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EXPLORATION OF MOTIF ABOUT MIRACLE MARRIAGES IN INDONESIAN AND MALAYSIAN FOLKTALES

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ABSTRACT

Among the wide range of subjects in Southeast Asia folktales, there are a number of stories that share the motif of "miracle marriages"(marriages between human and non-human lifeforms). As the tiniest plot in narrative literature, motifs can grow into texts. This study uses qualitative research methods, taking Indonesian and Malaysian folktales as examples, studying the logic of folktales which is based on the motif of "miracle marriage". And the logic is, most of the human characters in the stories are ordinary laborers or royalty who are stuck in predicament. The non-human character is a creature that transforms from animal to human, or an angel from heaven. In the stories of the male side as a non-human being, the male creature appears as an ugly figure. After being loved by a nice and beautiful woman (civilian or princess), he will be released from the curse and become a handsome man. In folktales that the female is non-human beings, generally, the female characters come from heaven, they voluntarily or are forced to marry men who work as hunters or farmers, and finally achieve the ending in which the wife is mandatorily recalled by heaven, or the human husband breaks his promise, which leads to the partners being apart, or the happy ending of a family reunion after a hard time struggle.

KEYWORDS: Motif, Miracle Marriage, Folktales

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia and Malaysia have long histories, with hundreds of ethnic groups residing on thousands of islands. The vast sea, dispersed islands, and differences in natural conditions cause economic and cultural development between islands to be inconsistent. For example, some areas had entered slave society around AD, while tribes at the primitive commune stage still could be found in Irian Jaya and Kalimantan until the end of the 20th century (Xu You-nian, 1983). These various ethnic groups and rich cultural conditions give rise to many surprising Indonesian and Malay folk tales, the contents of which are varied and colorful. Folklore is extensive, and there are types of stories that commonly feature fictional and incorporate supernatural elements into the lives of ordinary people, including miracle marriages. This type of folktales takes the main storyline of the marriage between spirits/animals/angels, and humans, and there are quite a lot of them in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Currently, the number of articles that study motifs is ample, ranging from studying multiple motifs from a single-story, comparing similarities and differences in stories of the same type of motif, or studying motif learning methodology, which covers a wide range of content. The abundance of Indonesian and Malay folklore has provided many research texts for scholars. There

is a lot of research on Indonesian and Malay folklore, including research on motifs. For example, Motifs of Narrative Structure of Sacred Tombs in Surabaya (Sudarwati, Anik C Rahayu, Novi Andari, 2018) studies three narrative motifs in the legend of the Holy Tomb. Meanwhile, Reading Banten in folklore motifs (Resti Nurdhidah, 2019, Membaca Banten Dalam Motif Cerita Rakyat) studies the combination of ancestral ideas and Islamic ideas from the Banten people. Motifs in fairy tales of Bawang Merah Bawang Putih from Indonesia and Kongjui Patjui from Korea-a comparison study (Hyon Ye Jin, 2017) compare the similarity of motifs in two Indonesian and Korean stories. There are also articles assessing the influence of historical events on the folklore setting and the classification of tale motivations (Yudianti Herawati, 2018).

However, research on Indonesian and Malay folklore, especially based on the "miracle marriage" motif, is still lacking. And with the marriage relationship playing a very important role in human life, while the imagination of fantasy creatures takes up a large part of folklore in Southeast Asia, research into the combination of these two elements, namely "miracle marriage", is of high value. This study will carry out a little exploration here, trying to examine the logic of the story based on this motif, containing exploring the plot structure, plot characteristics, role relationships, forms of expression, ideological connotations, and the conception of divinity.

METHOD

The word "motif" was adopted by scholars as a term. It was first produced due to the need for a folklore taxonomy. It is generally believed that the German scholar Kohler first proposed this concept. The concept of "motif" is widely used in various fields so that different fields have different interpretations. However, one of the basic characteristics of motifs that are widely known is that motifs are structural forms that do not change and can appear repeatedly in different texts. "In the field of folklore, the study of motifs is the study of plot structure. People analyze motifs to observe the problem of narrative typology, so as to understand the laws of evolution of folk narratives" (Zhang Yan, 2014). In short, motifs are a structural mode of narrative literature and can appear repeatedly in different texts. The motif used in this study is defined as the smallest plot structure in narrative literature. Veselovsky (Historical Poetics, 2003) formalists have shown that motifs can grow into plots. That is, "the motif itself is just a simple a+b formula, namely the plot structure of 'role' + 'angel' " (Zhang Yan, 2014).

