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Nik Nurul Azreen Nik Mohamad Sharifuddin and Salmah Jan Noor
Muhammad

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v9-i11/6645>

DOI: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v9-i11/6645

Received: 10 October 2019, Revised: 30 October 2019, Accepted: 03 November 2019

Published Online: 13 November 2019

In-Text Citation: (Sharifuddin & Muhammad, 2019)

To Cite this Article: Sharifuddin, N. N. A. N. M., and Muhammad, S. J. N. (2019). Cultural Values of the Malay Community through “Hikayat Misa Melayu”. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 9(11), 1172–1179.

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Vol. 9, No. 11, 2019, Pg. 1172 - 1179

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Cultural Values of the Malay Community through “Hikayat Misa Melayu”

Nik Nurul Azreen Nik Mohamad Sharifuddin and Salmah Jan
Noor Muhammad

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM
Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia.

Abstract

This research is about the cultural values that have been a traditional practice of the Malay community for decades. The culture covers a wide range of knowledge and not only the arts aspects. The culture inherited by the Malay community includes belief, traditions, customs, law and the lifestyle that have been practiced by the older generations. In this modernized era, the Malay community especially the younger factions have lesser understandings on the concept of culture and tend to look down upon the Malay culture itself the culture is the symbol of intellectuality of the Malay community because the culture would have not be created without experience and awareness from the society itself. Hence, this research focuses on the traditional culture of the Malay community embraced in the *Hikayat Misa Melayu* by Raja Chulan Raja Hamid in 1992. This research used *Teori Pengkaedahan Melayu* by Hashim Awang in 1989. The findings clearly portray the variety of traditional culture practiced by the previous generation including the royalties. Cultures highlighted by the writer have naturally been assimilated in the souls of the Malay community. Therefore, we hope this research is able to provide useful inputs to the society in hopes that the current generation will not alienate the Malay’s traditional culture in their daily lives.

Introduction

According to Deraman (2005), culture includes the whole aspect of life such as knowledge, beliefs, arts, law, manners and custom. A big part of the arts experts define culture as the coalition of grace (*budi*) and energy (*daya*). These two words combine to form the term *budaya*. According to Asmad (1990), *Bu* means authentic, first, pure and seen as perfection, pleasant and noble. *Daya* on the other hand means intellect, mentality and creation. Based on the definitions, we can conclude that the word *budaya* is derived originally from the idea and thoughts of a

human, not copied. Every actions of copying do not deserve to be considered as an outcome of a culture of race.

However, some people of this generation lack understanding on the real concept and meaning of culture. The community assumes that culture only consists of dance and other activities such as drama, theatre, music, reciting poems and many other forms of arts. The definition is not accurate as culture has a vast definition. According to Deraman (2005), culture is anything we think of, we do or we possess in life which involves every aspects of life including knowledge, belief, arts, law, moral values, customs and any form of lifestyle adopted from people of previous generations. Therefore, the culture of a group of human did not exist unexplainably. Culture is derived when a group of people experience their own history. The connection between a culture and its people are definitely strong. Without its people, culture would not exist. (Deraman, 1994).

Literature Review

Many researchers have touched on the cultural values of the Malay society in previous researches. Ismail (2018) has explained that culture is composed of cultural products with aspects such as language, lifestyle, belief system, communication and many others which exist due to the relationship between human and their environment. Culture also involves the self-ability and potential possessed by an individual himself. Malaysia embraces of people from many races, ethnics and different socio culture in which forms a multicultural country. It is inclusive of the concept of plurality, variety and heterogeneous which depicts people who live in their unique community and culture.

Next, Mamat (2014) explained that the community need to preserve Malay arts, custom and culture which is depreciated among the younger generations. This is because, arts symbolizes the lifestyle of a race with moral values and reflects the custom and cultures in their daily life. The arts of a race need to be strengthened and cultivated in the younger generations as they will inherit the art forms of their own race. Other than that, Muhammad, Musa and Rodi (2015) had researched on the interaction of the social culture as an approach by a party to forge diplomatic ties with other parties. This research proves that cultures are able to provide a positive impact to both parties. Social interactions through acculturation and assimilation methods results in formation of unity and integration between races in the government. Besides that, the community will also accept cultures practiced by different races and able to assimilate the culture in their daily life if it is suitable to their lifestyle and is not against Islamic teachings. However, if the culture of others is not suitable with their lifestyle then they will have to respect the culture without insulting or hating others' culture.

Additionally, researches that are related to cultures includes the research carried out by Awang and Hambali (2016) about culture acculturation, translation of non-material cultural elements in non-fiction texts by Husin (2015) and anthropology of culture and arts by Taharuddin and Amran (2013). All these researches explain the process of acceptance towards cultural elements among individuals or groups from different cultures. This proves that cultures which

exist in a community is very unique and is able to be accepted by other community of multiracial, multi beliefs and multi-ethnic.

