

EIGHT

Some Philippine Tales Compared with Parallels in North Borneo

Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the cultural links and affinities between the Philippines and Borneo is the presence of parallel or similar tales that are found in these two proximate localities. Our knowledge, however, of this field of study is comparatively limited owing perhaps to the rather unusual interest given by Philippine and Bornean scholars to other areas of research in the South East Asian locus.

The present paper is based upon a limited number of materials which have come to our notice from North Borneo. These materials may serve to stir interest in the further study of the folk-literatures of this area.

Of the many folk-tale characters or heroes in the North Bornean tales, the P'landok (Malay, Pelandok¹) occupies a prominent place. A series of tales are told of this folk-tale hero, which have parallels in the Philippine folk-literatures. These series of tales show a peculiar folk-tale character trait or motif that is comparatively widespread. From this trait or motif, we may draw parallels in Philippine or Bornean folk-literatures. Moreover, these tales may be taken as variants of one another.

The folk-tale trait or motif that has been referred to above is the bluff² character, which as it will be illustrated by the parallel tales, may be divided into two categories: the use of the bluff to put the arrogant to shame, and the use of the "psychique bluff."³ While these two categories may be classified into one-psychique bluff, it may be emphasised that the tales under the first category have a peculiarity which distinguishes them from those of the second. Moreover, the second group also possess another peculiarity, that is distinct and unusual.

A. The Use of the Bluff to Put the Arrogant to Shame

For a very convenient presentation of the tales falling under this category, the North Bornean (Bajau and Dusun) will be utilized. The general theme of this tale, including those found in the

Philippines, is the race between the fleet animal and the slow one, in which the latter comes out as the victor.⁴

The North Borneo version commences with the introduction that "when the P'landok had cheated all the strong animals and had brought their deaths, he wished to have a contest of wits with an animal who considered himself clever," so he went in search of one. Finally, he found one in the person of the Omong, the hermit crab. The Omong said to him, "...P'landok, all the strong animals have been killed by your cunning, but if you like to try your wits against mine, I am ready." "Very well," said P'landok, "that is what I am looking for, animals who consider themselves long-headed, but how would you like to compete with me?" "I would like to race with you," said the Omong, "and if you win, I will acknowledge your cleverness and your power of running." "What? You want to race with me?" said the P'landok, "you can only walk side-ways on the sand, and you don't race with your body only, for you have to carry a shell as well." So the P'landok felt shame to run a race with the Omong but he said, "When do we race?" "Tomorrow," replied the Omong..." Thus, they agreed. The Omong suggested that they race along a square course from post to post. On the morrow, the race started, but antecedent to that the Omong selected three of his followers, like himself in appearance and size, and told them to bury themselves in the sand by the corners of the race course, but to leave the starting point to the Omong, and instructed them further that when the P'landok called as he reached the post they will come out when he calls out "Omong" and answer "Yes."

The parallel tales found in the Philippines, and showing the central matrix of the motif, are perhaps variant forms (which variations will presently be discussed in some detail.) There are four tales citable: Two Tagalog, One Mountain Province; and the Fourth, a Pampango tale, which is actually a variant of the Second Tagalog tale. As a basis of the subsequent comparative analysis, I cite here the synopses of each.

The Tale from the Mountain Province⁵

"One day, while sunning himself on the bank of a river, a shell saw a deer coming towards him. "Fine day for a race, isn't it?" he called. "Yes," replied the deer, "but with whom can I race?" "With

me," suggested the shell. "With you?" asked the deer as though he could not believe his ears. "Yes, with me," replied the shell. "Why not?" "Don't be silly," said the deer with a scorn. "Who gave you the idea that you can run as fast as I can?" "Not as fast as you," corrected the shell, "but faster than you." "Now, you are crazy," said the deer. "I am not," persisted the shell. "The trouble with you is that you are too sure of yourself. Why don't you try and find out?" "Are you serious?" asked the deer. "Of course, I am serious," said the shell. "All right then," said the deer, "On your mark, get set, go!" So saying, the deer ran as fast as he could. After a while, it said, "Are you there, shell?" "Klick," said the shell. The deer was surprised. It was plain that the shell was running as fast as she was. He must therefore run faster to win the race. Thus the deer exerted more and more effort. But every time she asked, "Are you there?", the shell would reply, "Klick". This drove the deer frantic. And so, although already very tired, she kept running and running - until she fell into the water and drowned.

