

## The Association between “pembayang” and “pemaksud” of Malay Pantun

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### ABSTRACT

*The pantun as a form of traditional Malay poetry was very popular in the world. It plays an important role in Malay literature because of its preeminence and poetry. In term of style, pantun is manifested as a prosody abab. In term of content, each line of poetry is divided into two parts: **pembayang** and **pemaksud**. This is a correlation between the image and the realization of that image, which, even when there exist independent images, symbolize one meaning that is not directly expressed in both the **pembayang** and **pemaksud**. We realized that the clues and the meaning have a close connection with each other; based on the philosophy of Oriental people in general and the Malay in particular. From the perception of the Oriental people, they consider “human as a small universe; human and the earth are united”. Malay Pantun has some similarity with Vietnamese folk songs (*ca dao Việt Nam*) in which the nature is expressed clearly in both the two genres. The Vietnamese folk songs are the crystallization of Vietnamese people and are a genuine beauty of Vietnamese traditional culture. In terms of the perceptions, Vietnamese folk songs and Malay pantun are the reflection of objectivity and reality of the two peoples’ behaviours, customs and traditions through the images of the nature, lifestyle, national traditions and the community relations. In both folk songs and pantun, the nature is significantly expressed, which can be explained by the special behaviours of Vietnamese and Malaysian people to the nature. The nature had become an indispensable factor in their spiritual life and the behavioural culture of Vietnamese people.*

*Key words: traditional Malay poetry, Malay literature, Malay pantun, Vietnamese folk songs*

### ABSTRAK

*Pantun sebagai satu bentuk puisi Melayu tradisional sangat popular di dunia pada satu ketika dahulu. Ia memainkan peranan penting dalam kesusasteraan Melayu kerana keunggulannya dan puisinya. Dari segi gaya, pantun dimanifestasikan sebagai abab melalui ilmu persajakan. Dari segi kandungan, setiap suatu pantun dibahagikan kepada dua bahagian: pembayang dan pemaksud. Korelasi antara imej dan merealisasikan imej yang, walaupun apabila wujud imej bebas di setiap bahagian, imej itu melambangkan satu makna yang tidak langsung dinyatakan dalam kedua-dua pembayang dan pemaksud. Kami menyedari bahawa petunjuk dan makna mempunyai hubungan rapat dengan satu sama lain, berdasarkan falsafah orang Timur secara umum dan Melayu khususnya. Dari persepsi orang Timur, “manusia sebagai alam semesta yang kecil; manusia dan bumi bersatu”. Pantun Melayu mempunyai beberapa persamaan dengan lagu-lagu rakyat Vietnam (*ca dao Việt Nam*) di mana sifatnya dinyatakan dengan jelas dalam kedua-dua genre. Lagu-lagu rakyat Vietnam adalah kristalisasi orang Vietnam dan keindahan asli buat budaya tradisional Vietnam. Dari segi persepsi, lagu-lagu rakyat Vietnam dan pantun Melayu adalah mencerminkan objektif dan realiti tingkah laku, adat dua rakyat dan tradisi melalui imej, gaya hidup, tradisi kebangsaan dan hubungan komuniti. Dalam kedua lagu rakyat dan pantun, alam secara signifikan diungkapkan, yang dapat dijelaskan oleh perilaku khusus orang Vietnam dan Malaysia terhadap alam. Alam semula jadi telah menjadi satu faktor penting dalam kehidupan rohani mereka dan budaya tingkah laku orang Vietnam.*

*Kata kunci: puisi Melayu tradisional, kesusasteraan Melayu, pantun Melayu, lagu-lagu rakyat Vietnam*

### INTRODUCTION

As a genre of folk poetry in Malay community, pantun has a special aesthetic quality, which is the quintessence of Malay community’s culture and language. Through many centuries, pantun is still recycled from one generation to another. It has been rooted in people’s consciousness, being evolved and present vividly in Malay’s real life. Pantun not only

expresses the clement and modest souls of human but also contributes greatly to constructing and maintaining strong relationships among families and community. The educative meanings in morality and dignity of pantun also help preserve longstanding traditions of Malay community, the biggest community in Southeast Asia Island.

