

Culturing Maritime Elements in Malay Proverbs: A Preliminary Observation

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ABSTRACT: *Traditionally, the sea and ocean are the source of inspiration for new ideas, aspirations, language, ethnic dignity, and truth. By understanding and acknowledging the roles and functions of these two, i.e. the sea and ocean, in all aspects of life, the ancient Malays have employed maritime elements in their daily life and this has enriched their traditional intellectuality. This article attempts to illustrate the culturing of maritime elements in the Malay proverbs that show the personality, intellectuality, and understanding of the Malay people on the maritime aspects, which at the end enhances the Malay civilization. This preliminary observation also found that the existence and culturing of the maritime-based-proverbs illustrate the close relationship between the traditional Malays and oceans as well as lands. Besides that, the importance of the oceans to the development of Malay civilization in the 18th and 19th centuries has also influenced them in making these proverbs at that time. Finally, the use of proverbs in conversation by the Malay community can avoid misunderstandings and strengthen the bond among them.*

KEY WORDS: *Maritime culture, Malay proverbs, history of maritime, Malay language, and dignity of nation.*

INTRODUCTION

Like a Malay saying, *tak lekang dek panas, tak lapuk dek hujan*, Malay proverbs have long existed in the Malay culture. Although the Malay proverbs have long been spoken among the people of the Malay's archipelago, and also have become the worldview for the Malay community at that time, the origin and expansion of the proverbs are still unclear and continuously studied to date. For example, the questions as to when it started to be spoken, who were the speakers and the original ethnic are still yet to be studied.

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Nevertheless, one can be sure that the use and culturing of these proverbs in the daily conversation of the traditional Malay community in this region have begun even before the Malays knew how to read and write; and also even before they were colonized by people who claimed to have more advanced civilization than the regions they colonized. For the Malays, the creation and culturing of proverbs in their daily conversation are not only to illustrate richness, beauty, and prestige status of the Malay language, but also to demonstrate the behaviours, thinking, and manifestation of the Malay people on its nation, religion, and surroundings.

In addition, the proverbs are used to “delicately” educate the Malay youngsters on the importance of Malay norms and values of that time. Thus, the wordings used in the Malay proverbs are carefully arranged and delivered by respected elders of the Malay community. Malay proverbs are not originated in *Tanah Melayu*, but they were brought in by the Minangkabau (Sumatera) and Riau people of Indonesia (Alfizah *et al.*, 2003) who had massively migrated to *Tanah Melayu* around the 14th century and they have, since then, evolved along with the change of time and development of culture.

There are various theories and hypotheses proposed by linguists in understanding the relations between the spoken language and human thinking pattern. Among the famous hypotheses is the “Relative Linguistics Theory” that is pioneered by Boas, Sapir and Whorf (cited by Awang, 2003). According to this theory, humans are normally conversed in different ways because they think differently due to their different language, ethnic background, thinking behaviours, experiences, and surroundings. Here, the theory concludes that language, culture, and thinking behaviour of a person will determine how he/she thinks, reacts, and views the world; and this will become as a tool or expression for him/her to articulate his/her thoughts.

Based on those theories, this article will discuss the culturing of maritime elements in Malay proverbs that has stemmed from the influence of marine world in the life and thinking of the Malay people, and also its role in conveying messages in the historical context of the Malay community.

MEANING AND TYPES OF PROVERBS

There are a few general definitions, concepts, and meanings of “proverbs” proposed by linguists, activists, and social science researchers. According to Alfizah *et al.*, proverbs (*peribahasa*) is:

[...] merupakan salah satu cabang tertua puisi lama yang merupakan pancaran pemikiran masyarakat lama yang masih terikat dengan adat-istiadat. Struktur,

sikap, serta falsafah yang dianuti dan tasawwur masyarakat juga turut dicerminkan. Peribahasa dianggap sebagai warisan masyarakat, peninggalan tamadun, rakaman pengalaman manusia, serta rumusan daya keintelektualan dan kewajaran yang terhasil daripada cetusan hati nurani yang isinya penuh dengan pengajaran, nasihat, teguran, hikmah, dan kebenaran (Alfizah et al., 2003:21-23).