The First Tagalog Tale⁶

The deer grazing in the forest came upon a snail crawling on a leaf of a reed. He stopped grazing and intently watched the slow-moving snail. Moments later, he addressed the latter, "How slowly you move! Why don't you learn to walk fast? "Look at me, I am always hunted by dogs, but because I can ran fast, I am not at their mercy. But if you are chased by any kind of enemy, what would happen to you? Certainly, you will be killed." Having heard what the deer had said, the snail looked at him: his robust, healthy appearance, his long legs, and his sinewy muscles. It desired to be like the deer, so that it can run swiftly. But it thought that even if it forces itself to run, it would be hopeless. Thus, the snail said to the deer, "You are proud. You do not know what one with desire can do. I challenge you to a race from here to the river's mouth." The deer laughed aloud and replied, "Why do you think you can beat me? Perhaps you will cheat!" The snail replied that it will not, and so that there will be no room for deceit, they agreed that they should call upon one of their friends to be the judge. They called upon the Kalaw (the hornbill, *Hydrocorax hydrocorax*, L.) who was to watch the proceedings.

As their race commenced, the snail was far behind. While running the deer came upon a lush grazing field. He thought that while he had a wide lead, he will graze awhile, and when he sees the

snail coming he will start running again. But after grazing, he was attacked by sloth. He lay down to sleep thinking he will wake up before the snail passes by. But as he slept, the snail passed. Waking up in the late evening, he ran as fast as he could towards the river; there he was met by the snail and their judge. "You are beaten," pronounced the judge.

The Second Tagalog Tale⁷

The carabao (water buffalo) despises the turtle for his slow movements. To get even, the turtle challenges the former to a race. The carabao is reluctant to accept the challenge, because he thinks it is a disgrace to race against a turtle. But the turtle threatens to tell the other animals that the carabao is a coward. The carabao accepts the challenge, but defers the race for three days, which turns to the advantage of the turtle. They decide to race over seven hills. During his three-day delay, the clever turtle visited seven of his friends and asked each to help him. He stationed each on a hill, at the same time giving the necessary instructions.

The day of the race came, and the contestants met on the appointed hill. The race started; no sooner did the turtle disappear. At every hill, the carabao sees his opponent ahead of him. On the seventh hill, he was convinced that he had been defeated.

The Pampanga Version⁸

The snail challenges the deer to a race; it stations its friends at intervals along the way. Every time the deer stops and calls out to see where his antagonist is, a small snail answers from a spot a few yards ahead of him. At the end of the course, the defeated deer falls fainting.

TALE	HERO	VILLAIN	RACE COURSE
Bornean	Omong	P'landok	Square lot with post each corner
PHILIPPINES			Along a river
Mt. Province	Shell	Deer (ugsa)	bank

Tagalog-1	: Snail (susong)	: Deer (usa)	: To the mouth of
	:	:	: the river
Tagalog-2	: Turtle	: Carabao	: Over seven hills
	: (pagong)	:	:
Tagalog variant	: Snail (susong)	: Deer (usa)	:
Pampang version)	:	:	:

The foregoing table gives a graphic idea of the significant points on the study of parallel elements in both the Bornean and Philippine tales. It cannot be denied that the tales' development run along parallel lines, which, in significant details, however, show slight deviations. These deviations may have been due to the temperament of the people who possess these tales, as it is seen in the tales coming from the Philippines, e. g., taking as illustrations Tagalog - 1 and Tagalog - 2 tales.

