

GSM5550 CROSS CULTURE MANAGEMENT
(Individual Assignment)

MY OWN CULTURE



Symbols, Rituals, Role Models, Values and Assumptions.



I was born in the small family. I was the only daughter among four siblings. As children, we were tight by the rules set by my parents. As a child, i must commit with my parents order. Among the things that I remember most so far is the way I dress up. My daily wear is 'baju kurung', this is because my mother did not want me to dressed up just like my brothers. For her 'baju kurung' is a symbol of Malay women and s he wants me to look polite. I wear 'baju kurung' every day until i finished my secondary school. I change the way I dress accordingly when I go to college. Then I realize that what my parents do is they want me to commit with the religious , until now I never wear something that against our religion. But nowadays, most of parents did not really care how they want their child being dress as long it is still in proper manner and not against their religion. Everything can change; even some rituals, traditions and customs can changes depends on how we adapt



the changes. The changes happen because of globalization and modernization of culture, values and believes.

From kids, we were synonyms by Malay rituals, practices or even values. All the traditions and customs were set by the elders in the family especially parents, grandparents and also religious teacher who had conveyed us. Here are some of the values, practices and also rituals that important in my family that my parents allow me to pass on my children.

1. RESPECT FOR ELDERS.

Shaking Hands

The host may shake hands with the guest using both his hands, rather than in the Western manner with the right hand. The grip of hands is gentler and the shaking less vigorous than in the Western style. Additionally, when a younger person shakes hands with an elder, be it a parent, a teacher or someone else, the younger person also bows down during the handshake, and kisses the upper side of the right hand of the older person. This is to show respect to the elder person. During occasions such as 'Hari Raya' the younger persons in a family may also go down on to the knees and then carry out this handshake as just described. This, however, happens only when the elders are seated.



But nowadays, we ourselves did not allow our children to go down on the knees and carried out this type of handshake. We just want our children know how to respect the elders by bows down during the handshake and kiss the upper side of the right hand of the older person. It still practices until now by the young generation because it was a simple way to show their respects to the elder's generation.

Bow in front the elder person.

My parents always remind me to bow a little to the elder when we want to pass in front of them. By doing that manner, it will show our respect to the eldest and to get permission if we want go through pass them. It is not only practice by the Malays, but people from other race also practicing it. I noticed it when one of our classmate Chan Chi Kian enter the classroom and he want to pass Dr. Asma, he bow down his head a little to get her permission to passing her in front of class.

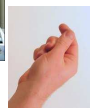
2. BEING POLITE

The Use of the Right Hand.

When we ate something, we used the right hand. It is taboo to use the left hand for eating purposes, even when forks and spoons are used. All good acts, such as holding a copy of the Holy Quran, touching someone, giving or receiving something, are to be done using the right hand. In fact if someone gives or receives something using the left hand this is considered rude.



Similarly when someone wishes to point at another person or at something the right hand is to be used. The actual pointing, however, in the Malay style is done not with the index finger, but with the thumb, the other fingers being folded backwards. Most acts considered good, therefore, are done using the right hand. The left hand is used for less clean functions such as cleaning oneself after going to the toilet.



Footwear to be left outside



Since kids, parents will remind me that, footwear must be removed and left outside before going up the landing or, in the case of modern houses, before entering a house. Muslims are generally very particular about

cleanliness, and therefore it considered best to leave shoes outside the house upon entry for they are likely to bring with them all manner of filth. Most Muslims do not wear footwear in the house. Often common areas of the house, such as the living room, are used for group prayers. Besides this many Muslims actually prefer to sit on the floor instead of sitting on chairs in informal situation. Meals are often eaten sitting on the floor. Much of this culture therefore comes to the Malays from the Islamic tradition. For all these reasons the house has to be completely clean.



3. BEING SHY



Being shy is the social emotion of 'malu'. It was the importance of the concepts for Malay behaviour generally. Malays basically are shy to ask question. Malays reluctance to ask anything because they do not want to be judge that they are disrespects to other person. Being shy also good for the young person, if they do not have the attitude, they will talk a lot and simple say what they want to say and interrupt to others conversations (talk like a parrot) . At last, it will hurt other peoples feeling.

But nowadays, Malays are not conservative anymore. They would say whatever they want to say. They are free to convey their opinion. In the globalization, languages are not the barriers to communicate. By put aside the 'shyness' you can talk to anybody in this world by using current technology. In this globalization world, if we felt shy we will leave behind. But, the value is still there. They would not say something negative towards other people.