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN  
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OF A PANTUN

Pantun be distinguished from other traditional forms of poetry by the close and unique content and artistic form. This is expressed in the following ways. A pantun includes different stanzas, each of which has a pair of 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and makes up 16 lines, with the variety of spelling patterns, including the terminal rhyme such as a-b-a-b, a-a-a-a and medial rhyme. Each pantun is divided into two parts, the clues (*pembayang*) and the expression of meaning (*pemaksud*). The clues often describe the splendid beauty and the relationship of nature around us such as colour, sounds, flowers, birds or historic sites and scenic landscape. The expression of meaning, on the other hand, refers to the social relationship such as beauty and the evil. It often contains deep philosophical messages about life.

There still exist different perspectives in judging the association in pantun poems. Researchers are mostly interested in the association between the clues and the meaning. There arises a question of whether there is any connection between these two parts in a pantun. However, all researchers have not figured out the explanation for this issue. The connection only exists in some pantun. Omardin Haji Asha'ari (1961: 23) affirmed that “there is no association between the clues and the pantun poems.”

Hans Overbeck (1992) pointed out that there is few pantun that witness the relationship between the clues and the meaning.

“I once went through my collection of pantun with a clever Malay Munshi from Sumatra and learned something about the meaning of the second lines, but very little of their connection with the first pair” (Hans Overbeck 1992: 17).

To compose a good pantun, Omardin Haji Asha'ari (1961) believed that “the important part in writing a pantun is mentioning the purpose or meaning of a pantun rather than the clues.” Some other researchers such as Munshi Abdullah claimed that “There are some quatrain pantun in which the first two lines are meaningless. They only make up rhyme. Only the two last lines contain the true meaning” (Omardin Haji Asha'ari 1961: 24).

Mohd. Taib Osman (1975) stated that the association between the two parts is only technical:

“I am more inclined to say that the connection between the first two lines and the final ones **represent something technical**: firstly, from the

point of view of the pantun form itself, secondly regarding the use of pantuns in Malay society. From the former of these points of view, the first two lines bring forth to the final ones the element of the rhyme. This element is essential, as one of the criteria for a good pantun is good rhymes. From the latter, the pantun is an artistic form of communication”. [cited by Francois\_Rene' Daillie 1990:24]

According to Francois\_Rene' Daillie (1990), there is no clear relationship between the clues and the meaning. The relationship appears to be mysterious and inexplicable.

“Between the pantuns in which there is evidently no relationship in meaning from one couplet to the other – a small minority in fact – and those where the link, on the contrary, or even the continuity of thought, is only too obvious – also minority – we find a large number of pantuns, among the best, characterized by the existence of a really perceptible though not always immediate, often subtle or mysterious connection, which contributes mostly to the special charm of this poetic genre”. (Francois\_Rene' Daillie 1990: 14).

Many researchers assume that the clues and the meaning are totally unrelated. The two opening verses are set for “the existence of poeticism”. It merely sets up a artistic context to bring the rhyme to an end. This is purely the superficial harmony as Za'ba put it (Zainal Abidi Bakar 1983: 15):

(1) *Bahagian yang pertama pembayang maksud, iaitu boleh diumpamakan sebagai kulit pantun itu. Tujuannya hanyalah seolah-olah menyediakan orang untuk mendengar isi yang sebenar akan dikatakan.*

(2) *Bahagian yang kedua mengandungi maksud yang sebenar, iaitu sebenar-benar isi pantun itu yang hendak dikatakan oleh orang berpantun.*

(3) *Bunyi hujung dalam tiap-tiap kerat pembayang (kulit) itu hendaklah berlainan.*

(4) *Bunyi hujung dalam tiap-tiap sekerat isi itu hendaklah sama dengan bunyi hujung pada pembayang yang dijdohnya masing-masing. (Za'ba 1965)*

While studying the pantun, we found out that the clues and the meaning are associated basing on the philosophy of Eastern people in general and of Melayu in particular. Eastern people regarded “human as a small universe and that human and earth are united, therefore they have the tendency to adapt

themselves to and live in harmony with the nature with a deep sympathy” (Pham Duc Duong 2002: 76).