The motif of "miracle marriage" consists of two roles and a relationship, which refers to the behavioral angelic relationship between the marriage of two human and non-human roles. The contents of this plot structure include: First of all, the two sides of the character are "human" and "non-human". Regarding the role of "non-human", the content is different: first, it can transform into a human-based on animals; second, an angel from heaven. Because Indonesia and Malay have historical backgrounds such as primitive beliefs and polytheistic beliefs, there are many names for non-human beings. The definition of "spirit" in the Big Indonesian Dictionary is a living creature that does not have a body but creates and has feelings (angels, jinn, devils, and so on). The definition of an angel is a princess or goddess from heaven. So that the concept is not too numerous and complicated, this study uniformly uses the word "spirit" to represent the first type of non-human beings, an "angel" to represent the second type. Then, the relationship between "marriage" behavior refers to the relationship between humans and non-humans as husband and wife. This

kind of thing that is impossible in real life is illusory and imaginary, it is a special literary presentation in itself and naturally has important research significance.

This study uses versions of folktales included in Ancient Southeast Asian Myths and Legends (Zhang Yu'an, 1999) and Indonesian Folklore (James Danandjaja, 1986) as the research corpus, qualitative research as a method to explore the motif of the "miracle marriage" and the story extended from it. Use the formula "a+b" to study the plot structure of "roles" + "marriage". The first part is the male as the non-human role and marries a female human; the second part is the women are non-human roles and marry human men. This study also derives the plot structure, characteristics, and features of the "miracle marriage" motif, meanwhile discussing role relationships, forms of expression, ideological connotations, the concept of divinity, and so on.

DISCUSSION

Folktales with a "miracle marriage" motif have a fixed plot structure. Among them, most of the "human" characters in the story are ordinary workers, and some are royalty who are in a certain dilemma; while the "non-human" character is a spirit who transforms from an animal into a human, or an angel from heaven, or creatures with supernatural powers. The two sides experienced meetings, acquaintances, marriages, and some eventually parted ways. The form of expression of this motif is also reflected in the storyline.

Two folktales from the Sumatran, Indonesia, *Pangeran Ular dan Putri Ketiga* (Prince Snake and Third Princess) and *Bensu dan Boa* (Bensu and The Python) both use male snake spirits as non-human parties and marry female humans. In the *Snake Prince and the Third Princess* (Zhang Yu'an, 1999:11), the third princess is a very beautiful girl, because of her beauty, she suffers from the jealousy and hatred of her two older sisters. Her sister trapped the third princess and kicked her out of the palace. The youngest princess was wandering in the forest and met a special flower snake. The snake accompanied her and comforted her, so the princess chose to stay with the snake. One day, a handsome young man came to the cave where the princess lived and asked the princess to marry him, but the faithful princess remained unmoved. Even though the princess refused, the young man came to propose again and again, and that happened every time when the flower snake was not in the cave. One day the curious princess secretly followed the flower snake and found that it turned out to be the handsome young man. The princess got the inspiration to burn the snakeskin, then successfully lifted the young man's curse. The princess marries the young man and lives happily ever after, later the young man also helps the princess' kingdom. In the story of *Bensu dan Boa* (Zhang Yu'an, 1999:22), Bensu is the third daughter in the family who is hardworking and very devoted to her parents, in order to prevent her family from getting cold and hungry, she borrows fire from a python which lives in a cave. The python appreciated her kindness and courtesy, therefore helping her gladly, comforted her with food, and gave her a gold necklace. When Bensu's two lazy older sisters found out about this, they also asked the python for food and jewelry, but they got nothing but a lesson. One day, Bensu's mother becomes seriously ill, and the python once again helps Bensu heal her mother. At this time, the python asked Bensu to beat its body, as Bensu trusted it so much, she agreed. After the beating, the python became a handsome king and married Bensu as queen, and the two lived happily ever after.