Tagalog-2, and its variant (Pampanga) perhaps show much earlier Philippine versions that manifest exact parallel elements with the Bornean, i. e., the tale heroes in their triumph are aided by two or more of their kind: the Omong by three other Omongs of his size and colour; the turtle (Tagalog-2) by seven other turtles; and the snail (Tagalog variant, Pampanga), by friends placed at intervals along the race course.

Even more significant is the delay that the Omong requested from the P'landok. This is utilized by the former in contacting his friends. This implies that the Omong had intentions to use his cunning, and prey upon the gullibility of the P'landok. The delay in the Philippine tale is, however, requested by the Carabao, which in all respects turns out to the advantage of the Turtle. While these two tales show a marked difference in this particular event, it can safely be surmised that these two tales have a common source. The Tagalog Variant (Pampanga) though it does not show the incident, suggests a delay for it is expressly pointed out that the snail placed his friends at intervals along the race course.

The other Philippine versions show later developments. We do not find in these tales the aid of friends or the hero's ilk in obtaining victory. Perhaps this element was eliminated for reasons we are unable to discover. However, the absence of this element may be attributed to the failure of the narrators to have understood the

significance of this element, if the sources of their narrative are the Tagalog-2 and/or its variant. The triumph of the snail, in Tagalog-1 tale, is due to the sloth of the deer. Moreover, there is another deviation from the normal ending of the tale: the appearance of the judge, which is not found in the other tales. This apparently is another late interpolation. These tales may, however, come from the same source as the locus classicus and the other Philippine tales under this section.

All these tales appear to be variant, if not versions of the Malay tale which tells of the race between the king-crow and the water snail, in which the latter comes out as the victor.⁹

B. The Use of the Psychique Bluff

The peculiar element of the motif's use referred to above is the employment of either the innocent or the intended bluff. We shall distinguish these two alternative elements after we have given the synopsis of each tale.

Under this section there are only three Bornean tales which draw our attention to parallel tales in the Philippines. I. "The P'landok and the Gergasi".¹⁰ The P'landok contrives to bind the Gergasi (a mythical demon who carries his spear on his shoulder, and tusks project from his mouth) by pretending that the strands of rattan vine he was stripping were to be used by him with which to go into the well, for the sky is going to fall. By so doing, he is saved from the catastrophe. The gergasi persuades the mousedeer, who is only too willing to bind him, after which he is pushed into the well. There, he is killed.

Parallel Philippine tales possessing the central matrix of this motif are found in various localities of the Islands. (a) "Suac and his Adventures".¹¹ Suac forbids the Pugut (black giant) to step on the fresh grass telling the latter that it is for the former's animal's feed. But the fresh grass covers a pit into which Pugut falls and dies. (b) "The Three Friends."¹² This tale appears to be a close variant of the Bornean tale. Dog and Carabao dig up a pit into which they intended to kill Bungis-ngis (a giant), instead they were killed in the attempt. The Monkey, the third in the company, contrives to push the giant into the pit where it dies.¹³

(c) "The Monkey and Juan Pusong Tambi-tambi":¹⁴ Three Buring-Cantadas (demons who feed on human flesh) were buried to death by the Monkey by bluffing that the realm (kingdom) is being besieged by the enemy.

From Lanao, we have two tales which also manifest the central matrix of the motif. (a) "Pilandok and Arimaoga":¹⁵ Pilandok encounters Arimaoga, the lion, who jumps upon Pilandok intending to devour him. Pilandok pleads for his life promising Arimaoga that he will save him from catastrophe that will soon fall upon the earth. The lion incredulous of the powers of the Pilandok proceeds to make a feast of our hero's flesh, but was later convinced that his safety depended upon the Pilandok. The Pilandok takes him to a tree and tells him to stand on his hind legs so that he can be tied secure with strands of rattan upon the tree. The lion by his gullibility is tied and left to die.

(b) "The Dog and the Lion":¹⁶ The Lion, hungry and emaciated, comes upon a dog, aims to eat the latter. The dog, afraid but calm of mind, convinced the former that all lions are already in his prison houses by showing the lion small ponds of water which reflected the image of the lion. Credulous of this ruse, the acclaimed king of the jungle with his tail between his legs fled from the dog.