4. CLOSE RELATIONSHIP

Our first close relationships aren't even a matter of choice: born into a family, you must learn to adapt to those individuals and they to you. You can pick your friends, goes the saying, but you can't pick your family. This is actually a relief: family members may not choose each other, but they don't (usually) reject each other, either. For example; my family are really united together, when we had to gone through the most painful moment in our life. The moment is when doctor told us that our late mother is suffering liver cancer at stage 4. She only had 3 weeks to 3 months to live. From that moment, I and my siblings will go back to our hometown at Malacca every weekend to give morale support to my mother and father. Until now, even my



mother had passed away almost one year; we still unite together every month. Close relationship not only for family members, Malays like to be part of a group and treated as members of a big family. They are interested to know the personal lives of close friends as it is one way to know them better and create harmonies.

5. INDIRECTNESS

Malays are generally indirect. It would appear impolite to make a request outright, so Malays talk around what they intend to convey in the hope that their message is understood. Indirectness can be also observed in a social setting, like in a marriage. When a man has the intention to marry, the man's parents would make the proposal to the woman's parents. In some cases, the woman does not even know about the proposal until the man's parents come to the woman's house. Just like my father told us his experience, once she knew about my late mother from his friend, he asked my grandparents to propose her without knowing each other. Their marriage remains until my mother last breath. In traditional Malay custom, the proposal is conveyed in poetic verses and rhymes to express their intention to have the girl's hand in marriage for their son. A typical



verse commonly used is, 'it has come to our knowledge that you have a beautiful flower in your garden. Would it be possible for us to pluck the flower for our son? Has anyone owned that flower?' If the receiving party accepts the proposal, then the wedding would be arranged. However, modern Malays today forego the traditional Malay proposal done in poems. The couples choose to decide between them if they want to get married and then leave the formalities of the proposal and wedding arrangement to the parents. From my own experience, my mother in law doing her 'merisik' through one phone calls. They decide to do directly the engagement ceremony without 'merisik' ceremony because we know each other for several years. It was a direct proposal without indirectness.

6. EAR PEIRCING



When I was 5 years old, my parents do the ceremony of piercing of the ear-lobes. It has no religious significance whatsoever, and is thus one of the traditional customary practices (adat). Basically, the ceremony is done to girls between the ages of about five and ten years. With the arrival of close relatives, guests and relatives, who may bring gifts, food is served, the standard fare being specially prepared rice (nasi minyak) and chicken or beef curry, and a syrup drink. Upon the completion of the feast, supplications (doa selamat) are read by a religious official, such as a imam or lebai, if one is present or by anyone else who may be able to do so. Following the feast the invited guests depart.

The actual ear-piercing is done either before or after the feast. Traditionally a woman pierced the ears of the young girl using a type of thorn, and the actual process taking no more than a few seconds.

With modernisation, the traditional manner of doing the ceremony 'Bertindik Telinga' is rare, and in most instances the piercing of the ears is done at jewellery shops or at commercial complexes. Even my daughter did not have any experience in this ceremony, she only done her piercing at the jewellery shops. It will be much easier and faster.



7. WEDDING CEREMONY

All of the people in this world want to get married and have their own memories in the wedding ceremony. They will have the ceremony by their own ritual. For myself, I also had gone through all the traditional rituals to the wedding process. 10 years back, when my husband (groom) families get the agreement by the my (bride) family, the adat 'bertunang' (engagement custom) will be held at the bride's home in a date that has been chosen by the two families.



During the engagement day, we will do exchange of 'hantaran'. It was a dowry or a gift comprises beautifully – wrapped and prepared wedding gifts such as cash, jewellery, clothing and other items. At the first place, we only plan to give the groom only 17th gift. When the time comes, it becomes 27th gifts, this is because my close relatives sponsor a few 'hantaran' for me because I am the only daughter in the family, so they feel happy for me. After that, in my wedding, it's proper begins with the 'akad nikah' (marriage contract) ceremony on Friday, after Friday Prayer. After that, the 'akad nikah' was held at mosque, it continues with 'majlis membatal air sembahyang'. This is essentially a symbol that he now can touch the bride being her lawful husband, where the bride will



handshake and kiss the groom's hand then the groom will kiss the bride's forehead and give her 'mas kahwin' and gift (basically gold ring, bracelet or chain).



At that night, we have the 'berinai' ceremony, which is the dyeing with henna of the

hands, and the feet of the bride. My parent roots were from Malacca, so Malacca people are popular with their 'berinai kecil' and 'berinai besar' ceremony. At 'berinai kecil' ceremony, only the bride with the close family attends the ceremony. Then at night, as requested by my late mother, she wants me to wear Malacca tradition costumes; it called 'sanggul lintang'. The 'mak andam' (make up person) also prepare a few other costumes for me such as Lengga (Indian costume), Cik Siti Wan Kembang (Kelantan's costume), Korean costume and also modern costumes. At 'berinai besar' ceremony, the broom will come to the bride house that night, and celebrate it together with the bride. There are also fire crackers show, the fire cracker was made in the bamboo.