There are also stories of snakes marrying humans in Malaysia. *Melur and the Snake* (Othman Puteh, Aripin Said, 2008:210) tells: Pak. Hitam had a daughter named Melur, Melur's mother died, so Pak. Hitam married a widow. One day Pak. Hitam was seriously ill. When he was dying, he asked Melur to take good care of her stepmother and step-sister. One night, Melur sat on the swing and sang softly, but her singing woke up the step-sister Kemboja, Kemboja was furious and pushed Melur off the swing. Melur ran into the jungle and cried sadly. A snake who had witnessed everything, approached Melur to accompany and comfort her. Melur was also surprised that she was not afraid of this giant snake. They chatted together, the snake asked Melur to marry him and told Melur to get her mother's consent for the wedding. Melur returned home and expressed her wish to the stepmother. The stepmother immediately agreed when she heard that Melur was marrying a snake. On the night of the wedding, the giant snake transformed into a handsome young man, and the two lived happily ever after.

Folktales originating from the West have also been adapted after being introduced to Indonesia and developed into classic local stories, such as Pangeran Katak (The Frog Prince) and Si Molek (Beauty and The Beast) in Bali. The Frog Prince (James Danandjaja, 1986:110) is based on the Grimm tale. In the story, the princess of the Daha kingdom was loved by the king so much that the king did not allow her to leave the palace. One night, the princess met a handsome prince in her dream, so she begged her father to go outside the palace looking for her dream lover. With the king's allowance, the princess was accompanied by a group of bodyguards, then came to a very beautiful pool. Happily, the princess was playing while a strong wind blew her shawl away. The guards tried to find the shawl but all came in vain. The princess cried sadly. At this time, a large frog emerged from the water and suggested to the princess that as long as she promised to stay with him, he would help to find the shawl. The princess thought the frog would not be able to survive without water, so she agreed. After the frog found the princess's shawl, he jumped ashore and asked the princess to take him back to the palace. In order not to associate with this ugly creature, the princess ran away. The frog was very sad as he had to jump to the palace to find the princess himself. When the king found out what had happened, he taught the princess to keep her promise. The princess realized her mistake and decided to stay with the frog. At this time, the frog turned into a handsome prince, and the princess was surprised to find that the frog in human form was her dream lover, so the two lived happily together. The story of Si Molek (James Danandjaja, 1986:113) was inspired by Beauty and the Beast from the Grimm fairy tale. In Si Molek in Bali, a merchant was planning to do business offshore. He promised to bring gifts for his three daughters. Molek is the wisest youngest daughter and did not ask for jewels but wanted a black flower. After returning from the navigation, the merchant passed through a dense forest on his way home. There was a mysterious palace in the forest, and the palace garden was full of black flowers. To fulfill his youngest daughter's wish, the merchant plucked a black flower without permission. At this moment, a deep voice raised, is the owner of the palace. The giant appeared, asked the merchant, why did he pick flowers in his yard without permission? The merchant replied, it was for his beloved little daughter. The giant was very angry. He offered the merchant a condition that the flower could be taken first, but the merchant's youngest daughter had to be brought to the palace to accompany him next month. The frightened merchant agreed vaguely, but after he got home, he realized that he had made a big mistake. Molek cares about her father's condition. After understanding what happened, Molek decides to keep her father's promise. The merchant and

Molek returned to the palace in the forest together, and Molek agreed to accompany the Giant forever. At that moment, the terrifying Giant turned into a handsome prince. Since then, the family has lived happily together.