[... one of the oldest parts of prose. It is the emission of thought by the older society which is still bound by customary. It reflects also the structures, attitudes, philosophy, as well as the concept embrace by the society itself. Proverbs are the heritage of society, relics of civilization, marks of human experience, and the outcome of intellectualism as well as the fairness from the heart. It is also full of teaching, advice, and truth].

In this article, proverbs are known as one of the earliest way people express their thoughts that are still influenced by their customs, structure, attitudes, beliefs, and worldview of their community. It is also seen as tradition and legacy, human experiences, intellectuality, and reasoning that emerge as the result of pure conscious awareness filled with moral values, advices, and truth.

Mohd Ghani Ahmad (2002) defines proverbs as a bond chosen by its creator with beautiful, complex, concise, and accurate language that has specific meaning. These proverbs will act as a belief and lesson applied from time to time. Za'ba, on the other hand, defines proverbs as a brief speech spoken by people as a comparison, example, and lesson (cited by Omar, 1986). Finally, Tenas Effendy (2003) defines proverbs as a mirror showing the Malay courtesy or *budi pekerti* that is always said in brief expression but has deep meaning attached to it.

Proverbs are one of the parts of the old literature that is categorized into three types i.e. *peribahasa selapis* (proverbs with either direct or indirect meanings attached to it), *peribahasa berlapis* (proverbs with indirect meanings attached to it), and *lidah pendeta* (statements with indirect meanings spoken by wise people).

Pepatah, or saying refers to words, reflects a particular situation in a community. These words are applied in order to refute other people speech and to explain the truth. For instance, "*berani kerana benar, takut kerana salah*" is a *pepatah* that connotes the idea that one should be brave if she/he thinks he is right in her/his doings, and should feel guilty if she/he commits sins or wrongdoings.

Bidalan is another type of Malay proverb that portrays deep meaning and is normally use by the Malay community. For example, "*sesal dahulu pendapatan, sesal kemudian tiada gunanya*". This *bidalan* explains the importance of caution. *Perbilangan*, on the contrary, refers to a few phrases

such as poems. Each phrase can be in the form of two lines or more and has to be read one by one like a person is doing estimation, e.g. "*hidup dikandung adat, mati dikandung tanah*". This *perbilang* estimates that a person will live following his/her traditions, and will eventually die and be buried in the ground.

There are two types of *perumpamaan* in Malay proverbs, i.e. the first type will compare the meaning directly using these words – *umpama*, *laksana*, *bagai*, *bak*, and *ibarat* – which means "like" in the English language; and the second type will indirectly make the comparison but still has deep meaning attached to it. *Lidah Pendeta*, in contrast, refers to famous sayings that have become the direction and general speech. *Kiasan* is a ironic phrase or sentence used to explain something and it can be classified into three groups: *kiasan halus* (slight ironic phrase or sentence), *kiasan sedang* (mild ironic phrase or sentence), and *kiasan kasar* (harsh ironic phrase or sentence).

Ibarat refers to a group of ironic words that explain a meaning. Its literal form does not illustrate the denotative meaning of these ironic words. Sometimes, *ibarat* can be formed together with *kias* and it is called *kias ibarat* or it can be formed together with *tamsil* that is called *tamsil ibarat*. Therefore, *tamsil* means ironic examples containing lessons and values, such as "*ikut resmi padi, makin berisi semakin tunduk*". Here, the lesson that can be learnt is that the more knowledge one has, the more humble he/she should be – ironically, the stalk of heavy ripe paddy shows the vast knowledge that one has, and the sagging stalk shows the humbleness that one should show to others.

Finally, *simpulan bahasa* refers to a phrase or a group of specially arranged words that connote different meaning. Thus, it is a chain of words that are formed in a few words – two words with implicit and explicit meaning attached to it, e.g. "*ada hati*" (has the desire), "*bodoh sombong*" (reluctant to ask although having problems), and others.

