

The Mouse-deer (*Kantjil*) in Malayo-Indonesian Folklore: Alternative Analyses and the Significance of a Trickster Figure in South-East Asia

By
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Several methods of analysis have been used by past generations of ethnologists, each claiming to make rich strikes in the folklore lode. The methods of mining these cultural treasures found in folk literature have reflected the predominant theoretical concerns of the period. The pioneering scholarship of Max Müller, the brothers Grimm, and Franz Boas was largely devoted to the collection, translation, and classification of folklore, while later on diffusion of the tales was emphasized, and more recently structural analysis has been employed.

The study of the folktales centering on *Kantjil*, or Mouse-deer, an Indonesian trickster figure, has also been watered by this variety of theoretical and methodological currents. In this article, I will utilize a number of major approaches, beginning with the collection and translation of the *Kantjil* tales, moving through the historical and diffusionist schools, and closing with a structural analysis which claims to provide a hypothesis about Indonesian culture and personality.¹

In recent years the descriptive, taxonomic, and historical approaches have been supplemented by an effort to discover underlying structures

1. An earlier draft of this paper was read during the Elsie Clews Parsons Prize competition at the American Ethnological Society Annual Spring Meeting, 1968, in Detroit, Michigan. I am indebted to my wife, Deborah Adams McKean, for aid in the translation, and to Drs. Frank Fernandez, George Hicks, Robert Jay and Philip Leis of Brown University for their encouragement and criticism. Research on the topic began in Indonesia while I was employed by the Commission on Ecumenical Missions and Relations of the United Presbyterian Church, and the National Council of Churches of Indonesia as a University Chaplain in Djakarta, and continued at Brown University through the munificence of a National Defense Education Act Fellowship. Indonesians whom I wish to thank include Dr. Bonar Sidjabat, Ds. Simon Marantika, Ds. Andre Anggui, T. B. Simatupang and their families, and the students of the Gerakan Mahasiswa Kristen Indonesia who gave us their friendship as well as their folklore.

in folklore. This development was generated by linguistic analysis, and it has affected anthropological studies in general. The structural methods attempt to be precise, internally consistent and rigorous in identifying elementary units and their patterned inter-relationships.² I wish to suggest that the structural approach, applied to an Indonesian folk-tale, may reveal some important dimensions of the Indonesian value-system, dimensions ignored or clouded by traditional analyses. The folktales about *Kantjil* are to serve as examples of the potential significance of structural analysis applied to folk-texts, and then related to the wider sociological, political, educational, and psychological context in which they are found. This concern for wedding form and distribution with cultural and psychological values builds upon the theories of Kenneth Burke and Roger Abrahams, who view folk-tales as predominantly persuasive, expressive utterances, designed to function rhetorically and influence others.³ While I recognize the importance of concentrating on the performer, the piece he performs, as well as on the effect which this has on the audience, I must here express at least two *caveats* about the procedure here employed. First, the source of the folk-tales available to me is an Indonesian book, and they do not come from the lips of an informant, nor with one exception, from a participant-observer who heard them "in context". Both Malinowski⁴ and Jacobs⁵ warn ethnologists against the possibility of methodological error in such cases, and I acknowledge them. Secondly, the *Kantjil* tales available to me are in the Indonesian language, and have only recently been translated from autochthonous languages such as Javanese or Achenese. No doubt linguistic subtleties have been lost in the translation of a translation, but the intention of this paper is to deal with basic motifs and structures, which will not be greatly altered by linguistic nuances in the stories.

The protagonist of these tales is a small mammel, *Tragulus javanicus*, which is called *Kantjil*, or less frequently *Pelondok* in the Malay-speaking world, and *Chevrotain* or Mouse-deer in Europe and America. It is not a true deer, but a ruminant classed with other cloven-hoofed animals such as the sheep, cow, deer, hippopotomous and pig. A nimble creature, it is only about a foot high, and is found

2. Dell Hymes, *Language in Culture and Society*, (New York, 1964), 357-459.

3. Roger D. Abrahams, "Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore," *Journal of American Folklore*, LXXXI (1968), 141-158.

4. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science, and Religion, and Other Essays*, (New York, 1954), 100-101.

5. Melville Jacobs, *The Content and Style of an Oral Literature*, (Chicago, 1959), 1-8.

6. N. Wirapustaka, *Tjerita Kantjil Jang Tjerik*, (Djakarta, 1953).

in much of island South-east Asia, and the Malay peninsula.⁷

A note on the Prophet Sulaiman, or Solomon, may help to clarify some of the following *Kantjil* stories. In Islamic thought Sulaiman is considered to be a wise and just ruler, acquainted with the speech and habits of birds and animals.⁸ Sulaiman is believed to be ruler of the animal kingdom, and his presence in the *Kantjil* stories is certainly a late addition to the tradition antedating Moslem influence in South-east Asia.⁹

My procedure, then, is to provide a translation of a number of the stories, and a summary of several other tales of the same *genre*. This seems necessary because the tales are not easily available in English, and do not even appear in the *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, although different beasts in other Asian countries seem to engage in some of the same escapades.¹⁰ Next I will offer three alternative analyses of the tales, and finally an hypothesis about their significance.

The Tale Of The Clever Kantjil

A. The Tiger Is Tricked By Kantjil

One day there was a *Kantjil* who entered the forest. As he sat resting, he was suddenly surprised by the roar of a tiger. He was afraid that he would be attacked, and wanted to run, but it was too late. The tiger was almost on top of him. He was so frightened that his neck-hair stood straight up. Then he had a thought. He took a large leaf, and covered up some water-buffalo feces which was on the ground. Then he took another leaf, and sat fanning the water-buffalo feces while he pretended to meditate. It was not much later when the tiger spied him, but Kantjil did not budge. So the tiger said, as if to tease Kantjil,

“What are you doing, so that your hands move like that?”

Kantjil did not answer, but continued to fan the object in front of him. So the tiger said, in an insulting tone,

“Hey Kantjil, it seems you’re unable to speak. It’s proper for you to run away, like a dog, for you’re in a bad situation. Why are you still here, monkey?”

(The terms “dog” and “monkey” used this way are among the

7. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Chicago, 1960), V. 443; II, 481 ff.

8. Compare *I Kings 4:33* in the Old Testament.

9. H.A.R. Gibbs and J.H. Kramer, ed. *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, (Leiden, 1953), 549-551.

10. Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, (Bloomington, 1957), II, 853; IV, 190, 319, 335.

most insulting in the Indonesian vocabulary.)

Kantjil answered, swallowing so that it appeared he was not afraid of the tiger.

“Hello, Tiger. My but you look old and tired today. Your body is covered with scratches, and you must be a very great fool if you can’t tell what I’m doing. Well, I’ll tell you. I am fanning a feast which belongs to the Prophet Sulaiman. I am entrusted to guard it for him.”

Said the tiger,

“If what you say is true, why am I not entrusted to guard it for him? I am stronger than you, and my teeth are sharp. See?”

With that the tiger snarled, and showed all his huge fangs to Kantjil, who almost fainted in terror. But he managed to answer,

“The Prophet Sulaiman doesn’t trust you because your body is all scarred and ugly, while my body is pure and trim—not like yours.”

The tiger then said,

“How delicious this feast must be! Let me have just a little taste of the royal feast.

Kantjil answered angrily,

“No wonder your appearance is so poor, Tiger, for you’re not able to restrain your passions. Really, you are a contemptible animal. Even those things that don’t belong to you, you want, while I, who guard this feast day and night, don’t have permission to take even a nibble. Certainly I won’t give you any of it, because I’m afraid of what would happen to me if the Prophet Sulaiman found out. But I’m not afraid of you. You really ought to be ashamed of yourself, wanting to eat this delicious feast.

The tiger became very angry with all these insults, and roared fiercely,

“Kantjil, if you don’t be quiet, I will split open your head. Who do you think you are, addressing me in such an impolite tone? Do you want me to chew you up and pulverize your whole body?”

“Be patient Tiger,” said Kantjil, “and don’t misunderstand me, for I’m speaking truthfully. If you want to risk eating this feast, I won’t stop you. But there is one condition: I must leave here first. After I’ve gone away, you can eat it all up. Then I will not see you eating this royal meal, and therefore neither of us will be disobeying the Prophet Sulaiman.”

