



# A STUDY OF ARCHETYPAL PATTERNS IN SELECTED MALAYSIAN FOLK TALES

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## Abstract

This article examines the Malaysian folk tale *The Two Beauties*, otherwise popularly known as *Bawang Merah Bawang Putih*, with the aim of identifying if archetypal patterns exist in Malaysian folkloric literature. Carl Gustav Jung, the founder of analytical psychology claims that fairy tales and folk tales from all around the world contain imprints which he terms as archetypal patterns. These imprints, according to Jung, reside in the dimension of the psyche which is the collective unconscious. Jung maintains that the existence of the archetypes and the collective unconscious prove that each individual carries in the psyche, from the moment of conception, a set of primordial images that enables us to think, act and respond in a universal way. Based on this theory, he subsequently concludes that man is a homogeneous being. Thereby, another objective of this article is to find out if the analysis of the selected Malaysian tale corresponds to Jung's theory and the outcome of this objective is discussed in relation to the Malaysian context. The end result of the article validates the fact that archetypal patterns do exist in Malaysian folk tales. It puts forth the idea that although the world is inhabited by a diversity of people, each individual is born with a similar mental mapping in the form of images, ideas and emotions thereby corresponding to the theory of human universality.

**Keywords:** Folk tales, Jung, Malaysia, collective unconscious, archetypes

## Introduction

Once upon a time, in the old Western world, the fairy tale or folk tale was deemed to be cheap literature. Society labelled it as the cultural inheritance of commoners that had "putative oral origins which continued its dissemination through tawdry chapbooks" (Grenby 8). Today, however, the fairy tale genre has taken a hundred and eighty degrees turn and has evolved from being known as a genre of 'cheap literature' to becoming a field where critical literary studies are being conducted to understand the pattern of human behaviour.

The earliest researchers of the fairy tale and folk tale genre were the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. Although there were others before them, the brothers were the first to apply theoretical and methodological standards to the genre. They meticulously documented the sources of their materials, the area where they were recorded and the identities of the storytellers. Apart from that, they were also responsible for differentiating folk tales, 'VolksMärchen' with literary fairy tales, 'KunstMärchen' by looking at their origin and the narrative style of the tale.

The studies of the oral and literary genre of fairy tale and folk tales have basically been text-centered until the middle of the twentieth century. Beginning from the nineteen fifties till

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the nineteen seventies, structuralist approaches were applied to fairy tales and folk tales. Vladimir Propp stood out as he devised a method of identifying the structure of narrative elements<sup>1</sup> in relation to one another and to the tale as a whole. Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung brought the fairy tales and folk tales into introspection using psychoanalysis in the twentieth century. The unconscious desires of individuals are thought to be unravelled in the co-relation of dreams, fairy tales and myths. It is in this century also that ethnographers and literature scholars such as Max Lüthi, moved the focus of the fairy tales and folk tales from text-centred studies to the social context and the process of story telling.

Today, in the twenty-first century, writers such as Anne Saxton and Angela Carter “retell” the stories of the fairy tales aiming to address social and psychological issues such as sexual abuse, abandonment and sexual identity thereby opening the avenue for a feminist interpretation of these stories. They focus on male-female power relations and the oppression of women. In addition, film-makers such as Jim Henson and Tom Davenport have gone beyond Disney productions in bringing new angles to the fairy tales and folk tales and consequently to our understanding of society via cinematic experimentations.

Renowned literary scholars such as Jack Zipes, Donald Haase, Maria von Franz, Maria Tatar and Maria Nikolajeva have through their works, transformed the fairy tales and folk tales genre into a dynamic field, making it a powerful tool to learn about the human psyche (in adults and children) as well as the changing effects of culture and society, shifting values, attitudes to consumerism, psychological trauma and inequality which constitute changes in life in a fast paced modern world.

The Western literary fairy tale and folk tale genre is a relatively young and modern genre that stems from the ancient history of oral tradition. However, this literary genre is yet to be fully developed in Asia. Although Asian scholars acknowledge the fact that oral literature constitutes a big part of Asia’s traditional literature and has been handed down for generations, a systematic research using eclectic methodology is sadly lacking in the area of fairy tales and folk tales in Asia. The existing research that can be found regarding fairy tales and folk tales of the Asian region are more often than not compilations of stories and therefore do not suffice as literary criticisms.

In this article, Carl Jung’s theory of archetypal patterns and Marie-Louise von Franz’s research in the area of psychologist archetypes have been used to analyse a Malaysian folk tale, *The Two Beauties*. The analysis will firstly show that western archetypal patterns are present in Malaysian folk tales thereby supporting Jung’s theory of human universality. Secondly, it confirms the existence of the collective unconscious in the human psyche as this tale has recurring motifs which are consistent with folk tales that are found all over the world. Finally, the analysis depicts the inner workings of the psyche to maintain the balance between the consciousness and the unconscious part of the mind which is crucial for an individual to function in society. It also mirrors to a certain extent the workings of a society in a particular culture and the overpowering need to belong to a group which results in conforming to societal pressures.