OCEANIC CULTURE AND ITS RELATION TO THE MALAY WORLDVIEW

Since long ago, the maritime elements have long been applied in the daily life of the Malay people and this influences their worldview. The origin of the Malay civilization (Austronesia, Polynesia, and Melanesia) in this Archipelago started along the coastal areas and islands. This is in relation to their knowledge and beliefs on the vastness of the ocean as well as its influence on the lifestyle of their ancestors, who are known as the seaman. Geographically, the countries of the Southeast Asia are developed

based on the archipelagic state concept – they are surrounded by various oceans and receive the influence of the two main oceans, i.e. Hindi and Pacific oceans.

The famous “Sea Power Theory” of Alfred T. Mahan (1965) shows the importance of dominating the oceans for the stability in economic and politic of a country. This importance is not only mentioned from the world point of view but also in religion. For example, there are 32 verses in the Al-Qur’an discussing about the seas and only 13 verses talk about the lands. Also, the Al-Qur’an precisely states the percentage of the sea water on the surface of the earth, i.e. 71%, and the remaining 29% is land, and these coincide with the scientists’ findings (Djamil, 2004).

If these 32 verses on the seas and 13 verses on the lands are added, the total is 45, and if these 32 verses on the seas are divided with the 45 verses (32 verses on the seas + 13 verses on the lands), which then multiply with 100% ($32 \div 45 \times 100\%$), the answer would be 71.11% and this matches with the scientists’ finding, i.e. the earth is made of 71% water. If the 13 verses on the lands are divided with 45 verses (32 verses on the seas and 13 verses on the lands), and then multiply with 100% ($13 \div 45 \times 100\%$), the answer is 28.88%, which is similar to the scientists’ finding, i.e. the earth is made of 28% lands (Djamil, 2004).

Peter Aughton (2007) showed how sailing through the seas and oceans was done by sailors either for trading, religion expansion, colonization, expedition, and others have changed the world history. In his book, Peter Aughton illustrated from the beginning of the period till the modern period where world famous sailors were determined and willing to sail through the harsh seas only to pursue their dreams. According to him, these sailings had bridged and built the human civilization until today (Aughton, 2007).

Gavin Menzies (2002) explained how seas have made China as the world’s leading maritime power (1405-1433) through its seven sailing series, and the sailing was captained by Admiral Zheng He. Zheng He’s fleet that is also known as *the Treasure Fleet* had sailed to the Archipelago, India, and Africa.

Apart from the European and Chinese sailors, Malay sailors are also famous in the history of world civilization. Christian Pelras (2006) has depicted the determination of Bugis sailors in the Archipelago sea before the Dutch era. He showed the greatness of these sailors and how they have arrived in Africa earlier than Zheng He and Columbus, i.e. around 5th century (Pelras, 2006).

Adrian B. Lapijan (1987) – a renowned scholar of the history of the Indonesian maritime, and was also famous for this phrase, *nenek moyangku*

adalah pelaut, which means “my ancestors were sailors” – stated that the history of Indonesia was *bahari*. In his speech entitled *Sejarah Nusantara, Sejarah Bahari* (1991), which was written in conjunction with the appointment as a Professor at the Faculty of Arts UI (University of Indonesia) in Jakarta, showed the importance of maritime in the Archipelago that acted as the main background for the formation of the Archipelago history and it was no longer regarded as trivial history.

In his speech, Adrian B. Lopian strongly emphasized that oceans play a significant role in the Archipelago history. Without these oceans, the islands will be seen as individual islands. Here, Adrian B. Lopian proposed that the history of Southeast Asia should be viewed from the global perspective and not as localized history or only the state of the people. The approach applied in the maritime history of Indonesia should view the territories of its waters as factors that will integrate thousands of islands. In his main lecture, Adrian B. Lopian mentioned how the seas of the Archipelago (*Laut Jawa, Laut Flores, Laut Banda, and Laut Sulawesi*) play a vital role in connecting and uniting the people of the mainlands and islands in Indonesia (Lopian, 1991). The result of the ancestors’ sailings showed the expansion of Indonesian language.