Methodology

In this research the researchers used texts from *Hikayat Misa Melayu* written by Raja Chulan Raja Hamid, published in 1992 as the main text of the research. This research uses qualitative methods, a method to analyse the content in *Hikayat Misa Melayu*. The theory of Malay Methodologies (Pengkaedahan Melayu) introduced by Hashim Awang in 1989 is applied in this research. According to Sikana (2008), this theory is an approach to research on Malay literature which are based on creativity, generating literature with high influence of nature and the finesse of moral values in the Malay community. This method is aligned with the life, belief and religion of Malay community which adopts Islamic belief as a foundation. Other than that, the theory is also based on the reality of life and environment surrounding the community. This theory has spread and been accepted in Malay literature and few countries in the Malay Archipelago.

Through the Malay Methodologies (Pengkaedahan Melayu), Awang (1989) divided it to two methods which are natural method and religious method. The natural method is divided into the applied approach, moral approach and hunch approach. On the other hand, the religious method is divided into missionary approach, community approach and arts approach which are related to one and another. This research however, only focuses on the moral approach.

The moral approach is based from the natural method in which literature based on incidents and objects, however the incidents is based on moral approach and not in the form of an existence which depicts tools or useful items but rather a human's life experience. Certain information and experience a person goes through often connects to their beliefs, culture, community, nationality and environment. A person's experience and attitude is judged from a positive and a negative aspect which will be used as a guidance and example for others. Besides that, literature could also provide understandings in knowledge which suits its identity.

Data Analysis

Proposal Custom

The Malay community have practiced many customs before the Malay civilization came to be in the Malay Archipelago. After embracing Islamic teachings, Malay community tailored their customs to fit the Islamic teachings based on the guidance from al-Quran. The custom of proposing is a custom which prevailed in the Malay community for a long time and is still being practiced till this day. According to Idris (2013), in a custom of the Malay community, before a wedding is to happen, both parties must undergo several processes. They will have to inquire, propose, and present betel nuts as gifts, solemnization, reception and many others. Zainun and Shafii (2017) have explained that the custom in proposal is a negotiating process to set the wedding dates and discussing the expenses of a wedding including the dowry. Proposals are also known as a process to send signs. According to Islamic teachings, customs in proposal is a process to allow the bride and groom to know each other more.

The custom of proposal can be seen in *Hikayat Misa Melayu* where the character Raja Iskandar desires to wife Puteri Budak Rasul in which he summons Raja Muda to convey his wish to the majesty Sultan Muzaffar Shah, the father of Puteri Budak Rasul. The example of the section found in *Hikayat Misa Melayu*.

Adapun akan Raja Muda setelah sudah dikabulkan oleh sultan Muzaffar Syah kehendaknya, maka mesyuaratlah ia dengan segala adinda baginda sekalian, dan serta menghimpunkan segala hulubalang yang dekat-dekat hendaklah disuruhkan pergi membawa tanda meminang dengan seperti adatnya...

Adapun yang pergi meminang itu pertama-tama Raja Kecil Muda dan Raja Alauddin dan Raja Culan dan Raja Inu dan segala adinda anakanda sekaliannya... Maka segala raja-raja perempuan yang tua-tua pun pergi membawa tanda itu.

(Hikayat Misa Melayu:33)

Marriage Custom

According to Harun (2011), a wedding is an important ceremony in the palace as it involves the continuation of heirs and the coalition of royalties. It also became a traditional festival celebrated by the royalties of Perak. Custom in proposal for the royals starts with a person called "Menjarum" to carry out the custom "Membisik kecil" to obtain agreement on both parties. After the agreement, the custom of presenting betel nut is done according to the status of the royalties. After presenting the betel nut, a proposal takes place and the dowry is set. After the solemnization, the bersanding ceremony customarily takes place. Berlimau and Mandi Sampat ceremonies are also customarily done on given days.

In *Hikayat Misa Melayu*, the custom of marriage is arranged to perfection. When Raja Iskandar wished to marry Raja Budak Rasul, the daughter of Sultan Muzaffar Syah, the process begins with inquiries. Raja Aliuddin and Raja Chulan have been summoned to make an offer and inquire on the majesty Sultan Muzzadar Syah's daughter. The bride's family accepts the offer and thus begins the ritual for proposal. Raja Aliudin Raja Chulan and elder female royalties presents half a kilo of gold during the proposal. This proves that the custom of proposal and marriage is a traditional culture practised by the Malay community for decades and is inherited till this day. (Idris, 2013).