In the introduction part of this article, the works of other theorists in this genre is briefly discussed. This is followed by an explanation of selected key terms in Jung’s theory and the methodology of interpreting fairy tales and folk tales using analytical psychology. Finally, a local folk tale is retold and analysed using Jung’s and Marie-Louise von Franz’s

methodology of interpreting fairy tales and folk tales as well as the author's understanding and background knowledge of the Malaysian culture.

It is important for scholars to take a keen interest in local literature and folkloric tales as these literary works contain the imprints of our origins, the history of our birthplace as well as customs and traditions that mould us to be the people that we are today. As we breakaway from centuries old traditions and embrace the modern way of living, the psyche will experience conflicts that will eventually lead to imbalances in the personality. By keeping these stories alive, we can always retain a tie to our past, as it is from the past that we can learn how to cope with challenges of the future.

### **Key concepts in Jung's Theory**

Jung's analytical psychology<sup>2</sup> is rather unique as it delves into the relatively little known realm of the unconscious. Through his research, Jung concludes that the personality is not solely dictated by the ego but is largely governed by the unconscious Self. Thus, the ability of an individual to adapt to and live in society as well as to have a sense of fulfillment within oneself is dependent largely on the unconscious part of one's personality. The highlight of his theory is the idea of the collective unconscious. Jung believes that each person is born with a mental mapping in the form of images and emotional undertones which connects him or her with other human beings.

In sum, every human being is born with a kind of code which is immersed in the unconscious. When this code is triggered for any number of reasons, individuals from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds have been found, according to Jung, to respond in similar ways to particular situations and circumstances. Based on his extensive life-long research, he theorizes that dreams, fairy tales and folk tales show that to be psychologically healthy one has to strike a balance between society's demands and the true nature of one's self. As a human being, it is pertinent that one recognizes and accepts one's individuality. Failure to do so means that he or she is living as society's puppet.

#### *i. The Psyche*

The psyche in Jung's theory functions as a mirror that reflects the inner workings of man and the world that he lives in. He divides the psyche into three parts. Firstly, there is the consciousness (the ego) and, secondly, the personal unconscious (the unconscious). Finally, the third part which separates him from other analytical psychologists is the presupposition of the existence of the collective unconscious.

#### *ii. The Collective Unconscious*

The collective unconscious is regarded as mankind's 'psychic inheritance' because, as Jung states, it "contains the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution, born anew in the brain structure of every individual" (Campbell 45). He further defines the collective unconscious as being "the ancestral heritage of numerous possibilities of representations, it is not individual but common to all man, and even perhaps to animals, and is the true basis of the individual psyche" (Campbell 38). He further conceptualizes the collective unconscious as consisting of mythological or primordial images. Thus the immediate recognition of certain myths and symbols in dreams, fairy tales, spiritual experiences,

fantasies, literature and works of art is evidence of the existence of the collective unconscious. Mythology, in Jung's opinion, is the primary example of the projection of the collective unconscious. It then stands to reason that since time immemorial humankind has been projecting its collective unconscious through all creative works of the imagination.

### *iii. The Archetypes*

The main contents of the collective unconscious are the archetypes which also act as "a second psychic system of a collective, universal and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited." (60). Archetypes are capable of conjuring certain psychic forms which are the creation of the instinctual drive in humankind. Jung believed that the number of archetypes in existence is infinite as they correspond to typical life situations. These archetypes make their appearance primarily in dreams, fantasies, mythologies, fairy tales and creative works of the imagination. Jung believed that identifying these archetypal symbols and understanding them is imperative in fulfilling one's primary goal of obtaining a wholeness of the Self.

### *iv. Examples of Archetypes*

#### **The Shadow**

The shadow is one of the most common and identifiable archetypes for one to experience. The shadow is in a manner of speaking the 'dark side' of our distinctive personalities. It is the sum total of all the cruel acts and morally negative tendencies that a person is capable of which remains latent until prodded to awakening. More often than not, they see these negative aspects in others but not in themselves. This occurs because they project their 'dark side' onto other people giving rise to irrational prejudices or obsessions with the unknown or the mystical.

#### **The Anima and the Animus**

In the physical world, one cannot help but be forced to play prescribed roles of gender which are determined by society. Generally, the image of the ideal man is depicted as being strong, physically and emotionally, whilst the woman is portrayed as being soft and nurturing. These projections according to Jung, are detrimental to the wholeness of the psyche as it hampers the fulfilling of an individual's full potential. As a means of counter reaction, he hypothesizes that there exists in the collective unconscious of men, the anima (the female aspect) and in women, the animus (the male aspect). These are the archetypes that one uses to communicate with the collective unconscious. However, both of these archetypes are extremely resistant to the consciousness. Jung believes that the anima originated for men from their early experiences with other women and the animus for women from their early experiences with other men. Apart from images, these archetypes can also manifest themselves as a feeling or a mood.