In conjunction to this, Adrian B. Lopian has published a few works on the history of maritime (2008 and 2009). In this context, Anugerah Nontji (1987) showed also the greatness and dynamic world of the history. It also talked about *bangsa bahari* and the role of the Archipelago sea in the development of human civilization in Southeast Asia during that era. By analyzing the traditional and modern history of this region, it is clearly showed that countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippine share similar history and maritime culture. Although these countries have gone through a lot of changes through time, still the identity of its history and maritime culture remain the same i.e. not many changes; and this can still be seen today as equal ownership or culture.

Based on the records and writings of the previous scholars, the influence of the ocean, i.e. the Archipelago Ocean, has formed maritime kingdoms and it was known as the main trading road for travellers and trading ships that came from the West through the Hindi Ocean and the East through the Pacific Ocean (*Lautan Teduh*), and also the local *prahus* that involved in various trading activities. For example, the influence of maritime on the history of formation and greatness of the traditional kingdoms of this region (before the colonial era) was clearly explained by a few scholars such as James F. Warren (1985), Kenneth R. Hall (1985), and Anthony Reid (1988).

However, there are a few interesting questions on the relations and connections between the maritime world and the life, thinking and culture of the Malay people, mainly before the Western colonization, that need to be addressed. Among the questions are: (1) How do the ideas of using maritime elements occur in Malay proverbs?; (2) How serious is the effect of this maritime world on the daily life and thinking of the Malay people?; (3) How far these proverbs strengthen and uphold the Malay values that is starting to apply universal values in it?; and (4) Are maritime-based-proverbs still rational from the perspective of pure science and the thinking of the Malay community nowadays?

The first question can be answered by understanding the origin of geo-territories, early formation of the community, and features of traditional civilization that have been developed and remain the same till today. Based on the observation and writings of famous scholars like James F. Warren (1985), Kenneth R. Hall (1985), Anthony Reid (1988), Adrian B. Lapian (2008 and 2009), and others, it can be concluded that the origin of human history, the theories on the formation of the geo-territories, and various other civilization of this region are inseparable; and this is strongly proposed again by Adrian B. Lapian (1987 and 1991) who noted that "our ancestors were sailors" (*nenek moyang kita adalah pelaut*). Before century, especially after the third major flood, around 6,000 BC (Before Christ) which had strike Southeast Asia and marked the end of Ice Age, the ancient people who had sailing skills from the mainland (Yunan), Taiwan, and islands surrounding the Pacific Ocean had sailed the seas and oceans to arrive at the islands that were known as the Malay Archipelago or the Southeast Asia.

In other words, the seas and oceans of the lands in this region were the only way out for them to do massive migration through sailings and this has resulted in the development of new civilization known as the *Nusanto Civilization* of the lands they landed around 5,000 BC. These sailors are called nomadic sailors and traders of the Archipelago.

To answer the second question, it is very essential to analyze the background of the Malay people who have become sailors and made the coastal areas as their early settlements. These settlements were eventually expanded to empires and trading centres of this region. Starting with the Hindu-Buddha empires led by Srivijaya in Sumatera and Majapahit in Java around 6th century, and then later the Islamic empires beginning in the 14th century led by Samudra Pasai, Aceh, Malacca, Johor-Riau, Brunei, Sulu, and many others, the Malay community had become the famous sailors and had applied maritime activities such as fishing, building *prahus* and ships,

and trading in the Archipelago areas as the centre of their life.

Next, the third question as to how the proverbs have sustained the Malay values that are slowly adopting universal values to it can be answered because the use of these maritime and universal elements will only further enrich the proverb itself. It does not change the values instilled in the proverbs. Finally, to answer the fourth question, it is still rational because maritime activities are still relevant to the Malay people.

THE EXAMPLES OF MARITIME-BASED-PROVERBS

The maritime elements are still seen in nearly all of the Malay proverbs, i.e. in the form of *perumpamaan*, *pepatah*, *bidalan*, *perbilang*, *lidah pendeta* (wisdom phrase), *kiasan*, *ibarat*, *tamsil*, and *simpulan bahasa*. Below are the lists of Malay proverbs that have applied maritime elements for the enrichment of words, language style, meaning, and values.