Maka sampailah tiga tahun lamanya Raja Muda bertunangan dengan Raja Budak Rasul, maka Sultan Muzaffar Syah pun berbicaralah dua laki isteri hendak mengahwinkan paduka anakanda baginda itu. Maka baginda pun bertitah pada sekalian orang besar-besar dan hulubalang rakyat sekaliannya pun disuruh kerah masing-masing punya jawatan...

(Hikayat Misa Melayu:39)

Custom in 'Berinai' or Henna Staining Ceremony

According to Idris (2013), it is a custom in the Malay community to hold an event called 'adat berinai'. This event is only done by the bride's family. The henna staining ceremony is usually held the night before the solemnization. This ceremony has been practiced by the Malay community for generations and has become an unforgettable tradition in this era. However, henna staining ceremonies must obey the rules of shari'a according to the Islamic teachings and should not depict other form of religions and beliefs. In the *Hikayat Misa Melayu*, henna staining ceremony was done by the bride's family, who is Raja Budak Rasul. Henna is placed on top of a monkey's head and paraded into the palace. Henna staining ceremony is portrayed in *Hikayat Misa Melayu*, as :

Hatta maka berjaga-jaga itu pun sampailah tujuh belas malam hingga sampai pada malam berinai; maka daripada siangnya itu, maka masuklah Orang Kaya Besar mengarak inai ke dalam. Maka inai pun dibubuhnya di atas kepala seekor binatang kera 'Hanuman' namanya. Maka diletakkanlah di atas perarakan, lalu diaraklah masuk ke dalam kota. Setelah sampai ke balai penghadapan, maka disambut oranglah inai itu seperti adat. Maka Orang Kaya Besar pun dikurniai baginda persalin dengan selengkapnya. Maka pada malam itu berinailah...

(Hikayat Misa Melayu:37)

Pregnancy rites or 'Adat Melenggang Perut'

Pregnancy rites are traditional rituals accustomed by our ancestors and continued to the current generation. Despite the modernization, this custom is still held strong by the current Malay community. A part of the Malay community firmly believes that the pregnancy rituals ensures the mother and the unborn baby are safe from disasters and catastrophe, which leads to this custom still being practiced in the community. The ritual is commonly executed by a midwife when the mother is seven months pregnant. As described in the *Hikayat Misa Melayu*, pregnancy rites were done for seven days and seven nights when the queen, Sultan Iskandar Syah's wife was seven months pregnant. The following were cited from *Hikayat Misa Melayu*:

Permaisuri baginda (Raja Budak Rasul) pun hamil. Apabila genap tujuh bulan, diadakanlah istiadat melenggang perut dan mandi-manda. Sebelum dilansungkan istiadat itu, berbagai-bagai permainan telah diadakan beberapa hari lamanya...

(Hikayat Misa Melayu:9)

Summary

In summary, customs referred as before is inherently the custom of the Malay community itself. The Malay community in the past supremely prioritizes the traditional customs that needs to be done before the start of an event. The royal family also plays a role in preserving the inherited traditional cultures of the Malay community especially the proposal custom, marriage custom, pregnancy rites and many others. Through *Hikayat Misa Melayu*, this generation of Malay

community especially the young factions will be able to understand, learn and recognize the traditional culture of the Malay community. Various customs and cultures are results of experience and perceptions of the community in which the customs and cultures are practiced by the community to this day.

Conclusion

Culture which includes traditions and customs of the Malay community are created based on the life experience of a community. There is no community or race without its own customs and traditions. Culture belongs to the community and is the image of the community. Cultures practiced to this day are the traditions passed down from one generation to another especially through oral education by the parents and family members. Therefore culture plays an important role as a symbolic identity of a community and the nation. The progress of a community and nation does not depend solely on the economy sector but also the cultural values which dignifies and establishing civilization of a community. The community today especially the younger factions should not forget their backgrounds and cultures even in this era of modernization.

Besides that, Anwar and Muhammad (2016) mentioned that the Malay community need to uplift the Islamic teaching by placing it as a control in formation of a culture in the Malay community as any cultures can be abolished if it goes against the Islamic teaching. However, cultures and traditions aligned with the Islamic teachings can be practiced. Furthermore, good values from cultures of other communities can be assimilated as a part of the Malay community culture and practiced. A community can accept and practice cultures from other community if it is suitable. Even though cultural transition occurs, it is important to maintain the positive values in the culture and the cultural transition should be able to bring positive impacts to individuals, community and the nation.

Corresponding Author

Nik Nurul Azreen Nik Mohamad Sharifuddin
Universiti Putra Malaysia
43400 Serdang
Selangor Darul Ehsan
Malaysia
Email. nikhurulazreen3009@gmail.com

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