#### **The Syzgy (The Divine Couple)**

The "syzgy" or the divine couple appears in fairy tales and folk tales in the form of Kings and Queens who 'live happily ever after'. The syzgy is the symbol of integration and

wholeness which is achieved by victoriously overcoming the destructive forces of the Shadow. This successful integration is usually coupled with a rise to great power. This happens because the divine couple is deemed capable of shouldering the responsibility of wielding that great power. Christ and the Church is a powerful representation that prescribes to the syzgy image.

### **The Self**

The self is in Jung's opinion the most important archetype as it is representative of completeness. Within each individual, there exists the tendency to seek growth, perfection and completion. This innate disposition is termed by Jung as the Self. This archetype is the most important archetype as Jung believes that it collects the other archetypes and binds them together to undergo the process of self-realization.

### **The Mother Archetype**

The mother archetype can appear either in personal relationships or in universal symbolism. In the former condition it can be one's own mother, mother-in-law or grandmother. In the latter, it takes the form of objects that one holds in high regard and affection, for instance, a Mother Goddess, paradise, earth or a country. Generally, this archetype is a representation of fertility as exemplified by the primordial image of 'the earth mother'. It is inborn in each of us and instinctively allows us to respond to the idea of 'mothering'. As with all other archetypes, this archetype has two sides as well, the good and the bad. Negative examples of this imagery would be a dragon or a serpent which devours its victims, witches, nightmares, water and death.

### **Interpreting Fairy Tales and Folk Tales**

The art of story telling has been present from pre-historic times since humankind started to master the use of language. Aristotle defined human beings as social animals and because of this, human beings are compelled to tell their experiences to each other in forms such as the fable, myth, folk tales, fairy tales, legends, satire and parables – all of which constitute traditional literature. Fairy tales and folk tales comprise a major part of the body of literature that is associated with oral tradition. These oral fairy tales and folk tales, which have been passed down from generation to generation were not only crucial in bringing communities together but also imperative in preserving common values and truths about humankind

Carl Jung followed this train of thought and believed that mythology and tales play a crucial role in unraveling the mysteries of the human psyche for the individual as well as for the entire population of humankind. Therefore, many concepts in Jungian psychology are presented using tales and myths. Amplifications of symbols, for example tracing them to the source of their origin and metaphorical language, are vital when analyzing myths and stories to bring about a deeper understanding on the nature of the individual and the collective human psyche.

In his article *The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairy Tales* Jung specifically explains the function of archetypes in the collective unconscious. However, he does not take this a step further especially in the interpretation of fairy tales and folk tales. Marie-Louise

von Franz, one of Jung's students, expands on this notion and has developed a further extension of Jung's theory. She has become one of the foremost authorities on psychological interpretations of fairy tales specifically pertaining to Jung's archetypal motifs.

Von Franz states that fairy tales and folk tales are "the purest and the simplest expression of the collective unconscious psychic processes. They represent archetypes in their simplest, barest and most concise forms. In myths or legends or any other more elaborate mythological material, we get at the basic patterns of the human psyche through an overlay of cultural material. But in fairy tales there is much less specific conscious cultural material and therefore they mirror the basic patterns of the psyche more clearly" (von Franz, *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales* 1).

The fairy tale and folk tale stand on their own and the interpreter is thereby free to examine them by bringing to them his or her psychological experiences. When these tales are analyzed using the technique of comparative studies, the interpreter can make sense of the interplay and the dynamics of the relationship of the archetypes within and outside the text. Von Franz postulates that the fairy tale and folk tale is "a relatively closed system compounding one essential meaning, which is expressed in a series of symbolic pictures and events" (*The Interpretation of Fairy Tales* 2). Thus, what one gets when studying the fairy tale or folk tale is the basic form of the human personality as there is no overlay of cultural material.

The Jungian interpreter sees the heroes and heroines of fairy tales and folk tales as abstractions or archetypes. This means that the fates of characters in these stories "do not correspond to neurotic complications, but rather are expressions of the difficulties and dangers given to us by nature" (von Franz, *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales* viii). Some methods of interpretation that are useful when analyzing fairy tales or folk tales are looking at the context of the tales as well as using mythological amplification as opposed to using a personality approach that reduces objectivity. By amplifying symbols that occur in fairy tales and folk tales, what a researcher does is to look for a number of parallels that can be utilized to construct the context of the story. For example, there is a dove present in the story that a researcher is analyzing. Research shows that doves denote love and peace. They can be traced back to Greek mythology because Aphrodite, the goddess of love, kept a dove as her pet. In fact, this symbol can even be linked to the Self archetype as it suggests wholeness and a sense of well-being. However, the dove can be presented in the story in a negative light; for example, the dove can be the tool that leads a hero to his destruction.<sup>3</sup> Now, the researcher has to amplify this motif and deduce what it means in the light of what he or she has discovered earlier.