First, on the "Perumpamaan". It is a type of proverb that shows comparison. It has lessons and values attached to it, and this proverb will normally begin with words such as *ibarat*, *laksana*, *seperti*, *macam*, and *umpama*. Among its examples are "*bagai aur dengan tebing*" which means working as a group; "*bagai ombak purus*" (loud situation); "*ibarat pasir, sekali air bah sekali berubah*" (changes can happen in split second); "*ibarat perahu takan karam sebelah*" (any loss in business will be shared); "*laksana terung bertunang ikan kering*" (very compatible); "*seperti batu di pulau*" (many); "*seperti belut pulang ke lumpur*" (return to hometown); "*seperti ikan kena tuba*" (getting sick or massive deaths in a place); and "*seperti udang, tahi di kepala*" (moron or heavy with debts).

Second, on the "Pepatah". It refers to concise and brief phrases that have moral values and advices for the Malay people of the past and now. Among its examples, using the maritime elements are: "*ada laut, ada perompak*" (everything in this world has its pair/partner); "*ada biduk, serempu*" (unsatisfied with what he or she has); "*ada pasang, ada surutnya*" (there is loss and there is also win-win situation); "*ada air adalah ikan*" (if there is a state, there will be subjects); "*adat teluk, timbunan kapal*" (people with position and influence will normally become the centre of complaint); "*air besar sampan tak hanyut*" (wealth and greatness should not be talked about); and "*asal berinsang ikanlah*" (do not be too choosy in job selection, food or drinks).

There are other proverbs including "*dayung sudah di tangan, perahu sudah di air*" (your wishes are all granted); "*kalau takut dilambung ombak, janganlah berumah di tepian pantai*" (if you are afraid of taking risks, it is better to stay away from it); "*bagai ikan pulang ke lubuk*"

(return to your hometown); "*air tawar secawan dituang ke laut takkan dapat menghilangkan rasa masinnnya*" (a small help will not change the responsibility that we hold); "*ada pasang ada surut*" (there are times that we will lose, and there are times that we will win); "*ada sampan hendak berenang*" (purposely seeking problems when there are actually ways to overcome the problems); "*ada udang disebalik batu*" (hidden agenda); and "*air besar sampan tak hanyut*" (unachievable dreams).

These proverbs are further enriched with these phrases, e.g. "*air setitik di lautan tanak sekepal di pergunungan*" (small matters); "*air tenang jangan disangka tiada buaya*" (passive people are sometimes useful); "*banyak udang banyak garam, banyak orang banyak ragam*" (each person has their own views); "*berakit-rakit ke hulu, berenang-berenang ke tepian, bersakit-sakit dahulu, bersenang-senang kemudian*" (we will experience difficulty before we gain success); "*butuk perahu, buruk pangkalan*" (a divorced man will not go back to his ex-wife's house); "*garam di laut asam di darat, bertemu dalam belanga*" (if we are fated to be together, we will eventually be together at the end); "*ikan belum dapat, airnya sudah keruh*" (things worsen even before the job is done); and "*ikan di hulu, tuba di hilir*" (futile efforts).

Next, "*ikan terkilat, jala tiba*" (quickly understand the meaning stated by a person); "*jong pecah, yu yang kenyang*" (there will be people gaining benefits during commotion); "*kalau kail panjang sejengkal, jangan lautan dalam hendak diduga*" (if you are still novice, do not try to advice a pro); "*kuman di seberang laut nampak, gajah di depan mata tidak nampak*" (you can notice other people's fault but you cannot see your own flaws); "*lain biduk lain digalang*" (the answers are the opposites of the questions), "*laut madu berpantalkan sarak*" (good speech comes from good people), "*laut mana tak berombak, bumi mana yang tidak ditimpa hujan*" (nobody with no mistakes), "*laut tidak membuang sungai, rimba tidak membuang latak*" (do not refuse people's wishes); and "*membuang garam ke laut*" (be courteous to rich people).