II. "The P'landok and the Tiger":¹⁷ The P'landok bluffs the Tiger into believing that he was guarding the coiled snake which he called the raja's orut (scarf-like cloth for swathing the body esp. the belly during war.) The Tiger uncoils the snake, and winding it around his body, he was bitten and crushed to death, after the P'landok had gone far and had bluffed that the raja's permission had already been obtained; permitting the Tiger to wear the orut.

We have so far only one Philippine tale which parallels the above tale. "The Monkey and the Turtle":¹⁸ Monkey, burning with the fire of revenge, seeks Turtle. He find the latter beside a large snake hole. Turtle pretends he is guarding the king's belt. Monkey desires to wear the belt. Presently, the snake comes out, Monkey seizes it, but the snake coils around him. He is crushed to death.¹⁹

III. "P'landok and the Bear".²⁰ Having disposed of the Tiger, the P'landok went in search of the Bear. Presently, he came upon a bees' nest in a tree. He sat nearby to wait. Not long after the Bear came asking him what he was doing. Pointing at the nest, he replied that he was guarding the raja's tawag-tawag (a large gong). Curious

about how the tawag-tawag would sound, he asked if he could sound it. P'landok answered that he will have to ask the raja's permission. When he had gone to some distance, he called out that the permission was granted. The Bear struck the nest. The bees coming in fury stung him to death.

The Philippine tale: "Pilandok and Sumuson sa Alongan":²¹ Walking in the forest, Pilandok comes upon a huge honeycomb. He examines it, but he is puzzled. So he sits under it, and watches in amazement. Presently, Sumuson sa Alongan (stopper of the sun's rays) arrives, and enquires of Pilandok what he is staring at. The latter replies that he is staring at and at the same time guarding an heirloom, a wishing heirloom. Curious about the powers of the heirloom, Sumuson trades in his bags of gold, a magic horse, and his sword. Pilandok leaves on the pretext that he would not want to incur the displeasure of his ancestors from whom he received the inheritance. Sumuson then makes his wish, then another, but nothing happened. Angered by the ineffectivity of the heirloom, he lashes at the object, which falls upon the ground, thus breaking it into pieces. The bees in their fury sting Sumuson sa Alongan who barely escapes with his life.

C. The peculiarity that was pointed out in the early part of this section may now be discussed. At a glance, the folktales do not show the employment of the innocent bluff (or deceit), but the intentional bluff, which plays upon the gullibility of the bluffed. This also involves working upon the bluffed's considerable inability to use his own understanding of the issue at hand. Moreover, this involves preying upon the entire subtle psychique elements in the bluffed's mental structure.

The three Bornean tales and the parallel Philippine folk-stories may now be compared. The FIRST GROUP of tales under this section shows similarity of plot development, although we find interpolations in the various roles of the characters. It is, however, significant to note that the Bornean tale and the second Philippine tale (b) (Batangas) cited show similar or parallel tale structures. It seems, as we have occasioned to remark, that this tale is a variant of the Bornean, although it may be surmised that they may have a common folk-literature origin. The Lanao tales, however, while

showing the central idea of the motif, appear to deviate from the tale framework as illustrated in the Bornean and second Philippine tales. The plots in these two Lanao tales have the following scheme of development: hero encounters the villain, who, hungry and weak, prepares to eat the former, but is killed, or deceived into believing that the villain is about to fall into the hands of the hero as a prisoner. The scheme of development of the Bornean and other Philippine tales is, the hero contrives to dispose off the villain by pretending that he is binding himself, then enters a pit for the world is coming to end; the villain believing the ruse, convinces the hero, who is only too willing to comply with his request.