“Earth and human united” is a primitive aesthetical conception in human’s nature, which is truly humane. It is believed that the Sun and the Earth are natural parents that give birth to humans. The Earth is the origin of life and culture. Humans are dependent on the earth. Once dead, they are back to the earth. Therefore, there is a solid tie between humans and nature, which nothing can separate. In the conception of the earth in the East, the natural environment is composed of many elements such as earth, water, air, light, terrain, clouds, rain, sun, wind and plants.

As the human’s living environment, nature has become an indispensable part in human’s emotional life and human’s behavioural state. The natural environment stipulates the lifestyle and culture of human behaviours to not only the nature but also to the society. Human and society appear inevitably during the natural evolution. They are a specific part of nature. The nature, humans and society are integrated on the principle of a perfect whole.

How to behave in harmony with nature is decided by the way of rural farming. In order to survive and develop, the farmers, first of all, have to be attached to the land, the crops that they have planted. They need to have a stable life so as to settle down.

The Eastern people seem to demonstrate the most appropriate treatment to the nature. They live in good harmony with nature, rely on it, act in accordance with it and worship it. “The attitude of living in harmony with, rely on and in accordance with the nature is the basic characteristic of the behaviours of the agricultural residents, especially those who plant water rice in Oriental countries, including Vietnam” Nguyen Viet Chuc (2002).

Melayu people does not separate humans from nature. They do not control the nature like what Western people has done to obtain individual benefits. Living close to the nature and close to each other is the outstanding characteristic in culture of the behavior of the Melayu people (Asmah Abdullah & Pedersen 2006: 63).

“ People in most Asian cultures believe that it is important to live in harmony with nature and co-exist with it. They adopt an accomodating posture with their physical surroundings and are less likely to challenge existing boundaries and norms as it can cause disharmony” Asmah Abdullah & Pedersen (2006: 63).

*Daun sirih sudah disusun,  
Siap dengan gambir dan kapur:  
Adat semang pulang ke dusun,  
Adat belut pulang ke lumpur.*

The Malays also act in harmony with the nature, integrate into the nature and draw the nature to incorporate into their spiritual life. Therefore, whatever aspects of the nature that appear in Melayu pantun such as sun, rivers, mountains, moon, stars, wind, flowers and leaves can be a potential element to become the environment, the combination and the reflection of people’s life, images and emotions. The examples from this study are cited from “*Kumpulan Pantun Melayu*” Zainal Abidi Bakar (1983).

*Sebab padi sebab selasih,  
Itulah sebab saya lurutkan;  
Sebab budi sebab kasih,  
Itulah sebab saya turutkan.*

The civilization of wet rice cultivation is a cultural component of the Melayu inhabitants. Rice has become a major staple food of Malay people, which is grown all over the Malaysian peninsula. In pantun, the rice is compared to people’s personality while the cinnamon is compared to love. A pantun is composed in a paralleled meaning of the two first and two last pantun verses. In other words, the interrelation between different parts of the pantun is the interrelation between the image and the realization of that image. The clues express the images while the meaning helps concretize the simile of the two last pantun verses and clarify the implication in these images. The key meaning conveyed in the pantun is to advise people to live with love and kindness.

Tajul Kelantan, a researcher of pantun claimed that the pantun clues was taken from the nature: “*pembayang maksud satu-satu pantun diambil dari sumber alam*” Zainal Abidi Bakar (1983: 15), and the true meaning of pantun lies in the meaning, which is the two next phrases. Considering the following examples, it is obvious that the hints and the meaning of pantun have very close connection in order to express a perception of Malaysian about a social relation.

*Yang jurang bersama jurang,  
Yang bukit bersama bukit;  
Yang enggang itu sama enggang,  
Yang pipit iu sama pipit.*

Obviously, pantun always reflects life, people and society. It puts all these things in connection with the nature to highlight the emotions, moods, actions and

behaviours of Malay people. From the vast landscape of the nature and the similar inspiration of the nature, the images have been zoomed out and conveyed in the pantun with the view to expressing people's feelings. Accordingly, it has been developed into an emotion and a philosophy of Malay people.