In her book, *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales*, von Franz outlines some rules that can be used when interpreting fairy tales and folk tales which are given below:

Firstly, begin with the exposition; examine the time and the place that the tale occurs in. Secondly, examine the number of people (*dramatis personae*) involved and the roles that they play, and then name the problem that the tale revolves around. After that examine the ups and downs (*peripetia*) that occur in the story. This can be done in the form of a diagram or amplifying recurrent motifs. Next, construct the context of the tale. The final most important step is interpreting the amplified story into psychological language (39 – 44).

However, it is imperative for Jungian analysts not to present their findings as the one and only correct interpretation. This is because he or she can only say “what the myth seems to represent and then modernize the myth into psychological language” (44). This is because the ideas presented in myths and symbols can vary from generation to generation. For example, a symbol that carries a particular meaning today can very well carry an opposite meaning in the future depending on the social and cultural shift of the world. Ultimately, von Franz believes that all fairy tales and folk tales despite having varied themes endeavor to deliver one fact to the consciousness which is the attainment of the Self.

### Analysis of Folk Tale: The Two Beauties

The following is an analysis of a Malaysian folk tale namely *The Two Beauties*, also popularly known in Malaysia as *Bawang Merah Bawang Putih*. The study uses Jung’s and Maria von Franz’s theoretical framework on the interpretation of fairy tales and folk tales which focus largely on the archetypes. The analysis will show that archetypes do exist in Malaysian tales and this concurs with Jung’s notion that archetypes are a world-wide phenomenon. It will also show the power that society has over individuals especially in terms of child-parent relationships. Finally, it portrays the workings of the inner psyche in its quest for self-realization and the attainment of a balanced self.

### The Two Beauties

*Once upon a time there lived a couple named Pak Lembut and Mak Lembut. They had a daughter named Bawang Merah whom they loved very much. One day, Mak Lembut becomes ill and passes away. She makes Pak Lembut promise that he will marry again so that Bawang Merah will have a mother to look after her. He marries a lady named Patung who has a daughter named Bawang Putih. Both of them do not like Bawang Merah and abuse her without her father’s knowledge. Eventually Bawang Merah retreats into a world of make believe where she imagines that her mother is still alive. She has a pet fish that reminds her of her mother. One day, Patung catches the fish and cooks it. Bawang Merah is heartbroken and she buries the bones of the fish. The next morning she sees that a tree has grown on that spot. She builds a swing for herself under the tree and spends her time there singing happily. A prince hears her singing one day and he is mesmerized by her beauty. He wants her to follow him to the palace to console his younger sister who misses their mother who has passed away. Her stepmother refuses to let Bawang Merah go and tries to trick the prince by sending Bawang Putih instead. The prince does not fall for their trick and reveals their cruel nature to Bawang Merah’s father. He then takes Bawang Merah to the palace. Both Bawang Merah and the little princess are consoled by each other’s company and soon they both cease to be sad. The prince falls in love with Bawang Merah and marries her. Patung and her daughter repent and are forgiven by both Bawang Merah and her father. They all live happily ever after.*

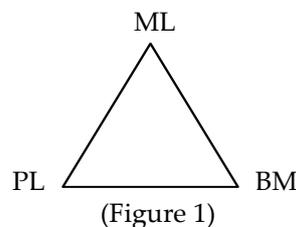
(Adapted from *Asian Folk Tales*, Amin, 1993)<sup>4</sup>

The story of *The Two Beauties* is parallel to that of the popular fairy tale, *Cinderella*. There are easily three hundred and forty to over a thousand five hundred versions of *Cinderella*, inclusive of picture books and musical interpretations, all around the world<sup>5</sup>. The theme of a kind heroine who suffers at the hands of a stepmother and who receives help from a magical guardian and finally gets all that she wishes for appears in folklores of many countries. The earliest recorded version of the tale comes from China. It was written by Ch’eng-shih in the middle of the ninth century A.D. The heroine of the Chinese tale is

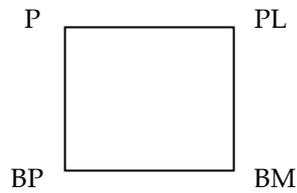
Yeh-shen. There is no fairy godmother in this earliest known version. A magical fish is Yeh-shen's helper in this version. However, a golden shoe is used to show Yeh-shen to the prince who wants to marry her. This story was next popularized in written form by Charles Perrault in his *Contes de ma Mere L'Oye* in the seventeenth century.