Significant in our study of parallelism in Bornean and Philippine folk-literatures are the paradigms: the P'landok and the Gergasi" (Bornean) and the "The Three Friends" [the Second Philippine tale (b)]. In these tales, we find exactly similar plot developments. In the Bornean, the hero undertakes to kill the Gergasi after his friend - the Bufallo, and the Horse (the Bull, the Stag, the Dog, and the Kijang, who refuse to undertake the task) - fail to dispose of the Bungis-ngis, but this is accomplished by monkey by using the same method as the P'landok had used.

The SECOND GROUP of tales show exact parallels. The P'landok in the Bornean tale becomes the turtle in the Philippine story, while the Tiger in the Bornean story becomes the monkey in the Philippine tale. Both the villains are deceived into wearing the snake as the king's orut (Borneo) and the king's belt (Philippines). The bluff is accomplished by the employment of the intentional deceit.

In the THIRD GROUP of tales we find the heroes in their perennial conflict with the villains. Here the Pilandok (P'landok) pretends that the bees's nest was the wishing heirloom (tawag-tawag) of the raja. While there are one or two points of difference between the two tales, in general scheme, both manifest a single frame-story. The variation appears to be in the P'landok's "willingness" to let the Bear sound the tawag-tawag upon obtaining the raja's "permission", while the Pilandok barter the wishing heirloom for sacks of gold, a horse, and a sword. Another point of difference is the bear's death when he is stung by the bees that he disturbed by beating the nest, while Sumuson sa Alongan barely escapes death, after he whacks at the honeycomb because it did not yield his wish.

D. Perhaps one of the significant points in this attempted study at drawing parallels between the Philippine and the Bornean folk-literatures is the presence of seemingly similar names of heroes - the P'landok and the Pilandok. The Bornean P'landok may certainly be the Malay Pelandok, "the mouse-deer" (vide *Endnote* 1). However, the Philippine (Lanao) Pilandok has been described by Abdullah T. Madale as a "sea-horse".²² Mr. Madale further equates Juan Tamad with the Pilandok, which seems to imply that the Pilandok would have similar or the same characteristics as the former. It would, however, be safer to take Madale's words with caution on the ground that future research may yet have something to say about this equation. Moreover, it may be assumed that Juan Tamad, certainly belonging to a later cycle of folk-stories in the Philippine literature, possesses story elements that may have been drawn from a much older cycle of folk-tales, like, for example, the Maranaw Pilandok cycle. Upon this assumption, we may further point out that Juan Tamad is a modern Tagalog adaptation of the Pilandok character.

For the present, it may be well to assume that the Bornean and Philippine P'landok, respectively, are variant forms in the phonetic structure, semantic origin, and tale characteristics - of the Malay Pelandok. Moreover, the assumption that the Bornean P'landok and the Philippine (Maranaw) Pilandok are variant forms of the Malay Pelandok suggests strong evidence of contacts between these localities, particularly between Southern Philippines and North Borneo. It further gives us insights into the early relations between the North Bornean coastal regions and the Southern Philippines, if not all the Islands.²³

E. The present writer wishes to conclude this short paper by citing in full one Pilandok tale from Lanao, though at present we have not as yet found its Bornean parallel - if there were any. It is hoped, however, that a parallel tale or one similar character trait will soon be discovered.

Pilandok Goes to Market²⁴

"There once lived in the kingdom of Agamaniyog, Pilandok and his wife. Pilandok was hardworking but halfwitted. One day his wife asked Pilandok to go to the market to buy salt.

"Obedient as usual, Pilandok took a basket and went to the nearby market. He bought salt which he wrapped in a banana leaf and placed in the basket. Then started his journey home. One the way, however, he had to cross a river. He waded, and when the water reaches his waist, the banana leaf was torn, sending the salt into the river. Pilandok was broken-hearted.

"He said, "Poor salt, why did I have to imprison it in a banana leaf? Now it wants to get out and go home ahead of me. Well, I better drop all of it into the river." Pilandok dropped the basket and went on.

"As he continued walking, his shirt got caught by a hanging twig. Pilandok took it off and left it on the twig, saying, "Please tell my wife that I will come home a little bit late. Tell her to wash you too."