*Kalau nak tahu di rumpun padi,  
Lihatlah rumput di permatang;  
Kalau nak tahu untung kami,  
Lihatlah laut petang-petang.*

By comparing the two similar natural phenomena, the key meaning of pantun arises in such a way as people's life is largely dependent on nature and environment. Favourable nature brings good luck and prosperity to people. Like what Vietnamese people often say: "Clement weather and favourable terrain lead to the concord among the people" when describing the vantages in people's life and work.

Malay people loved nature and lived in harmony with nature. They created a close connection between the nature and the emotional life because nature was the long lasting aesthetic inspiration for them. To be able to sustain their lives in harmony with the natural environment through planting or seafaring career under the changeable and complicated environment, Malay and Vietnamese people must have a synthetic observation and learn to accumulate experience to find the relationship between natural phenomena and daily life activities; accordingly, formed the "synthetic dialectical thinking that valued experience".

*Baik-baik belayar malam,  
Arusnya deras, karangnya tajam;  
Cari-cari mualim yang faham,  
Di situlah banyak kapal tenggelam.*

Vietnamese folk songs (*ca dao*) are pure crystallization of the Vietnamese people, the beauty of Vietnamese folk culture. In terms of thinking, poetry is like a mirror that objectively reflects the reality in behaviours, manners and customs of the Vietnamese through the images of nature, life, national traditions, community relationships. In poetry, the nature is clearly expressed thanks to the special behaviors of Vietnamese people with the nature. The nature became an indispensable part in emotional life and in the behavioral manner of the Vietnamese.

Longing for a favourable weather  
*Lạy trời cho thuận gió đông*  
Ship will dock and wife will unite husband  
*Cho thuyền thấy bến cho trông thấy chàng*

Folks reflect people's emotions through its images and also express people's affection and perceptions.

From ancient times, from sowing until harvesting, farmers have always been worried about the floods or droughts. The farm work depended much on nature; therefore, farmers are closely tied with nature. Favourable climate is likely to bring abundant crops.

With their own feeling, Vietnamese people also have similar ways of attracting nature to be friends of humans. They also integrate into nature to express their own feelings and behaviours.

People do farming to get paid  
*Người ta đi cấy lấy công*  
My farming depends on different aspects  
*Tôi nay đi cấy còn trông nhiều bề*  
I care for the sun, clouds and soil  
*Trông trời, trông đất, trông mây,*  
The rain, wind, days and night  
*Trông mưa, trông gió, trông ngày, trông đêm*  
Until the feet are tough, Until the rocks are soft  
*Trông cho chân cứng đá mềm,*  
Only assured when the weather is fine  
*Trời yên bể lặng mới yên tâm lòng*

Cultural behavior of Western people for the natural environment was basically different from the Oriental residents in that it showed the contrast between human and nature, and regarded nature as the archives of life, which could be fully exploited to serve human needs. Western people were opposed to and disrespected the nature, which resulted in the rational thinking.

Vietnamese people often regarded human and nature to be closed and inseparable. Over many generations and hardship, Vietnamese people still rely persistently on nature. From the perceptions of the Eastern people, "the natural environment is composed of a variety of factors such as earth, water, air, light, terrain, cloud, rain, sun, wind and plants (Nguyen Viet Chuc 2002: 78). Therefore, the heaven and the earth is the integration of different elements, which were tied together.

Nature is the most mentioned factors in poetry. The nature intertwined with the lives of the Vietnamese people in such a way as leaning on each other and take the most advantage of the nature. People could be able to flexibly deal with the changes of natural environment. This lifestyle was the aesthetic characteristic of traditional cultural behavior of Vietnamese people.

In the folk, the expression of people's behaviour, mood, and lifestyle were tied to the nature. These factors were in harmony with nature in a familiar, friendly and highly sociable way. Behind the photos, such names expressed the feelings, the hearts, behaviours and also the emotional traits of people. People ingeniously spring from their vast emotions about the nature to compare, contrast and express their diversified emotions and feelings in a natural and dedicated way as if the nature was just an excuse for the expression of their feelings.