After the Kantjil had left, the tiger devoured the meal in a gulp. He chewed it up, and began to feel sick. Then he vomited. The tiger was terribly mad, because then he knew that he had eaten water-buffalo feces. If the Kantjil had been near him, he surely would have attacked him, but the Kantjil had disappeared in the forest. He said in his heart,

"The feces of a water-buffalo Kantjil called a meal. If I meet him, I'll split his head open and eat all his bones."

Then the tiger went looking for Kantjil, snivelling and grumbling to himself.

The Kantjil in the meantime ran as fast as he could, fearful of encountering the tiger again. After a time he came to a dead tree with a huge hornet's nest inside. Kantjil picked up a leaf and carefully approached the nest, which emitted a low buzzing sound. He began to fan it with the leaf.

Shortly thereafter the tiger approached him, and roared, "Hey Kantjil, now you'll be my dinner."

"Don't you dare to talk of eating me when I have orders from the Prophet Sulaiman to guard his royal going," replied Kantjil.

"Is that really his gong?" asked the tiger.

"Tiger, are you deaf? Listen carefully and you will hear it humming from the last time it was struck. It's sound is wonderfully sweet. What a pity that you can't hear it—but I have my orders, and no one must touch it."

"Please let me strike it; how eager I am to hear it ring," begged the tiger.

"Tiger, you're talking like a madman. Do you think I own this royal gong? But if you really want to hear it so badly, I'll do you a favor and go and ask the Prophet; if he allows you to strike it, I'll let you know. But don't touch it until he gives you permission." Kantjil went some distance away, and then called back, "Tiger, the Prophet Sulaiman commands you to strike the gong. But don't do it half-heartedly."

The tiger gave it a mighty swipe with his paw. The hornets flew out, and stung him over all of his body. The tiger ran here and there in great pain, trying to escape them. When he finally outran them and began to lick his wounds he thought, "Kantjil, I have not got you yet; but when we meet again, there is no doubt that I will eat you alive."

The Kantjil ran away, but he was getting tired and hungry too. After a few hours he came across a very large and handsomely striped python. It was coiled up, sleeping in the shade, and its coils looked just like a beautiful striped cloth. (Batik). Kantjil sat down quietly beside it, and began to fan it gently with a leaf. The tiger happened by, and was in a rage when he saw Kantjil, who had already tricked him twice. He growled, "Hey Kantjil, this time your doom is sure."

Replied the Kantjil, "Why do you speak of doom, Tiger? Look at what I am fanning. Do you know what it is?"

The tiger went close to the python, and replied.

"Well no, I don't recognize it. What is it?"

"This is what I have been ordered to care for by the Prophet Sulaiman himself. It is his girdle. This lovely cloth descended to him from his ancestors, and its great power prevents one from dying. If it's worn for only an hour, you are not likely to feel ill for at least a year."

The tiger was not feeling very well by this time, having eaten water-buffalo faeces and been stung by hornets, so he thought it would be a good idea to try it on before he ate Kantjil.

"Let me wear it for an hour, then, Kantjil, for I am not so good at catching food as I used to be."

"What!", exclaimed the Kantjil, appearing to be very angry. "Is it right for you to wear this royal girdle when I have not even tried it on? This is the possession of the Prophet, and I have instructions to care for it. But if you really insist, I will go and ask him. If he agrees to it, I will call to you."

Kantjil ran off as far as he could, and yelled from the top of a hill, "Hey Tiger, the Prophet says to put it on, and wrap it tightly."

So the tiger put the head of the python around his waist, which woke up the snake. Soon the tiger was wrapped up completely in the coils of the python, and was crushed to death.

The Kantjil heard the tiger thrashing about and screaming for aid. Knowing what difficulty the tiger had encountered he trotted off. His heart was happy, because at last he was free from that enemy.