In the stories above, there is a snake spirit and a frog spirit. The two male spirits appear as ugly, scary, and discriminated animal images, and break the curse after being loved by a good and beautiful human woman (civilian or princess), returning to a handsome and noble prince or king. Human women are characterized by beauty, kindness, loyalty, and trustworthiness, and they remain as loyal to the ugly and strange spirit as their husbands. The male spirit in the story initially had a low status, but in the end, his status became higher, powerful, and prestigious. It can be found that the plot structure of some of these stories is the same, the woman either naturally or actively corrects her mistakes, accepts the spirit as her husband, and the spirit turns into a king or prince, bringing prosperity to women and living happily ever since. It can be seen that the simple conservative educational concept contained in this kind of plot, a woman who is loyal to her husband, does not hate her husband, or is kind and keeps her word, will be well rewarded. From the perspective of role relationships, the interactive behavior that contributes to the marriage in the stories above are mutual help and promise. When the main character is a human woman, other women in the story generally appear as villains, such as the evil elder sisters in *Snake Prince and the Third Princess*, *Bensu and The Python*, *Si Molek*, while the youngest child is always the most beautiful and kind. Male characters such as the princess's father or the spirit as the princess's husband always provide help, love, and protection. Another typical routine is the story starts with an ugly man and a beautiful woman. The marriage relationship is relatively simple, and the end is that the heroine voluntarily marries the male spirit, and then begins a better life.

In addition to folklore about male spirits and female humans being married, there are also many stories in Indonesia and Malaysia tells about female spirits or angels and male humans being married. Although women in such stories are sometimes based on animals, the difference from the case of the male spirit above is that these non-human female creatures come from heaven and have sacred features, this study collectively uses the word "fairy". Most of them are from heaven, marrying a human male who is either a hunter or a farmer.

The Sulawesi folk tale *Bidadari Angsa (The swan Fairy)* (Zhang Yu'an, 1999:70) relates that: There was a young man named Mamanuya who planted sugarcane in the Donati area and found that sugarcane in his field was always stolen. One day he hid secretly and saw who stole the sugar cane. He saw nine swans flying down from the sky. They took off their swan skins and became beautiful women. The fairies bathe and play in the water. Mamanuya was taken aback by the beauty of them, couldn't stop looking. The fairies finished bathing, put on swan skin, and then flew back into the sky. One day, the fairies flew down to take another bath. This time, Mamanuya secretly hid one swan skin. After the other fairies turned into swans and flew away, there was one fairy who was left in the water. Mamanuya walked to the fairy and invited her to live a mortal life together. The fairy was originally the daughter of the gods. Since she lost the swan skin and could not return, she agreed with Mamanuya, and the two married and had children. Before getting married, the fairy warned Mamanuya not to break her hair. But one-day Mamanuya accidentally broke one of it, and blood spurted from the broken spot. Therefore, the swan fairy had to return to heaven to heal, and Mamanuya and their son Bransunto had to say goodbye in tears. Missing his wife too much, Mamanuya takes his son to heaven through hardships and a long journey. When

the god saw that the son-in-law was coming, he asked Mamanuya to try to find his wife himself, and he succeeded. So Mamanuya's family of three stayed in heaven to live. More than ten years later, their son Bransunto grew up. He wanted to return to the mortal world, he took many seeds with him and started farming. From then on, the village was full of crops and fruit trees. The life of the villagers is getting better and wealthier. Another story in Sulawesi, *Burung Merpati Biru dan Narao (Blue Dove and Narao)* (Zhang Yu'an, 1999:83), doesn't have a happy ending like the previous one. Once upon a time, there was a young farmer named Narao who needed to cut down trees to cultivate the land. He continued to cut down for half a month but found that the trees did not decrease. One day Narao finished his work and was about to go home. Suddenly, a large group of blue doves flew over. Narao curiously observed and discovered that this group of blue doves could restore a felled tree by singing. Narao thought of countermeasures, and the next day, Narao prepared a bird catcher and covered it as the blue dove flew to the ground. Narao was happy to finally catch the bird that caused his work wasted. When he opened the cover, he was surprised to find that there was a beautiful girl. To survive, the girl offered to marry Narao. So they got married and gave birth to a son, they loved this son very much. One day, the son asked his mother to sing, otherwise, he would not stop crying. The mother warns her son that once she sings, she will return to being a blue dove, and she must leave them. But the spoiled son insisted on listening to his mother sing, the wife had no choice but to sing to make the child happy. The wife who sang the song turned into a bird and flew into the sky, no matter how Narao and his son cried, she did not return.