The published Malaysian version of *Cinderella* namely *The Two Beauties*, is similar to that of The Grimm Brothers' German version, known as *Aschenputtel*, or *Ash Girl*. The similarity stems from the fact that the fairy godmother character is absent in both of these tales. In *Aschenputtel*, the heroine plants a tree on her mother's grave from which she gets magical help in the form of a white dove and extravagant gifts. At the end, the stepsisters' eyes are pecked by birds from the tree to punish them for their cruelty. However, there are still variations when these aspects are compared to those in *The Two Beauties*. In the latter tale, the form of the mother appears first as a fish and then as a tree which grows on the spot where the heroine plants the bones of the fish. She is not bestowed with any magical gifts by the spirit of her mother unlike Yeh-shen who has wish-granting fish bones in a magical chest or Cinderella who has a 'pseudo-mother' in the form of the fairy godmother. Despite this, her life is maneuvered by the fish bones and the tree which are spirit forms of her mother. The existence of these two objects puts her on the path to happiness as it is while swinging under the tree that she meets the prince who plays a crucial role in helping her attain self-realization. She becomes a mother figure to the prince's little sister, eventually marries him and from then on lives happily ever after.

This folk tale conforms to the archetypal story as it begins with the phrase "once upon a time". This phrase indicates both these ideas: firstly the events in the story took place at a certain time and place and secondly, it implies "timelessness and spacelessness which is the realm of the collective unconscious" (von Franz, *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales* 39). The story unfolds with a positive triad which consists of Bawang Merah, Pak Lembut and Mak Lembut. In number symbolism, "the number three is generally connected with the flow of movement and thus with time" (von Franz, *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales* 90). As explained by Franz, the triad formation represents oneness. There is one uniting thing at the center that connects two poles. For example, in this story (Figure 1), the mother figure, Mak Lembut (ML) is the uniting figure that connects the other two poles represented by Pak Lembut (PL) and Bawang Merah (BM).



The conscious and the unconscious are therefore in synchrony representing an integrated psyche. A problem is then introduced into the story when Mak Lembut passes away due to an illness. The triadic formation which does not possess a strong foundation if compared to the quatrain formation collapses, symbolizing the unbalancing of the psyche. The introduction of Patung (P) and Bawang Putih (BP) into the tale results in a quatrain formation (Figure 2).



(Figure 2)

Although the quatrain generally stands for the symbol of the Self and wholeness, in this tale, it becomes the negative impulse that stirs the unconscious thereby hindering the individuation process. Ultimately, at the end of the story there emerges two balanced triadic formations due to the addition of two new characters, Putera Gunung (PG) and Puteri Bulan (PB). This suggests that the unconscious is overcome by a higher level of consciousness culminating in a balanced psyche ((Figure 3).



(Figure 3)

The character of Mak Lembut typifies the mother archetype. She is the positive mother figure who amplifies the qualities of maternal solicitude and who fosters growth and fertility. After her death, it is implied that the spirit of Mak Lembut is firstly magically transformed into a fish and next, into a tree, the "beringin tree". The symbol of the fish is synonymous with the archetype of the Self. The fish is a well-known Christian symbol. According to von Franz, "the apostles were called 'fishers of men', and Christ himself (ichthys) is symbolized by the fish and was celebrated in the Eucharistic meal of fishes. Both Christ and the fish are symbols of the Self" (von Franz, *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales* 154). In Hinduism, the fish denotes the saviour symbol as it is one of the avatars that Lord Vishnu took to save the world from destruction. In countries such as Malaysia, the fish is a staple diet of the people and in the past it was largely the main source of survival and means of living as it still is today in some places. The fish, in this story symbolizes survival for Bawang Merah as it reminds her of her mother and helps her to live from one day to another despite the harsh treatment that she has to face at the hands of her stepmother and stepsister.

The tree that grows from the spot where Bawang Merah buries the fish bones is an extended transformation of her mother. Trees are a universal symbol of the feminine. In this tale the 'beringin tree' plays the dual role of protecting Bawang Merah from reality as she forgets the outside world when she swings and sings under the tree. It also gives her solace and comfort as she feels that her mother is still with her in spirit form. In the Malay language the root word 'ingin' means 'wish', 'want' or 'desire'. Therefore, as the name 'Beringin'<sup>6</sup> suggests, the tree has magical proprieties as it can help with wish-fulfillments. This is exemplified by the fact that Bawang Merah meets the prince who eventually rescues her from her predicament under the 'beringin' tree. When compared to the Yeh-shen tale, this story focuses on fulfilling emotional needs of being loved and

being wanted. The latter, however, is fixated more on material needs as Yeh-shen eats well and has beautiful clothes that magically appear when she wishes for them in the box where she keeps the bones of the fish.

Ironically enough, it is the over-protective nature and the love that Mak Lembut has for Bawang Merah that brings about the situation that Bawang Merah is eventually trapped in. The promise that she extracts from Pak Lembut on her death bed to marry again introduces the problem in this folk tale. The consequences brought on by this promise create an upheaval in the psyche and causes the unconscious to take over the conscious aspect thereby leading to the disintegration of the Self. In this story, Bawang Merah withdraws into a private world of make-believe while in the real world people can have a mental breakdown or develop neuroses.