B. Kantjil And The Crocodiles

After Kantjil escaped from the tiger he was tremendously hungry and thirsty, so he went to a river where he drank deeply. On the other side of the river he noticed some delicious fruit, but he could not get across. Then he called out, "Hey Crocodiles, I have been ordered by the Prophet Sulaiman to take a census, so come to the top of the water and line up."

When the Crocodiles were all assembled in a row from one side of the river to the opposite bank, Kantjil jumped on to them, and began to count out loud as he jumped from one back to the next. "One, two, three, four, five, six. . . ." When he was across and safely on dry land he gleefully yelled back, "Hey Crocodiles, I fooled you. Thank you for the bridge!" Then he had his meal of fruit.

But the Crocodiles were very angry, and when Kantjil returned to the river to get another drink, one of them waited in ambush, and grabbed him by a leg.

"Crocodile, do you think you have caught my leg?" asked Kantjil. "That is just a tree branch, my leg is over here," he said, holding a twig near the Crocodile's eye.

"Perhaps it is so," thought the Crocodile, "for I don't taste any

flesh, and it feels like a piece of wood." So he let go and snapped at the twig. Kantjil jumped away, and threw taunts over his shoulder.

Later one of the Crocodiles was on the river bank when a tree fell over and caught him by the tail. Three water-buffaloes came near-by to drink, and the Crocodile asked for their help. With their strong horns they lifted the tree off the Crocodile, but he immediately seized the leg of the biggest buffalo in his jaws. The water-buffalo bellowed in pain and anger. "What have you done? I've helped you, and now you turn on me. It's not right."

Then along strolled the Kantjil, and said to the water-buffalo, "Why do you say such foolish things? It is the nature of the world to be ungrateful. Look at that old sleeping mat floating down the river. Once it was clean and soft, and gave comfort to a sleeper; now it is thrown away as useless. Look at that table-cloth floating near it. Once it was bright with fine silk thread, the pride of a hostess, but now that it is torn and old it is thrown into the river. So don't be so stupid water-buffalo."

Then he turned to the Crocodile, and said in a scoffing tone, "As for those dumb animals setting you free from a tree-limb, I won't believe it until I see it. Let go of that tough old bull's leg, and keep an eye on that tender young calf who would make very good eating while you order these beasts to lift up the branch as you claim they did before."

The Crocodile was peeved at Kantjil for doubting his word, and did as was suggested. Just as the water-buffaloes hoisted high the tree branch, Kantjil cried, "Quick, drop it down on Crocodile!" This they did, wounding him, and pinning him fast.

"As long as there are Crocodiles in the world, we shall be your enemies," said the dying beast. "Well," answered Kantjil, "as long as I am in the world, my wits will be my friends."

C. Kantjil As Mediator

In the interests of economy, this tale will be summarized, and not translated exactly. Its style is not dissimilar from the ones above. At the start of the story a deer and a leopard watch their children playing together happily in the forest. This friendship continues until the dry season comes, and the leopard mother cannot find enough food for her daughter. One day she tells the deer that she had a dream on the previous night in which she ate the deer. She asked if the deer thought that one should obey dreams; the answer was, of course, negative, so they agreed to seek out other animals to hear the case. All sided with the deer, which made the leopard very angry. In the meantime the deer met her cousin, Kantjil, whom she invited to help her.

Finally the animals went to a village where a head-man lived who

had a reputation for fair play. He agreed to judge the case, but the threat of attack by the starving leopard and the promise of a venison steak proved too much for him. He was about to tell the leopard to follow the vision in her dream when suddenly Kantjil jumped up, and carried a burning fire-brand to the roof of the head-man's house. While the head-man ran for water, Kantjil told him that he had dreamt he should burn the village down, starting with the head-man's house. He was, of course, simply following the instructions in the dream. Seeing the error and injustice that he was about to commit, the head-man judged the case in favor of the deer, who ran away from the leopard, taking her daughter into another part of the forest.