The next day, we had 'majlis bersanding'. During that day, we had 'menepung tawar' ceremony. Where, all the relatives give bless to the broom and bride.



Today, a Malay wedding is indeed an elegant and merry occasion, it is difficult to see the typical traditional one, most of youngsters like to have one with contemporary touches. However, no wedding will be complete without the 'Akad Nikah' custom, which is the most important in the wedding. Followed by 'majlis membatal air sembahyang' then 'bersanding'. There is no longer 'majlis berinai kecil' or 'majlis berinai besar' so the bride and groom will save their cost and it is more relevant nowadays. People are busy working, they can not commit with the 3-4 days leave only for 1 wedding ceremony. Indeed the practising adherents of Islam will avoid these unislamic practices.

Its values, practices and also rituals will face challenges towards culture changes. As we know, globalization, modernization and westernization gave a major impact to any changes including cultures. It will change the language, style, social network or even food. The most important is the value of one culture also would be changed.

Respect Elderly: Young people today, majority of them less respect to the elderly. Even government always do a campaign on 'Budi Bahasa Budaya Kita' but seem like the value is not attached with their heart and manner. The community should help to avoid this matter by giving support to government and be the one who can show and thought the young generation about this value. If we lose this value, Malay will lose their face. This is because Malays were known as kind hearted, polite, soft spoken, friendly, helpful and many more positive values, because of these positive values it will show their positive manner.

Language: Not just Malays, but Chinese and Indians who live in the urban areas especially, have been raised with English speaking environment, adopting those western culture. I can not say it is bad to speak fluent English, but why must we leave the native languages? It is not even shocking today to see a Malaysian who only can speak English, and have no sense or ability at all of speaking their own native language, it is their mother tongue.

Style: It is in our culture, no matter Malays, Chinese or Indian that it is not proper to show off the special body parts of the females, or to wear short skirts and tight shirts, previously in the past. Women or girls nowadays are so dare to be nearly naked; they are proud of it. Why we are losing these good values today, the eastern values? Of course the answer is because of the globalisation. We have become too liberal. We adopt others' cultures and values, and put aside or just throw away our own culture. We should be ashamed. Those values that we have actually were the great ones that what made us special to the westerners.

Social network: One of the most interesting phenomena of globalization is the shaping of online communities. This process has led to the evolution of new identities for people around

the world while disregarding where they live and what their nationality is. New ideas, new methods of work and good life and governance are being shared worldwide even in the most isolated places of the globe. It shows that, the globalization really affect the way we communicate. If we see few years back, we only use letter or public phone to contact the other person. But nowadays, the usage of information technology makes the social network more global. Even, families also communicate through online whether they use email, face book, tweeter and many more ways to communicate. My daughter, she 7 years old also know how to communicate with this medium of media. The youngster will adapt in the usage of this technology because of its rapid changes.

Food: Previous years, we only ate rice serve with other dishes for our daily meal. For breakfast, we will have a 'nasi lemak', 'cucur tepung', 'lempeng' or other traditional 'kuih'. Today, we still cook for our family but because of time consuming, we start to cook instant or frozen food. For example, in the market we can have instant 'cucur tepung' or even frozen fried chicken. Besides that, we start to go to fast food restaurant. This is because the impact of westernization in our culture. We want to dress like western people, we want to eat what they eat and we also want to have a life like them. All of these changes will have an impact on our own culture. Youngster today, sometimes don't even know about local and traditional food. As an elder generation, we should try to remains our own traditional practices even in a modern ways.

As a conclusions, the young generation, being vulnerable, is easily in fluenced by the negative development in the west, and with adoption of new (western) values, they feel they are in confrontation with their parents who still cling to the set of traditional values. The nature of this confrontation is translated into, or is expressed by the youths getting themselves involved in a variety of anti-social activities. Irrespective of the pace of development, the family institution has to be strengthened; its values have to preserved and instilled. As for the Malays in Malaysia, they are aware of the changes that occur around them, and of the negative impacts such changes have on their family system. However, as devout Muslims, they always fall back to their religion for guidance. The majority of the Malays are not easily influenced by anti-family movements with their radical proposal for family alternatives in the west. They are also not easy to fall prey to modern western family values, which are mostly in contradiction to the teachings of Islam. But we must remember that, any changes happen still based on their values and believes.