Generally in fiction, the stepmother is the antagonist. In psychology she represents the unconscious in a destructive role. The stepmother can be placed metaphorically as a two-sided coin. On one side she has cruel intentions, however, on the flip side, her actions are responsible for leading the heroine into situations that identify and strengthen the latter's best qualities. Patung is symbolic of the negative mother archetype. As Mak Lembut's shadow, she is the impulse that unsettles the psyche. She is the projected image of Mak Lembut and therefore displays all the opposite qualities that Mak Lembut possesses. When interpreted into psychological terms, Patung is the neurosis that attacks the psyche.

In this story, each character has a name which is synonymous with his or her inherent quality. 'Lembut' means soft and Pak Lembut and Mak Lembut depict this characteristic as both of them are soft-hearted and good-natured people who succumb easily to societal pressure. For example, although Pak Lembut does not have the desire to remarry, he is compelled to do so by the people around him. Bawang Merah's name refers to the small onion which has many layers and is an important cooking ingredient. True to her namesake, Bawang Merah, the heroine, has many layers to her character and she strives to bring happiness to others at the risk of her own well-being. Life throws her a lot of hardships which she patiently undergoes whilst still helping others to the best of her abilities to the extent where she is seen as someone special in the eyes of people. *Putera Gunung*, loosely translated into 'Prince of the Mountain', is the saviour who rescues Bawang Merah from her plight. *Puteri Bulan* or 'Moon Princess' signifies the feminine principle that unites the hero and the heroine.

The anomaly here is in the names of Patung and Bawang Putih. The former means doll which is a plaything that brings happiness to children. The latter is garlic which is also important in cooking and has medicinal value. But in the story, the actions of Patung and Bawang Putih are out of the norm and do not tally with their names. Patung instead of delighting people that she comes in contact with seeks to control them as seen in the case of Bawang Merah. Bawang Putih, taking her cue from her mother, does the same to her stepsister by treating her unkindly. Both of them typify destructive archetypes that cause an imbalance in the psyche. The unconscious has taken over the conscious part of the psyche. As it is now in control of the psyche it hinders the individuation process.

The loss of Mak Lembut deeply affects not only Bawang Merah but also Pak Lembut. Her death jeopardizes the relationship of the masculine and the feminine. The zygote unity crumbles. Eventually, Pak Lembut loses touch with the feminine aspect of himself and

becomes a weak father who is 'blinded' to the happenings in his own home. There is a questionable aspect to his character as initially after the death of his wife, Pak Lembut becomes obsessed with Bawang Merah. He takes her everywhere, even to the fields where he works, tends to her every need and is reluctant to remarry. All of this hints of a future father-daughter complex. The fact that the villagers insist that he keep his promise to his late wife as it is not appropriate for a father to raise a daughter on his own reflects the cultural thinking of the society. One cannot help but feel that the situation would have been different if he had had a son instead of a daughter.

The central figure in the story is Bawang Merah. Her close relationship with her father allows her to develop an active and lively mind. As suggested by the colour symbolism of her name 'merah' which means red, Bawang Merah is passionate in nature. Bawang Putih is her shadow complex. She displays all the negative traits that are opposite to Bawang Merah's positive qualities. She is cool and calculative. Although her name 'putih' means white and denotes the colour symbolism which means purity, she is essentially devoid of pureness as she goes along with her mother's scheme to trick and marry the prince who in reality loves Bawang Merah.

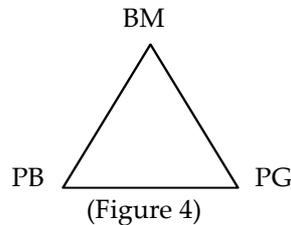
The abuse that Bawang Merah endures at her stepmother's hands forces her to develop a dual personality as a defense mechanism. She goes from being a cheerful, happy child to an unhappy child who cries a lot and avoids Patung's fake hugs to show her displeasure. Eventually when she comprehends her circumstances, she retreats into a world of make-believe which is deep in her subconscious. It is her only salvation as it is the solitary place where she can display her true nature with the person that she loves the most, her mother. Her natural, creative impulses are forced to be suppressed as she learns to be passive by tightly controlling her feelings in the presence of her family. She descends gradually into the realm of the unconscious. Subsequently, over a period of time, she will lose touch with reality.

The fact that she stops crying, does not flinch from Patung's insincere hugs and becomes silent is characteristic of possession of the animus. Following Jungian interpretation, the woman who is silent and has a closed-up attitude is controlled by the animus<sup>7</sup>. In actual fact, she hides a passionate nature which she is unable to express freely. This point is illustrated by von Franz who states that women who are not allowed to develop their minds and their talents, more often than not, bottle their feelings. This leads to irritability, ill-temper or locking themselves in a world of silence. At the extreme end of this pole is "the catatonic, schizophrenic who although unable to utter a single word has a burning fire of emotions within" (von Franz, *Archetypal Patterns in Fairy Tales* 79).