Towards An Understanding Of The Kantjil Tales

A. The Collection Of Texts And Cultural Diffusion

As the European colonialists became interested in the "exotic" literature of Asia, folk-tales were recorded and published in such periodicals as the *Journal of the (Malayan) Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, which included "A Pelondok (Kantjil) Tale" among its articles in 1906. The translator makes no attempt to explain or analyze the story, which contains a number of the above episodes, though in a different order.¹¹

A more coherent effort to treat the tales was made a decade later by R. B. Dixon in *The Mythology of All Races: Oceanic*. After recounting several of the Kantjil stories, mainly taken from Dutch sources, he wrote:

"The group of trickster tales and fables are of special importance not only to the study of Indonesian mythology, but also in relation to the whole question of the origin and growth of Melanesian culture."¹²

After plotting the distribution of the tales, and discovering that they occur in those parts of Indonesia most strongly affected by the Sanskritization emanating from India, and linked with the Hindu-Javanese kingdoms from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries, Dixon affirms the tale to be present in the other parts of South-east Asia which had been in close contact with India. He concludes that it is intimately tied to the spread of Indian culture, and does not occur in Melanesia, or farther to the east.

Although he may be entirely accurate in reconstructing the diffusion

11. G.M. Laidaw, "A Pelondok (Kantjil) Tale," *Journal of the (Malayan) Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, (London, 1906), XLV, 73-102.

12. R.B. Dixon, *The Mythology of All Races: Oceanic* (Cambridge, 1916), 203.

of the tales, Dixon does not so much as hint at the reason why these stories have perserved over the years, or how they function as a cultural expression in a variety of settings.

B. An Historical Perspective

The history of the Kantjil story has more recently been traced in a thorough study by Sir Richard Winsted.¹³ He notes that in the second century, B.C., a *stupa* in Bharhut, Allahabad, India was carved with stories about animals, derived from the Buddhist collection known as *Jatakas*. A collection of stories written down about 300 A.D. known as the *Panchatantra* also springs from this source, as do Aesop's Fables. Winsted claims that the latter have spread out of India and across Africa and into Europe, as well as into Southeast Asia.

Two other Kantjil stories which I have not translated here echo familiar American folklore. In the first, Kantjil is depicted racing with a snail, and suffering defeat at the hands of the slower creature because he falls asleep; in the second story Kantjil is captured by an angry farmer who sets up a sticky scare-crow in the cucumber patch which Kantjil has frequently raided. Kantjil engages the scare-crow in conversation, then becomes angry at its insolent silence, and gives it a kick. Soon he is engulfed in its sticky embrace. Only by playing dead is he able to escape. If these stories are recognizable by eyes familiar with American folklore, it is no doubt because they resemble the Hare and the Tortoise and the Tar Baby episode in Uncle Remus. According to Winsted's reconstruction, the stories spread out of India not only westward toward Africa, but also eastward toward Indonesia and Malaya. He writes: "The germ of this widely spread tale which occurs in the *Hitopadesa* is a *Jataka* story of a young prince who hits an adhesive goblin and sticks to it."¹⁴

Now in spite of the interesting historical background provided by Winsted, an ethnologist is not yet able to understand how these stories are related to the cultures in which they have become imbedded, and which they, in turn, may have influenced. Evidence supplied by Winsted does, however, tend to strengthen the case for diffusion, rather than the independent invention of the Kantjil tales.

C. A Structural Analysis of the Kantjil Tales

There have been a number of innovators responsible for the method now termed "structural analysis", including Axel Olrik who sought

13. Sir Richard Winsted, "A History of Classical Malay Literature," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, (London, 1958) XXXI, Part 3, 5-261.

14. Winsted, 1958: 12.

“epic laws” in *Sage*, and Vladimir Propp, who found Russian fairy tales to have a limited number of component parts which occurred in a predictable order. They were precursors of other recent analysts such as Lévy-Strauss, Radin, and Dundes, who have attempted to lay bare the internal logic of folklore and myths.¹⁵ The technique which I have selected for application to the Kantjil stories is that outlined by Dundes. He suggests that folktales may be defined as sequences of “motifemes”, and a framework of motifemic slots may be filled with various motifs and allomotifs.¹⁶ Combining the insights of Dundes with those of Olrik, six motifemes may be perceived in the Kantjil tales.

1. *An opening description of a calm and harmonious universe.*

This motifeme is found in all of the tiger stories, as well as those about the deer and the leopard. An allomotif is present in the Crocodile tales which opens calmly, except for Kantjil’s thirst and hunger.

