaysian folktales' distributions. The dramatis personae distributions in Group 1 and 2 are the ones that dominate the Malaysian folktales. The number of folktales populated both groups beat the rest of the 50 groups and the sharp divergences in the total of folktales between the two groups and the rest of the groups speaks volume. The divergence connotes in the Malaysia's culture, the age-old folktales that have been passed down for generations contain the particular dramatis personae which directly influence the structure and flow of the narratives. In Group 1, the distribution comprised of Villain, Helper, and Hero and Group 2 Villain, and Hero.

Apparently, the two distributions are composed of a small number of dramatis personae which is relevant to the complexity of the folktales' structure and flow. The minimal number of dramatis personae symbolize the simplicity of the folktales' structure which fundamentally reflect the clash between the force of good and evil with the good emerges as the victor in the end. Such scenario is not odd though in the culture of Malaysia considering the folktales narrated by the elders are mainly to impart positive moral values particularly to the children. Thus, the simplicity of the structure of the folktales removes the complexity in delivering such positive messages. To illustrate the point, The King Crow and the Water-Snail folktale in Group 1 recounts about the Hero who battled the Villain with the assistance of the Helper and finally succeeded. Much simpler than the former example, Father Lime-Stick and the Flower Pecker folktale from Group 2 merely tells about the Hero who solely fought the Villain without any helps from the Helper of the Donor and yet managed to win. Both folktales from the two groups echo and epitomize the preponderance of the dramatis personae distribution in the Malaysian folktales in the setting of the current study. Once the dramatis personae and its distribution in the Malaysian folktales were acquired, the analysis of the narrative structure for classification started as expounded in the succeeding section.

Table 3. The distribution of the dramatis personae in the Malaysian folktales

	Group of Dramatis Personae	Total Dramatis Personae	Malaysian Folktale
1	Villain, Helper, Hero	3	37
2	Villain, Hero	2	37
4	Villain, Donor, Helper, Dispatcher, Hero	5	20
5	Villain, Helper, Dispatcher, Hero	4	20
3	Villain, Donor, Helper, Hero	4	19
6	Villain, Donor, Helper, Princess/Her Father, Dispatcher, Hero	6	11
7	Villain, Dispatcher, Hero	3	10
8	Donor, Helper, Hero	3	8
9	Villain, False Hero	2	8
10	Villain, Donor, Helper, False Hero	4	7
11	Villain, Donor, Helper, Dispatcher, False Hero	5	6
12	Donor, Helper, False Hero	3	5
13	Villain, Helper, False Hero	3	5
15	Helper, False Hero	2	5
16	Donor, Helper, Princess/Her Father, Dispatcher, Hero	5	4
17	Donor, Helper, Dispatcher, False Hero	4	4
18	Villain, Donor, Helper, Princess/Her Father, Hero	5	4
19	Helper, Princess/Her Father, Dispatcher, Hero	4	4
20	Donor, Helper, Dispatcher, Hero	4	3
21	Villain, Helper, Princess/ Her Father, Dispatcher, Hero	5	3