Von Franz also claims that it is the "natural feature of the feminine, be it a woman or be it the anima in a man, to be personal." (79). The Eros<sup>8</sup> is personal and therefore has to be related to something concrete. In this story, Bawang Merah is only able to release herself from her animus possession with the help of another feminine principle that is Puteri Bulan. As the name itself suggests, the symbol of the moon stands for femininity. Thus, the existence of a new Eros as an object of relation allows Bawang Merah to lavish her repressed impulses on it. This allows her to resurface from the unconscious to consciousness and continue with the process of individuation. Puteri Bulan also represents the child archetype as she symbolizes the hope for a new and better future. She plays a vital role by assisting Bawang Merah in successfully undergoing a rebirth process that enables her to become

whole again. It is only after being freed from the animus possession that Bawang Merah is able to recognize the anima in her other half, Putera Gunung, who plays the role of hero.

The joining of the masculine and feminine principles with the child archetype culminates in a whole and integrated psyche as displayed by the triadic formation of Bawang Merah, Puteri Bulan and Putera Gunung (Figure 4).



It is important to note that in this new formation, Bawang Merah has figuratively stepped into her mother's shoes as she is now the uniting principle of the other two poles.

In the Brothers Grimm's version of this story, the stepmother and stepsisters are punished when birds peck their eyes and make them blind. In Perrault's version they are forgiven as in the Malaysian folk tale. This happens in many fairy and folk tales whereby the villain after showing repentance is forgiven by the hero. However, when villains are forgiven, there is no guarantee that he or she will not regress into their old ways. Taking this story as an example, there is always the possibility of Patung and Bawang Putih succumbing to envy and starting their mischief again by meddling with Bawang Merah's life. This point is reflective of reality itself as the archetypes in one's personality, may they be positive or negative, are always ready to emerge on the stirring of an impulse. Evil deeds, for example, are products of a psyche which is controlled by the instinctive impulses of the subconscious. Man cannot solve the problem of evil by repressing it. Thereby, failure to address these feelings always leaves the door open for dire consequences in the future.

### **Analysis Findings: The Two Beauties**

Looking at the analysis, one can come to a few conclusions. Firstly, the story has reoccurring archetypes which are consistent with tales from around the world. There is the mother archetype, the shadow, the anima and the animus to name a few. Each of these archetypes appear at a point in time when an individual is experiencing changes in his or her life as do the characters in the story. In everyday life, the appearance of the archetypes at crucial points results in the subconscious taking over the conscious part of the psyche engendering a wholly different persona. Secondly, the decisions displayed by the characters in the story are reflective of the constraints of society in local culture. In traditional Asian culture the institution of marriage is deemed to be highly sacred. Both parties are prescribed specific roles, the father is the breadwinner of the family whilst the mother is the nurturer who looks after the home, spends time with the children and instills good values in them. This is the perfect family in the eyes of society.

However, on her deathbed, Mak Lembut extracts an unnatural promise from her husband. By asking him to remarry upon her death she displays in her action the societal way of

thinking. She knows that in society, Bawang Merah and her husband would be social outcasts without a mother and a wife, so she does the ultimate sacrifice, allowing her husband and her child to be cared for by another woman. Her motive is for them to be accepted into society as a family. The other character who bows down to societal pressure is Pak Lembut. He has no wish to remarry and is prepared to look after Bawang Merah. This in itself is seen as an abnormality in traditional Asian culture. The question is this, 'Is the father being a male figure capable of raising a daughter, a female figure as this is usually done by the mother, the ultimate female figure?'

Hence Pak Lembut is pressured by the elderly members of society to remarry and one representative is chosen to speak to him regarding this issue. He is further advised (in lieu of his promise to his late wife) that it is best that the task of raising Bawang Merah be passed on to his prospective bride. Patung, on the other hand, is chosen as a suitable spouse for Pak Lembut as she herself is a widowed mother who needs a man as the head of a family. Once again, one can discern society's perception that a woman who is a mother will naturally be a good stepmother to another child and the undertone is that a woman cannot live without a man's protection. It is therefore a marriage of convenience. By bowing to societal pressure, both Pak Lembut and Patung take on different personas, the former goes back once again into the prescribed role of breadwinner and ceases to be a doting father while the latter takes on the dual personalities of being the loving mother as befitting society's ideals but in the privacy of her home wears the mask of the cruel stepmother as dictated by her subconscious.