The proverbs are further enriched with the elements, i.e. "*ombak kedengaran, pasirnya tiada kelihatan*" (you have heard the news but there is no hard evidence on the news); "*ombak yang kecil jangan diabaikan*" (dangerous matters should always be watched over although they are trivial); "*padang perahu di lautan, padang hati di fikiran*" (think first before you react); "*pandai menyelam di air dangkal*" (know how to behave); "*penyu bertelur beratus-ratus senyap, ayam bertelur sebiji riuh sekampung*" (people who work silently yield more benefits than people who love to tell people about his works); "*perahu papan bernuat intan*" (something that should

not be partnered together); "*sambil menyelam minum air*" (doing two jobs at one time); and "*sekali air bah, sekali pasir berubah*" (things will change according to situations).

In addition, "*setitik di lautan, sekepal di bukitkan*" (small things are being exaggerated); "*siput memuji buntut*" (self praise); "*tak akan pasang selalu, di mana surut sentiasa*" (there are times in life that we will suffer hardships and there are times in life that we will experience ease); "*tak sunggung seluang melaut, akhirnya balik ke tepi juga*" (explorers will surely return to their hometown); "*terlajak perahu boleh diundur, terlajak kata buruk padahnya*" (be careful in your speech so that it will not hurt those who listen to it); "*umpan habis, ikan tak dapat*" (the efforts done yield no results); "*umpan seumpan, kail sebertuk*" (worthless efforts that have no proper preparations); and "*apung di tengah lautan dipukul ombak, sekejap ke tengah sekejap ke tepi* (poor explorers).

Lastly, "*walau ikan diam di dalam tujuh lautan sekalipun, termasuk ke dalam pukuk juga*" (even a saint makes mistakes); "*sebab mutiara sebiji, lautan yang dalam diselam orang*" (regardless of where a knowledgeable person live, people will still look for him or her); "*lautan dalam dapat diduga, hati manusia siapa tahu*" (it is difficult to know what people think); "*lautan dalam sudah diselami, inikan pula air dalam terang*" (once you have faced more difficult matters, small matters can easily be handled); and there are few others.

Third, on the "Bidalan". This proverb shows comparison and lessons that have moral values and intelligent meaning. The phrases are brief and can easily be remembered. Among the *bidalan* are "*biduk lalu, kiambang bertaut*" (a person who gets involved in other people's dispute will receive a bad reputation although the people he was managed to solve the dispute); "*biru seperti laut*" (very blue); "*dalam macam lautan*" (very deep); "*gelora macam lautan*" (agitated); and "*luas seperti lautan*" (so gigantic). The phrases spoken by the wise people are also influenced by the maritime elements such as "*padang perahu di laut, padang fikiran di hati*" (think carefully before doing) and "*telah menyelam lautan yang dalam*" (has a lot of experience).

MARITIME PROVERBS AS MIRRORS AND TASAWWUR OF THE MALAY PEOPLE

Further analysis shows that Malay proverbs mirror and contain the worldview of the Malay people – their values, purpose in life, manners, and traditional teaching methods using natural elements as means to deliver various meanings such as being humble, being nice to other people, be

careful, the importance of relationships, rational and loss and gains, and others. As an ethnic that places great importance of dignity and self image, the Malay ancestors try not to advise people bluntly as an act to save their face.

This means that Malays at that time always used proverbs in their daily conversations. However, this does not mean that Malays are afraid to tell the truth. This is merely the result of the Malay culture that gives a lot of emphasis on saving face or saving one's dignity. Next, although there are proverbs that are too difficult to understand, still these proverbs show great personalities and Malay values conforming to the context of that time. To ensure that the purpose is met and nobody gets hurt in the process of advising, delivering the meaning indirectly using the elements of nature, be it on land and sea, seemed to be the best way.

By using certain words and extravagant language style, the meaning can be delivered pleasantly and hurting someone's feeling can be avoided, as a proverb says "*menarik rambut dalam tepung*" (message is successfully delivered and people accept the message gladly). In this context, Asmah Omar (1986) showed the language elements as the illustrations on how Malay thinks within the Malay context itself. Zurinah Hassan (1999) and Hashim Awang (2003) showed also the influence of nature in the literature works and verbal poems of the Malay community.