22	Princess/ Her Father, Hero	2	3
23	Helper, Princess/Her Father, Hero	3	3
24	Villain, Helper, Dispatcher, False Hero	4	3
25	Donor, False Hero	2	3
26	Villain, Princess/Her Father, Hero	3	3
27	Donor, Helper, Princess/Her Father, Hero, False Hero	5	2
28	Donor, Helper, Hero, False Hero	4	2
29	Villain, Donor, Dispatcher, Hero	4	2
30	Villain, Princess/Her Father, Dispatcher, False Hero	4	2
31	Donor, Helper, Princess/Her Father, Hero	4	2
32	Villain, Donor, Hero	3	2
33	Donor, Hero	2	2
34	Villain, Donor, Helper, Dispatcher, Hero, False Hero	6	2
35	Donor, Helper, Dispatcher, Hero, False Hero	5	1
36	Donor, Helper, Princess/Her Father, Dispatcher, False Hero	5	1
37	Villain, Helper, Princess/Her Father, Dispatcher, False Hero	5	1
38	Villain, Donor, Dispatcher, False Hero	4	1
39	Dispatcher, False Hero	2	1
40	Villain, Helper, Princess/Her Father, False Hero	4	1
41	Helper, Dispatcher, False Hero	3	1
42	Villain, Princess/Her Father, Hero, False Hero	4	1
43	Helper, Princess/Her Father, Dispatcher, Hero, False Hero	5	1
44	Princess/Her Father, Dispatcher, Hero, False Hero	4	1
45	Villain, Donor, False Hero	3	1
46	Villain, Dispatcher, False Hero	3	1
47	Villain, Dispatcher, Hero, False Hero	4	1
48	Princess/Her Father, Dispatcher, Hero	3	1
49	Villain, Donor, Helper, Princess/Her Father	4	1
50	Villain, Hero, False Hero	3	1
51	False Hero	1	1
52	Hero, False Hero	2	1
	Total		269

5. FOLKTALE CLASSIFICATION

In the interest of obtaining the narrative structures embedded in the Malaysian folktale collected, the morphology of folktales was employed as the method of analysis. Essentially, the morphology is the description of the tale based on its components parts (structure) and the relationship of the components to each other and the whole tale (Propp, 1998). In the morphology, 31 constants known as functions are established and defined as the performance of dramatis personae in the tale.

This study exploited the 31 functions to extract the structure of the folktales and create the structural classification proposed. Typically, a tale begins with a particular Initial situation such as an introduction of a hero or family members. Though it is not considered as part of the 31 functions, still it is regarded as one of the essential structures of a tale and imperative to be included. Occasionally, there appear to be actions of dramatis personae that cannot be defined by the functions. Such is a rare occurrence which the cause is due to the structures too difficult to comprehend without external comparative reference or contamination of structures from other forms of folklore such as legend transpired. This type of structure is considered as vague and should it discovered in the folktale the function is designated as Undefined function. Table 4 presents the 31 functions of the morphology following the Initial situation inclusive the Undefined function.

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Table 4. The 31 functions of folktale's morphology (Propp, 1998)

	Definition	Function		Definition	Function
1	Absentation	One of the members of a family absents himself from home	17	Branding, marking	The hero is branded
2	Interdiction	An interdiction is addressed to the hero	18	Victory	The villain is defeated
3	Violation	The interdiction is violated	19	Liquidation	The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated
4	Reconnaissance	The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance	20	Return	The hero returns
5	Delivery	The villain receives information about his victim	21	Pursuit, chase	The hero is pursued
6	Trickery	The villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or his belongings	22	Rescue	Rescue of the hero from pursuit
7	Complicity	The victim submits to deception thereby unwittingly helps his enemy	23	Unrecognized arrival	The hero, unrecognized, arrives home or in another country
8	Villainy	The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family	24	Unfounded claims	A false hero presents unfounded claims
8a	Lack	One member of a family either lacks something or desires to have something	25	Difficult task	A difficult task is proposed to the hero
9	Mediation, the connective incident	Misfortune or lack is made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go, or he is dispatched	26	Solution	The task is resolved
10	Beginning counteraction	The seeker agrees to or decides upon counteraction	27	Recognition	The hero is recognized
11	Departure	The hero leaves home	28	Exposure	The false hero or villain is exposed
12	The first function of a donor	The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, or any other possible actions which prepare the way for his receiving either a magical agent or helper	29	Transfiguration	The hero is given a new appearance
13	The hero's reaction	The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor	30	Punishment	The villain is punished
14	Provision or receipt of a magical agent	The hero acquires the use of a magical agent	31	Wedding	The hero is married and ascends the throne

15	Spatial transference between two kingdoms, guidance	The hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search	32	Undefined function	Unclear element
16	Struggle	The hero and the villain join in direct combat			

The 269 folktales under study were first examined to gain the comprehension of structure and then individually the folktale was analyzed, dissected, and related to the functions in Table 4 to form a sequence of functions of dramatis personae. That said, once the sequences of functions of all the 269 folktales were identified, they were grouped together based on a similarity of the function's sequences to form the classification system. In the end, the folktales were separated and classified under different structure classes. Having said that, the outcome of the structural analysis produced six unique structure classes. Table 5 demonstrates the six classes labeled alphabetically with a respective sequence of functions.