Through Bawang Merah's actions one can see the manner in which the psyche acts in order to maintain the balance between the inner world of the subconscious and the outer world of reality. Initially she is surprised by the dual nature of her stepmother but eventually she becomes accustomed to it and accepts it as part of her life. As one internalizes negative feelings such as those experienced by this character, what happens is the imagination is enhanced and the individual regresses into the subconscious part of his or her personality. This is depicted in this story as readers see that the main character creates two worlds for herself. One is set in reality in which her stepmother and stepsister dominate over her whereas her father is blinded to her misery. The other is a fantasy world where she plays, talks and is cared for by her mother. Eventually this fantasy world begins to invade her real world as she sees the fish and the tree as 'reincarnations' of her mother and treats them as such.

This magical element in the story suggests a severe unbalance in Bawang Merah's psyche. When Bawang Merah is given the opportunity to look after the little princess who has suffered a similar loss, she is jolted back to reality as the positive mother archetype emerges from within her. She comes to term with her loss and is able to have a balanced personality. Her new role as a wife and mother in a family unit enables her to function once again in society as the psyche has achieved self-realization. In the real world, an individual who has suffered trauma as in the case of the character in this story needs a sense of closure in the form of, for example, counseling, so that the archetypes can be integrated with the subconscious and a balanced personality is created. Only then can the individual effectively function in society on a daily basis.

## Conclusion

Undoubtedly, one cannot dispute the importance of the fairy tale and folk tale as it depicts fundamental aspects of human nature irregardless of colour, ethnicity and language. Jung and researchers such as von Franz base their work on the premise that myths, fairy tales and folk tales describe the collective culture of a group of people as well as the individual's psychological experiences and processes. Myths and communal stories strive to provide the answer to these two questions: Firstly, in the cultural sense, *'Why are we here and what is our role in the world?'* and secondly, in the individual sense, *'Why am I here and what is my role in the world?'* Although, the cultural aspect has and still is often researched, the individual aspect is often overlooked. Jung was the first person to use mythology and tales by translating them into psychological language so that people can use these stories as guiding points in their personal quest of self-realization. Despite the fact that these stories have their roots in the distant past, the essence that one can discern from these stories are greatly relevant to modern life and society. Jung has connected the dots that bridge the gap of the world of myths, dreams and stories to the meaning of symbols and metaphors that are found in them. By doing so he has shown the connection between the individual psyche and the collective psyche. However, the greatest contribution of Jung's work lies in his discovery that symbols, myths and stories have the power to make us look into ourselves not only collectively as a particular race but also at an individual level, forcing us into consciousness to take responsibility for our own actions and decisions.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Vladimir Propp extended the Russian Formalist approach to the study of narrative structure. In the Formalist approach, sentence structures were broken down into analyzable elements, or morphemes, and Propp used this method by analogy to analyze Russian fairy tales. By breaking down a large number of Russian folk tales into their smallest narrative units, or narratemes, Propp was able to arrive at a typology of narrative structures. By analyzing character and action types, Propp concluded that there were 31 generic narratemes in the Russian folk tale. While not all were present, he found that all the tales he had analyzed displayed the functions in unvarying sequence.  
< [http://www.britannica.com/Vladimir\\_Propp](http://www.britannica.com/Vladimir_Propp) >.
- <sup>2</sup> Refer to Jung's article *The Basic Postulates of Analytical Psychology in Modern Man in Search of a Soul*.
- <sup>3</sup> Von Franz gives an example of this in her book *The Interpretations of Fairy Tales* using the fairy tale entitled *Prince Ring*. In this tale the motif of a deer is amplified. In mythology, the deer represents a positive symbol. It represents self-renewal and rejuvenation. However, here the deer represents negativity as it is used to lead the prince to a witch. The witch entraps him in a cask which symbolizes a regression into the womb and the loss of self as he is in a state of isolation (pages 114-121).
- <sup>4</sup> This is an abridged version of the story and it is written by the author of this article.
- <sup>5</sup> < <http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/cinderella/history.html> >.
- <sup>6</sup> The 'beringin' tree is scientifically known as *ficus benjamina*. A young sapling generally grows into a huge, shady tree. It is attributed to have qualities such as purity as well as magical proprieties such as being able to protect the people around it. In the Indonesian language, it is also known as the 'waringin' tree which means the tree of confusion. Often this tree is mistaken for the bodhi tree due to similar physical structures. It was under the bodhi tree that Lord Buddha was enlightened.  
< [www.encyclopedia.com.my/volume8/malayshadow.html](http://www.encyclopedia.com.my/volume8/malayshadow.html) >.
- <sup>7</sup> Jung states in his article *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self* that the animus is ruled by Logos and therefore when a woman is in possession of the animus, it gives her the ability for reflection, deliberation and self-knowledge. At

the same time it also induces in them irrational moods, behaviour and opinions that can be very strong and difficult to overcome.

- <sup>8</sup> Jung states that women's psychology is founded on the principal of eros, the great binder and loosener, whereas from ancient times the ruling principal ascribed to men is logos. The concept of eros could be expressed in modern times as psychic relatedness, and that of logos as objective interest. Refer to Jung's *Collected Works*, vol. X, p. 123 and p. 255.