PROBLEMS IN UNDERSTANDING THE ELEMENT OF MARITIME USED IN TODAY'S MALAY PROVERBS

As explained earlier, although the culturing of proverbs among the Malay people has long existed and continuously exist in today's world, the culturing of these elements in the proverbs, especially in the daily conversation, may not be similar to the proverbs of those days. Today, the culturing of proverbs among the youngsters is only restricted in classrooms and it is learnt mainly for exam purposes. This raises the idea on why this phenomenon occurs, even though Malay people know that this tradition should be preserved. Among the main reasons contributing to this idea is that people are no longer realizing their relations with seas and oceans.

During the ancient days, Malays perceive these elements as a part of them. But now, it is marginalized especially by the city folks who perceive seas and oceans as something individual. Moreover, the traditional words of these elements, like "*biduk, jung, dondang, lancing, penjabab, bayu*" (traditional tools for fishing, fish's names), and many others are not popular and always regarded as alien. This results in the use of new names and words align with the modernization of the Malay language. For example,

today's society prefers to use "boat" (loan word from English) instead of *prahu*. They also know about "cyanide" more than *getah tuba*; they also know "salmon" and "tilapia" more than *ikan puyu* and *ikan temakul*; they also know "parrots" and "cranes" more than *burung nuri* and *burung bangau*; and so on.

However, the maritime proverbs are very important for the Malay people. Today, the proverbs created by the Malay people can be perceived and defined as a tradition that serves to educate, advise, inspire, ponder, and be sarcasm to people. Yet, the proverbs are actually encouraging people to think critically. Hence, this is misunderstood and questioned by today's community that has labelled proverbs as irrational in pure maritime science, ridiculous, inaccurate, incorrect, and others.

Among the proverbs that are critically criticised are: "*ketam mengajar anaknya berjalan dengan betul*"; "*ada air adalah ikan*"; "*kuman di seberang laut nampak, gajah di depan mata tidak nampak*"; "*sambil menyelam minum air*"; "*siput memuji buntut*"; and "*walaupun ikan diam di dalam tujuh lautan sekalipun, termasuk ia ke dalam pukot juga*". For instance, "*ketam mengajar anaknya berjalan dengan betul*" is scientifically wrong because matured crabs are surprisingly walking sideways, and because of this walk, they are not supposed to teach the young ones to walk properly. That is why the modern and scientific community question the authenticity of this idea.

In relation to this, one can question the different views on this matter. Did our ancestors create these proverbs out of nowhere without applying the universality of the knowledge they have? Or it has come to a point that sarcasms are no longer applicable in this modern world? Is it necessary for us to be straight forward like the Western community? All of these questions show that the conflict of thoughts stems from the lack of understanding about the Malay people, their relations with the ancient maritime history, their thinking style and cosmology, the Malay values, and also the self esteem of the Malay people.

The history has proven that Malays are very traditional; they still maintain their tradition, like a proverb says: "*biar mati anak, jangan mati adat*". For the Malays, customs and traditions are important. They are not selfish and are fully aware of the social illnesses affecting their youngsters. For these reasons, Malays have come up with a harmonious way that is not based on scientific research, but merely depends on their critical thinking – they are able to combine various pure scientific elements, cosmology, culture, philosophy, psychology, moral values, and ethics in this life. For Malays, individual perfection does not only based on thinking style, educational background, positions and others, but also based on moral

values, esthetical values, feelings, self dignity, politeness, friendships, pride, moral, and others; and all these cannot be expressed through scientific methods and monetary terms.

Thus, the culturing of proverbs using maritime elements among the Malay community can be said to have the content of thinking, life philosophies and their manifestation of the surroundings, and critical thinking; and all these are expressed beautifully and interestingly through the language. This is shown when they are able to apply maritime elements to symbolize and enrich the language as well as to form Malay ethnic group that will be proud of their origin and persona.