2. *A threat of danger confronts Kantjil.*

In Kantjil’s confrontation with the tiger and the Crocodile this motifeme is obvious; an allomotif may be suggested for the cases in which Kantjil’s friends (deer and water-buffalo) are in danger.

3. *Kantjil presents an alternative action, detouring the enemy.*

This motifeme may be seen in all the stories; an allomotif includes the alternative action proposed on behalf of his friends.

4. *The enemy accepts the alternative action, because of his greedy motives.*

Tiger desires the feast, gong and girdle allegedly belonging to the Prophet Sulaiman; Crocodile desires a tender calf instead of a tough bull; the village head-man expects a reward from the leopard—thus all fit this motifeme. Only the story of Kantjil pretending to take a census of the Crocodiles does not neatly fit into this category, but they behaved obediently in order to comply with the command of Sulaiman. Thus their motivation may be interpreted as negative greed, or avoidance of punishment, and this might be an allomotif.

5. *The consequences of following Kantjil’s alternatives are visited upon the enemy.*

The tiger eats some feces, gets stung by hornets and crushed by a python; the crocodiles are tricked into making a bridge across the river, one loses his dinner by loosing Kantjil’s leg, and is finally crushed by a tree branch. The roof of the head-man’s house is burned, and the leopard remains hungry. The motifeme is consistent.

6. *Harmony and calm return once again to Kantjil’s universe.*

Kantjil is content because the tiger will no longer bother him; he

15. Hymes, 1964: 357–359.

16. Alan Dundes, *The Study of Folklore* (New York, 1965), 208.

affirms his trust in his wits when the dying gasp of the crocodile threatens him; the deer and her daughter depart for a safer place in the forest after foiling the leopard's hunger. In all cases the motifeme applies.

These six motifemes which emerge in a rudimentary structural analysis of the tales enable us to see their basic framework, and help us to account for the retention of both form and content through their wide dispersal in time and space. It is possible to claim that they have all of the excitement of a straight-forward mystery story, since an urgent and dangerous problem demanding a witty solution by the cool and courageous protagonist is posed. And they have the emotional satisfaction of a symphony, as they begin and end on the same note, and a variety of themes is repeated with minor variations in between.

The essential trait of Kantjil is that he out-thinks his opponents, and by appearing to submit to them, he leads them into a trap. He bears a striking resemblance to certain features of the Trickster in American Indian folklore.¹⁷ The more negative dimensions of Kantjil, when he appears as a destroyer, blunderer, or fool are evident in the stories in which he is beaten in the race with a snail, and captured by a farmer with a sticky scarecrow. In these cases an allomotif for #5 must be offered, in which Kantjil is trapped or deceived and the structure reverts to motifeme #2 before the story reaches the pleasant outcome of motifeme #6.

If it is accurate, as Lévi-Strauss proposes, that the Trickster must function as an intermediary between opposites, and therefore occupies a position between polar terms (male/female, earth/sky, gods/men, water/solids) then the Mouse-deer is well suited to this task. We have already noted that it is neither a deer or a pig, though it shares some genetic and physiological features with each of them; it is certainly not a mouse, although its size and coloring might cause it to be classified in the rodent family; it can live in both swampy and mountainous areas. In short, it is a strange creature, *sui generis* in South-east Asia, and a phenomenon which challenges any neat categorization. The enemies which Kantjil overcomes are both land and water beasts (tiger and crocodile), indicating that Kantjil is master of both realms; yet he loses a race to a snail, and is captured temporarily by a man, so he is not unambiguously superior to other creatures.

Radin suggests that the Trickster figure should be understood as a psychological projection foreshadowing the condition of man.

"How shall we interpret this amazing figure? Are we dealing here

17. See Jacobs, 140; and Paul Radin, *The Trickster* (New York), IX.

18. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York), 227.

with the workings of the mythopoetic imagination, common to all mankind, which, at a certain period of man's history, gives us his picture of the world and of himself? Is this a *speculum mentis* wherein is depicted man's struggle with himself, and with a world into which he had been thrust without his volition or consent? Is this the answer, or the adumbration of an answer, to questions forced upon him, consciously or unconsciously, since his appearance on earth?