"It was sunset but Pilandok was not home yet. So his wife got impatient. She thought that something bad had happened to her husband, However, in a few minutes after the lamps were lighted, Pilandok arrived home.

"Did you get the salt and my shirt? Pilandok asked his wife.

"No," she answered. "Where did you put them?"

So Pilandok told the story.

"You are really a nit-wit," Pilandok's wife told her husband. "Now we will have no salt for our viand and no shirt to cover your skin"....Pilandok got a good tongue-lashing from his wife that night."

ENDNOTES

1 In Malay folk-lore, it is the mouse-deer, a four-footed animal that lives in the woods and is very small, about the size of a dog. It is believed that in the old days, it was very wise and much more clever than all the animals. It had the power of speech.

2 Vide and Cf., Norman Brown, "Vyaghramari, The Lady Tiger Killer: A Study of the Motif of Bluff in Hindu Fiction", *American Journal of Philology*, vol. xiii, p. 122-151.

3 Vide and Cf., the present writer's *Indian Influences in the Philippines*, University of Madras, August 1960, p. 343- 346.

4 Cf. P. O. Bodding, *Folk-tales of the Santal Parganas*, "The Elephants and the Ants", p. 329. Also C. H. Bompas, *Folklore of Santal Parganas*, No. cxv-"The Elephants and the Ants, p. 328. *The Orientalist*, i, p. 87-88; R. O. Winstedt, "Indian Origin of Malay Folktales", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Straits Branch*, No. lxxxii, p. 124, et. seq.

5 Mallari, Tale 80, "The Shell and the Deer", p. 150-151.

6 Bloomfield, Text 2 "Ang Pagtakbuhan nang Usa at ang Suso," p. 18-19 (in his *Tagalog Texts with Grammatical Analysis*. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1917).

7 Fansler, No. 82 - "The Unequal Match" (Laguna).

8 Ibid. This version is appended as part of the Notes to the Tagalog Tale.

9 Walter Skeat, *Fables and Folktales from an Eastern Forest*, p. 33-35.

10 Evans (2, in Bibliography), p. 119-123.

11 Fansler, No. 4(a) - Pampanga.

12 *ibid.*, No. 4(b) - Batangas.

13 The first paragraphs of the first Bornean tale are summarized as follows: The Buffalo and the Horse had been unsuccessful in guarding the fish from the Gergasi. And the Bull, the Stag, the Dog, and the kijang (barking deer) refused to take their turn for they say it is useless to fight the Gergasi when the stronger animals have been beaten. The P'landok was silent, but he came out with a suggestion that he will take the task of guarding the fish. (vide text, *supra*).

14 Fansler, No. 48(a) - Iloilo.

15 Madale (6, in Bibliography).

16 Madale (5, in Bibliography).

17 Evans, op. cit., (see Bibliography)

18 Fansler, No. 55(b) -Pampanga.

19 In this same tale, Monkey is burned when he ate the chillis, which Turtle said to be "King's fruit" which he is guarding. Vide also Fansler, No. 56(b): Monkey calls the Chillis "bright red bread". Crocodile eats it, and is burned.

20 Evans, op. cit., p. 124-25.

21 Madale (6, in Bibliography).

22 Madale (6, in Bibliography).

23 Cf. Maragtas (8, in Bibliography).

24 Madale (5, in Bibliography). Madale's story is here cited in full with no alterations made.

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In 1971, reference to the origin's of the term Maragtas was made in the Appendix of Juan R. Francisco, *The Philippines and India: Essays in Ancient Cultural Relations* (Manila: National Bookstore Inc. 1971, pp. 157-158). In so far as the etymology of the word is concerned, it does not have any Sanskrit origins nor relations. As of this date no further research has been done on the subject, especially on the text of the folk literature itself.

For more comprehensive discussion of MARAGTAS, see Juan R. Francisco, *Philippine Paleography* (Quezon City: Linguistic Society of the Philippines, 1973). pp. 69-78.