With the six structure classes obtained, the current and future Malaysian folktales collected can be centralized, and systematically stored and recorded based on the folktale's narrative structure respectively. As aforementioned, this act is in line with one of the UNESCO's suggestions in the attempt of preserving and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. With that said, the upcoming section elaborates on the findings obtained in comparison to the original morphology of folktale grounding the study.

Table 5. The structure classes of the Malaysian folktales

Structure A	Structure B	Structure C	Structure D	Structure E	Structure F
Initial Situation	Initial Situation	Initial Situation	Initial Situation	Initial Situation	Initial Situation
Lack	Mediation	Mediation	Mediation	Lack	Mediation
Mediation	Struggle	Struggle	Lack	Mediation	Struggle
Struggle	Victory	Victory	Punishment	Liquidation	Punishment
Victory	Liquidation	Liquidation		Punishment	
Liquidation		Punishment			
Wedding					

6. FOLKTALE CLASSIFICATION: DISCUSSION

The morphology, which initially applied on Russian folktales, explicitly claimed that not all functions must appear in a folktale, but the ones that appear must be in order as given. Nevertheless, once applied to the Malaysian folktales which clearly bear different cultural influence than the Russian's, the claim does not sustain and this is not strange and invalid. Lwin (2010) and Gilet (1998) asserted that the order of the functions' appearance in a folktale is not as unyielding as universally claimed. The six structure classes attained as shown in Table 3 apparently show sequences of function that was formed not in the order dictated by the original morphology and also, not all functions were utilized in supporting the folktales examined. From the classes of the structure obtained, it can be seen that each class carries the distinctive type of structure from one another hence influencing the folktales classified under each of the class respectively. To cite an instance, the folktales that are sheltered under Structure A can be said to be a romantic type and always involves the saving of the princess in distress which ends with the hero being rewarded with marriage. Meanwhile, Structure B is different from the rest of the classes because the folktales grouped under it do not have the function of Punishment which says a lot about the type of struggle between the hero and the villain in the tale.

In analyzing the folktales, it is discovered that all the related functions were applicable in identifying the sequences of function. There were not any folktales that could not be analyzed using the morphology of folktale. It was not hard to understand the relation between the 31 functions and the structure of the folktales because this study deals with the apparent aspect of the folktale.

Focusing on such aspect warrants that the interpretations of the folktales' structure are clear, simple, and direct. The clarity of the structures along with the two qualifying factors established avoids this study from having to use the Undefined function in analyzing the folktales. However, it is not to say that the six structure classes are fixed. The addition of folktales into the collection obtained in future may propel a discovery of new sequences of function that definitely will produce new structure classes in the classification system or even new undefined functions which are unique to the Malaysian's culture.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this study is to preserve the Malaysian folktales as one of Malaysia's intangible cultural heritage through the structural classification system. To accomplish that, the identification and selection of the Malaysian folktales are first and foremost. The identification task is supported by the two qualifying factors: the operational definition initiated in the study and the ownership of the folktales. The factors help in safeguarding the folktales collected from contamination of other folklore's forms and as well ensuring the cultural value of it. Once identified, the folktales are analyzed thoroughly to extract the dramatis personae and the spheres of actions supported by Atlas.ti. The distribution of dramatis personae and the spheres of actions identified are significant because they steer the extraction of the folktales' narrative structures which is guided by the 31 functions of the folktale's morphology. As the essence of the article, the discovery of the dramatis personae distribution and the structure classes contribute toward the preservation of the Malaysian folktales through structural classification.

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