On the basis of the very extensive data which we have today from aboriginal tribes it is not only a reasonable but, indeed, almost a verifiable hypothesis that we are here actually in the presence of an archaic *speculum mentis*.¹⁹

Trickster is here seen to reflect the mental and emotional state of man during a certain phase in his psychological evolution. The rather undetermined and unbounded proportions of the Trickster figure, emphasized by Lévy-Strauss and Radin, may not appear in only one story, but may emerge when the whole corpus of texts is considered, as Jacobs found to be the case with Coyote among the Clackamas Chinooks.

"The discrete representations, which doubtless do not include all Clackamas narratives about coyotes, offered lineaments of a personality which manifested the worst and best in men. Coyote was not so much a cultural hero, trickster, or transformer as he was at the extreme an expression of Clackamas comprehension of the deepest feelings in headmen, and at the other, of their obligations and potential capacities. This was a sophisticated depiction in which such a man's deficiencies were neither underplayed nor rejected; his profoundest needs and most extravagant foibles were set forth."²⁰

We may infer, then, that an examination of the Kantjil tales *in toto* would reveal more ambiguity in his character than is displayed in the stories translated above. He might display that profound combination of intelligence and stupidity, good and evil, creativity and nihilism, eroticism and asceticism, selfishness and altruism which are found in man himself.

Summary And Conclusions

A translation of some relatively unknown Malayo-Indonesian folktales about a Mouse-deer has been presented, and the stories analyzed from three different methodological perspectives, illustrating these historic trends in the study of folklore. The structural analysis is said to

19. Radin, P. 1956: x.

20. Jacobs, M. 1959:140.

provide clues about the preservation of the tradition, and reasons for its impact on audiences. The qualifications of Kantjil as a Trickster figure are discussed and indicated. Does this study lead us to any tentative conclusions about Malayo-Indonesian culture and personality? I wish to propose as an hypothesis that Kantjil serves as an "ideal type" for at least some Indonesians in some situations. Two bits of evidence encourage such a view, but far more research is needed to either contradict or confirm the hypothesis.

First, these stories were translated from an Indonesian book which seems to be intended for children. The print is large, sketches illustrate the stories, and the language is uncomplicated. It appears that Kantjil is meant to provide not only entertainment, but also pedagogical help in the instillation of "values." For these are tales with a "moral", in that Kantjil's witty response to difficulties leads to his success, while the clumsiness, greed, and stupidity of his enemies results in their downfall.

The second bit of evidence for suspecting a linkage between these stories and a value system rests on the "oral tradition". I first learned of Kantjil's exploits from an Indonesian Army officer who had fought brilliantly and valiantly against the Dutch during the revolution. The General was describing Indonesia's response to international pressures which were applied from time to time by Russia, the United States, Japan, Great Britain, China, and other powers. He argued that the cleverness of his nation would prevail against any threats, coercion, plots, or force employed by either East or West, and thus Indonesia could never be long dominated or controlled by any country. In order to illustrate his belief in the victory of his fellow countrymen against malevolent external powers, the General related some episodes in the Kantjil series.

So on the basis of this admittedly slim evidence based on the role of Kantjil in education and politics, I wish to suggest the hypothesis that Kantjil is an important model for some Indonesians, and that the Kantjil figure characterizes and reinforces a value system which I suspect to be a part of both the believed-in and the lived-in world. More data on the contextual setting of the tales, their short and long range impact on audiences, and the relationship of these stories to psychological or behavioral patterns in Indonesia are needed to test the hypothesis.

The structural analysis of the stories has revealed why they are more than twice-told tales, and the proposed hypothesis points toward the identification made between the story-teller, the story, and the audience. Kantjil may indeed represent an ideal type for Indonesians, as a symbol of cool intelligence to be emulated and appreciated by

those who would overcome danger, difficulty, or impending chaos by the resourceful use of wit. As Kantjil takes his place in bearing and shaping culture, he may provide an insight into uncharted aspects of the Indonesian identity, with a vision of what man is, and can or should be.

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