CONCLUSION

The culturing of the maritime elements in Malay proverbs among the traditional Malays clearly shows the strong influence of this element, be it in the language, lifestyle, and formation of the Malay civilization. Based on this article, many of the maritime-based-proverbs contain moral values, prides, and reminder for the Malay community on how they should live their life. It is also found that these proverbs are created based on knowledge, observation, and experiences. For instance, Malays, at one time, were known as seaman, sailors, and traders who had gone through various experiences (bad or good), e.g. sinking ships, drowning in the sea, losing houses due to rough waves, and this is expressed in this proverb: *"jong karam, hiu yang kenyang"* and *"jika takut dilambung ombak, jangan berumah di tepian pantai"*.

Apart from gaining life experiences, the maritime-based-proverbs also apply things related to land or general meanings, for example: *"umpama ketam mengajar anaknya berjalan dengan betul"* (it is scientifically wrong because matured crabs are surprisingly walking sideways, and because of this walk, they are not supposed to teach the young ones to walk properly); *"walau ikan diam di dalam tujuh lautan sekalipun, termasuk ke dalam pukut juga"* (even a saint makes mistakes); *"lautan dalam dapat diduga, hati manusia siapa tahu"* (it is difficult to know what people think); *"kuman di seberang laut nampak, gajah di depan mata tidak nampak"* (you can notice other people's fault but you cannot see your own flaws); *"kalau kail panjang sejengkal, jangan lautan dalam hendak diduga"* (if you are still novice, do not try to advice a pro); and many others.

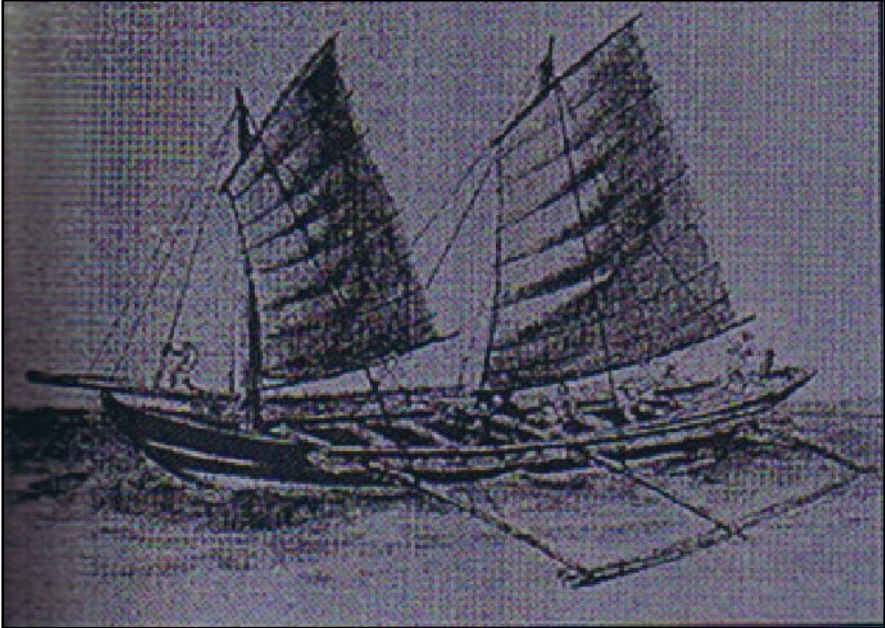
This preliminary observation found that the existence and culturing of the maritime-based-proverbs illustrate the close relationship between the traditional Malays and oceans as well as lands; it shows the high intellectuality and Malay civilization, which at the end promoted them to

kato pusaka by the Malay-Minangkabau. Besides that, the importance of the oceans to the development of Malay civilization in the 18th and 19th centuries has also influenced them in making these proverbs at that time. The form and beauty of this style, which are universal and “friendly”, will further enhance the Malay proverb; and this can be achieved as long as Malays apply the lesson taught in the proverbs. To conclude, the use of proverbs in conversation by the Malay community can avoid misunderstandings and strengthen the bond among them.

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The Local *Prahu* in Malay Archipelago

(Source: James F. Warren, 1985).

Besides that, the importance of the oceans to the development of Malay civilization in the 18th and 19th centuries has also influenced them in creating these proverbs at that time.