From this field look to other field  
*Đứng bên ni đồng, ngó bên tê đồng*  
 Seeing the vast and immense of the fields  
*Mênh mông bát ngát,*  
 Watch from other field to this field  
*Đứng bên tê đồng, ngó bên ni đồng,*  
 Realizing the as immense image  
*Cũng bát ngát mênh mông.*  
 The women are like the young grain  
*Thân em như chẹn lúa đồng đồng*  
 Flying under the early sunshine.  
*Phát phơ dưới ngọn nắng hồng ban mai*

Behavioural culture of Malaysian people is the harmony with natural environment. This behaviour is regulated by the agricultural and cultivation lifestyle in which people are closely associated with the creatures, rivers and fields.

*Dari mana datangnya lintah?*  
*Dari sawah turun ke kali;*  
*Dari mana datangnya cinta?*  
*Dari mata turun ke hati.*

As the modest and honest farmers growing wet rice, Malay people compared the path to love with the one of a leech crawling its way from the fields into the river.

Malay people always love and live in harmony and with deep empathy with the nature. The nature is like the unseparable friend. It is regarded as a soul mate, the one who is eternally in companion with human. The love of Malay for the nature and for humans is illustrated vividly in pantun. The clue and meaning of a pantun have a very close association basing on a comparison and contrast in order to highlight the key meaning of a pantun in a close relation with people's life.

The congruous relationship is expressed distinctively in pantun:

*Kalau ada jarum yang patah,*  
*Jangan simpan di dalam peti;*  
*Kalau ada silap sepatah,*  
*Jangan simpan di dalam hati.*

The repetition of “*kalau ada, jangan simpan*” contributes to enhancing the links between the rhymes and also helps readers realize the congruous connection between the “snapped needle” (*jarum yang patah*) and “human errors” (*silap sepatah*). The high appreciation of community among Malay people has many positive and valuable aspects. For example, people always care for each other. The community is solid when people are helpful and sharing during happiness and difficulties. However, Malay people do not lose their independence, autonomy and self-confidence to overcome the shortcomings and head for the future.

*Kerana apa binasa pandan,*  
*Kalau tidak kerana paku;*  
*Kerana apa binasa badan,*  
*Kalau tidak kerana laku.*

Once again, the relationship based on a comparison is expressed on the above pantun through the comparison between the nail (*paku*) and the attitude (*laku*). Malay people regard the attitude as a part of the behavioural culture. The culture of behaviours is crystallized throughout a living, working and communicating period. It is filtered into the standard and social values, which are recognized by the whole Malay community. These values are expressed under the form of rules and mottos of behaviours. Therefore, the bad attitudes will violate the norms, the social values and destroy human identity.

*Cuba-cuba bertanam mumbang,*  
*Moga-moga tumbuh kelapa;*  
*Cuba-cuba bertanam sayang,*  
*Moga-moga menjadi cinta.*

The content of the clue and the meaning of this pantun is similar. It both refers to the act of growing. However, there is a difference between growing a plant (related to the nature) and nurturing a love (related to human).

In addition, many pantuns are composed in the contrast between the clue and the meaning. For example:

*Budak- budak mendayung perahu,*  
*Sambil berdayung sambil bermain;*  
*Macam mana bunga tak layu,*  
*Embun menitis ke tempat lain.*

There seems to be no relationship between the children sailing the boats with the dew, a natural phenomena. However, the above pantun is composed on the contrast between the two first verses and the last two. The clue suggests the joy of the children while sailing a boat. Meanwhile, the meaning expressed the depression of a flower when the dew seeks for another flower. When comparing the meaning of the opening and closing of the pantun, it is noticeable that people's actions are all governed by people's mood and feeling.

In terms of the form, the relationship between the clue and the meaning are associated through the rhyme abcd-abcd. The readers not only can understand the relationship between rhythm and tone but also figure out the relation in meaning of this pantun. Thanks to that, readers can understand the meaning conveyed in this pantun.