The Dayaks in Malaysia have a story of *Pemburu dan Dewi (Hunter and the Goddess)* (Zhang Yu'an, 1999:279). Once upon a time, there was a Dayak teenager who made a living from hunting, called Guidubon. One day he was hunting in the forest and found a rare red-eyed bird. He raised the spear and threw it at the bird, the bird fell to the ground, changing into a piece of red gauze. Guidubon took the gauze and heard a woman's voice asking, did anybody see her gauze? Guidubon was mesmerized by the beauty of women, he told the woman that if she agreed to marry him, he would return the gauze. The woman immediately agreed, but the condition was that he could not ask about her name or her family background. Then they were married and gave birth to a son. One day, Guidubon saw his wife sewing a green feather garment, which supposedly could fly into the sky, but Guidubon refused to wear it. Then the wife reveals a secret to Guidubon, it turns out that she is the daughter of the god of war. After speaking, the wife flew into the sky in the blink of an eye, and Guidubon didn't even have time to react. His wife's voice came from the sky remembering him to wear the feather garment if he wants to meet. Guidubon thought his wife would return on her own, so he waited. After waiting for so many years, not seeing his wife, Guidubon married another woman. But the son missed his mother very much, and Guidubon finally remembered the feather garment. The Princess of the god of war is disappointed to learn that Guidubon has married another woman, and asks Guidubon to return to the mortal world alone, leaving the son to be raised in Heaven. The son was raised by the god of war and eventually grew into a mighty warrior, and returned to the mortal world, teaching what he had learned to the Dayak people. There is also a story in Malaysia called *the Story of the Turtle-dove* (Othman Puteh, Aripin Said, 2008:44). King Kamarulzaman liked to keep birds very much, he kept many beautiful birds in the palace, the king had a daughter princess Syahrul Bariah. One day, princess Syahrul Bariah suddenly had a strong desire to eat birds, and the king happened to be out, so the princess caught

a bird kept by the king and ate it. When the king came back, he went to feed the birds with great joy, but when he counted the number of birds, he found that one was missing. The king was furious and wanted to punish the guarding soldiers. Princess Syahrul Bariah could not bear the punishment of the soldiers, so she admitted her mistake. The king was so angry that he cursed the princess and turned her into a turtle-dove. The turtle-dove left the palace but fell into a trap, and it turned out that the trap was set by a young man named Setia. The kind Setia cherished this beautiful bird and brought it home. Since then, Setia has been surprised to find that there were cooked meals on his table every time he came from work. Setia made a plan and decided to pretend to go to work and hide around the house. Setia looked inside the house from the window and saw a beautiful woman was cooking. Setia immediately returned home and asked who the woman was. After learning that the beautiful woman was the turtle-dove, Setia proposed to her, and the two lived happily ever after.

Judging from the plot framework, some of the stories mentioned above are relatively similar, and generally present a form of meeting-marriage-staying together or being apart. From a certain plot angle, among them, the fairy takes the initiative to marry a male human because she desires a mortal conjugal life, and there is also one who is captured by the man or her fairy cloth was hidden therefore could not return to heaven. However, the fairy had to return because of the limitations from heaven, the end of some stories is that the husband and wife are permanently separated, and the husband bravely chases to heaven to be reunited with his wife, and their children returned to the mortal world to engage in agriculture and benefit the local people. In terms of roles, most of the women's roles are proactive, and they are very willing to marry men whose status is lower than themselves, and most of their offspring are boys. From the perspective of the role relationship between the human male and the fairy, the power of the gods decreases, and the behavior of humans strengthens. People not only worship divine beings such as fairies, but believe that humans can form marital relations. Achieving the same or even higher status as a fairy also implies the idea that humans can subdue and control supernatural beings. In addition, the remaining fairies and human children in the stories above are all boys. Since then, it can generally reflect that people in the old patriarchal society paid more attention to men. Men in stories are often given the duty of saving humans, defeating monsters, and so on, but female characters who are fairies with magical power, generally do household chores and take care of children.

Folklore, as one of the works of folk literature, expresses the aesthetic pursuit of society, as well as in folklore with the motif of "miracle marriage", male spirits based on animals initially appear with ugly faces and are also terrible or disgusting unwanted animals such as snake and frog. On the other hand, the image of the fairy is a beautiful and graceful bird like a swan, and both men and women will be very extraordinary in appearance after being transformed into a human.

Primitive beliefs and animism have given birth to many characters in the story. In folklore with a "miracle marriage" motif, fairies no longer only carry transcendence of religious beliefs, they do not use their divine powers to do certain things. Instead, more humanity stands out. Fairies leave heaven for love and children. From the male point of view, it can be found that the beauty, nobility, and talent of the fairies in this kind of folklore comes from reality and is higher than reality, surpassing the standard that can be achieved by women of that era, so that they can become the sustenance of love, and the ideal marriage partner. Moreover, the human male who married the fairy in the story lived in poverty and hardship, and when they asked the fairy to marry, the fairies

generally agreed immediately. Men don't have to pay money or effort, then fairies marry them without asking for anything in return, and leave the original favorable living conditions. This kind of plot embodies psychological compensation for men. Besides, some stories emphasize the hard experience of marriage between a human and a fairy and the enlightenment of growth that this experience brings to both. The main characters travel through mountains and rivers in search of his wife who is far away in heaven, and finally gets a chance to live in heaven.

The influence of the natural environment on the performance of the motif is likewise demonstrated in folktales. Indonesia lies on the equator while Malay is nearby. Both belong to a typical tropical rainforest climate and the temperature changes throughout the year are comparatively steady. Water resources are abundant, soil fertile, and rich in natural resources. Such extraordinary natural conditions have cultivated a rich farming culture. Therefore, the slash-and-burn lifestyle is commonly appealed to in folktales, and most of the main characters are engaged in the farming business. Generating a bumper harvest has also become the main purpose and accomplishment of the children who were born because of the "magic marriage" and returned from heaven to the mortal world, reflecting people's desire and fantasy for a bumper crop at that time.

CONCLUSION

Folklore with the motif of "miracle marriage" embodies people's longing for a beautiful love and married life, and their desire for an ideal and perfect partner. Folklore with a "magic marriage" motif has a fixed plot structure. Among them, most of the "human" characters in the story are ordinary laborers, and some are royalty who are in a certain predicament; while the "non-human" character is a spirit who transforms from an animal into a human, or an angel from heaven. In the story of the male side as a non-human being, the male spirit appears as an ugly, scary, and discriminatory figure against animal images. After being loved by a good and beautiful human woman (civilian or princess), he breaks the curse and returns to being a handsome and noble prince or king. The simple conservative concept of education contained in this plot is that a woman who is loyal to her husband, kind, and keeps her word, will get a good reward. The typical routine is to start with ugly men with beautiful women. The marriage relationship is relatively simple, and the end is that the female characters voluntarily marry the male spirit, and then begin a better life. In the stories of women as non-human beings, most of the fairy come from heaven, they voluntarily or are forced to marry human men who work as hunters or farmers, and are finally achieving the ending that the husband and wife are being apart because fairies are bound by heaven or the husbands break their promise, or the happy ending of a family reunion after a hard time.

The importance of studying literary motifs is not only in settling the external structure but as a national thought supported by motifs, which reflects the psychology of culture rooted in Indonesia and Malay. What is most distinctive is that although folklore with the motif of "miracle marriage" is also widespread in the literature of other countries, Indonesian and Malay animism and mysticism hold extreme attention towards non-human beings (especially animals). With the increase in people's cognitive abilities, these narrative plots are becoming more common. It should also be linked to the combined power of people's natural imagination, subjective creative aesthetics, and moral reinforcement, which derives the "miracle marriage" motif is rich in meaning.

SUGGESTION

Due to their historical origins, Indonesian and Malay have considerable overlap in literary works such as folklore, both countries have rich story texts. As the smallest unit of plot structure in the story, the motifs can be derived rich and colorful. Scholars can try to study stories in different countries that share the same motif, analyze that with the background of the same motif, the similarities and differences of the reflections, evolution and localization of these stories. Or, in historical chronological order, study the characteristics of the same folklore motif in the various feudal kingdoms of a certain country. What's more, because there are many Indonesian and Malay folk tales with the "miracle marriage" motif, this study does not fully cover all stories from this motif due to the limitation of words.

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