*Cacak pancang di tengah arus,  
Hanyut ke beting atas pasirnya,  
Diambil orang buat meniti,  
Kalau patah ganti yang lain;  
Tuan laksana benda yang halus,  
Sudah ditinting lahir warnanya,  
Memberi cahaya dalam hati,  
Rasaku tidak kepada yang lain*

In the above pantun, the rhyme connecting the nature and human through the form contrast. The comparison between the pole, which can be changed, and the love, which cannot be changed is based on the general meaning of appreciating people's faithfulness. The image of the girl is illustrated in a modest and sensible way, which expresses a typical characteristic of the Malay people's behavioural culture in love: traditional, modest but very hearty. The love is natural but it conveys the faithfulness inside.

The Vietnamese and Malaysian people did not separate themselves from their natural environment but created a strong bond between the nature and human, which was expressed through their close connection with the country, natural fields and crops. The patriotism was put in harmony with the love for the fields, markets and wharf. The love had symbolized the typical features and diversity of each area, the spectacle of rivers, mountains, waterfalls and forests of Vietnam and Malaysia. "Nature is like an inseparable friend and a soul mate – an everlasting companion of human beings." Pham Duc Duong (2002: 76).

The private emotions of Melayu people also enabled them to display a different set of behaviours.

They always considered the nature as human's friend, extended their love and harmony with the nature to express their feelings and behaviours. The nature is regarded as a companion, who could understand and share with human. It created reasons and opportunities to express the emotions, status and behaviours. Through the nature, the Melayu people also sent their encouragement to the young men to behave ethically and avoid hurting the women.

*Zaman berperang Raja Berma,  
Peluru sampai di pucuk kayu;  
Seekor kumbang menyeri bunga,  
Kumbang terbang, bunga pun layu.*

Malay pantun shares some similarities with Vietnam folk song (*ca dao*) because the nature is clearly expressed in these two genres of poems. The image of bee and flowers in Malay pantun was completely correspondent to the bee-flower image in the following folk (*ca dao*). Both Vietnamese and Malaysian people used these images to reflect people's morality.

*As wise as the orphaned butterfly  
Mô cha con bướm khôn ngoan  
Get closed to the blooming, leaving the dying  
flowers  
Hoa thơm bướm lượn, hoa tàn bướm bay*

The people in the East regarded human as a small universe (or primary universe). Human and the earth were also considered as united (heaven and earth merged). Therefore, people here preferred to adapt and live in peace with the environment, sharing deep empathy like what Nguyen Du said: "People in sadness, how come the scenery in happiness". The nature was the inseparable friend, a soul mate and an everlasting companion of human.

The behavioural culture of Vietnamese and Malaysian has a significant humanity, which integrated in various factor such as highly appreciate the community spirit, the strong self-reliance, the harmony between human and nature, the reliance of human on nature, the friendship of human with nature and the contemplation of nature. The behavioural culture was embedded in the Malay pantun in such a way as the folk songs of Vietnamese people, which created typical features for both Malay pantun and Vietnamese folk songs. Just considering the words could not clarify the link between the clues and the meaning of a pantun. However, when analyzing each pantun, the connection between the two parts was very close basing on the overall meaning of the whole pantun, which often expressed

the union between the earth and the human, the harmony of human and nature.

### CONCLUSION

The philosophy of human living in good harmony with nature, associated with the aesthetic aspect of human in a traditional culture of Vietnamese lifestyle had been expressed in a form of a national philosophy with a vitality and a deep influence in the society. That philosophy had controlled the attitudes and the behaviours of Vietnamese people towards the nature, which formed a combination between aesthetic value and the materialistic value of the traditional culture in general and the ecological culture in particular.

Pantun is generated in the comparison or the contrast between the clue and the meaning. This is the interrelation between the images and the reality of such images. The clue expressed the images, the meaning helps concretize these images, explain the denotation in these images. There are also cases in which there is an association between the two parts although each part contains a separate image. This image is supposed to express an indirect meaning, which is not stated directly in the clue and meaning.

The above analysis has partly added proof for the judgment that “there is a mysterious association between the clue and the meaning of a pantun”. It also gives the answer to the question of whether the relationship between the clue and meaning of a pantun is a relation in form and the parallel in rhythm. The association between the clue and the meaning of a pantun is determined basing on the connection between the nature and the human and the society. It is generalized from the related issues to the life and values of Malay community.

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