Review of Hans Volker Wolf, Looi Wai Ling, Stefanie Pillai, and Adriana Phillip (eds), *The Mousedeer and the Crocodiles: A Malaysian Folktale in 111 Languages*

Amin Amirdabbaghian and Hans V. Wolf

Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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Hans Volker Wolf, Looi Wai Ling, Stefanie Pillai, and Adriana Phillip (eds). *The Mousedeer and the Crocodiles: A Malaysian Folktale in 111 Languages*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 2017. xxvi + 300 pp. ISBN: 978-983-100-941-3.

In 2016, when Universiti Malaya (UM) celebrated its 111th anniversary, the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics (FLL) decided to mark this occasion by "gifting" UM with a multilingual book of translations in 111 languages. In also keeping with FLL's objective to engage in international dialogue and understanding, it was decided that the translation project would involve the popular Malaysian folktale, *Sang Kancil dan Sang Buaya* ("The Mousedeer and the Crocodiles"). After all, with the possible exception of East Indonesia and Vietnam, where it is the tortoise, monkey, and rabbit that play a more central role, the *kancil* (mousedeer) features as the protagonist in the folktales of almost every other region of Southeast Asia. Such is its appeal in Malaysia that the *kancil* was elevated to the status of a national icon in the 1980s, subsequently appearing as a main character in many animation productions. Among these were the country's first *Sang Kancil* and Aesop Fable animation series, produced on the request of the Ministry of Information and directed by Hassan Muthalib in 1983, and the first 3D animation by Jaafar Taib in 2004.

As FLL offers undergraduate courses in a range of Asian and European languages, there was already a wide and internationally established network of language connections to be tapped to find translators for the *Kancil* story, in addition to help from colleagues and students from other departments of UM. The most surprising discovery in this search came in the form of Dorothy Yapis from Sarawak, the co-manager of the UM Alumni restaurant, *Eden*, on campus, who was found to be a native speaker of Bisaya. Dorothy contributed her own version of *Sang Palanduk Maya Sang Buwayo* to the collection.

It would be remiss not to mention in this review the originating idea behind the text chosen for translation and some of the logistic complexities that were called up by such an ambitious translation venture. It was Bhavithra Anathe Segar, a student of the FLL and IPBA (Institut Pendidikan Bahasa Antarabangsa), who had proposed the idea for translating the *Sang Kancil* (Malaysian mousedeer) story. In endorsing this idea, the editorial committee felt that the *kancil*'s folktale reputation in Southeast Asia as a unique "animal of the jungle" that is known to be intelligent and quick-witted "echoes a general human aspiration: to be smart and creative, to develop and use our skills, talents and knowledge for ourselves, and for the common good of our societies and countries in the global community of this small world" (xv). Once the use and adaptation of the *Sang Kancil* story was agreed on, copyright permission had to be obtained from Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP), the government body

that promotes publishing and translation activities in Bahasa Malaysia (Malay), for the use of the "classic" version of the *Kancil* story, published in Malay in 1990 in the collection entitled *Ceritah Lagi! 5* by author Noor Sham Abdul Hamid.

After the world "language map had been spread out" and responsibilities for any possible language translations distributed, the question then arose as to "what kind of translation" should be asked from the participating translators. Considering the oral tradition of folktales, it was felt that the translators should opt to creatively retell the story to readers in their own language. Theoretically, such a procedure is supported by Nida's dynamic approach to translation: "In such a translation (dynamic equivalent translation) one is not so concerned with matching the receptor-language message with the source-language message, but with the dynamic relationship, that the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message" (Nida 1964:159).

As the editors assert in their Preface:

> As linguists, we know what a challenge it can be to translate literary texts in a scientific manner. The concept for our 111 translations differs from academic formality and systematic selection, and allows for dynamic interpretation for the sake of readers who enjoy the oral tradition of folktales. The enjoyment of cultural adaptation may be used as stylistic device in some of the language versions, whereas others may want to retain the surprise of nature unknown. It is, therefore, an interesting challenge for translators who are willing to slip into the role of interpreters for the sake of oral conventions. (xv)

The (new) Bahasa Malaysia version was creatively narrated by Laila Suhana, a literature prize-winning student of FLL's IPBA group. The English (base) version (for international translators) was written by a native speaker of English from Australia who had been living in Malaysia for 15 years at the time.

By the time these preparations were finalized and invitations sent out to hundreds of potential translators across the world, UM Press had also become a partner in this global project that "was mainly motivated by the aspects of language, culture and identity that symbolically constitute the character of [UM] as a mediator of education, experience, and social learning for Malaysia" (xiv).

When the book was finally printed, launched, and distributed, *The Mousedeer and the Crocodiles* comprised 7 Malay dialects, 25 indigenous languages, and 2 creolized languages of Malaysia as well as 77 international languages (including English).

In view of "the story teller's role" that was attributed to the translators by the editors of this volume, it is interesting to compare how Malaysian terminology (such as *kancil* or *jambu*) was "foreignized" or "domesticized" by the translators (Yang 2010: 77-80) according to their perception of the knowledge and expectations of their readers.

In the Afrikaans version, for example, *jambu air* ("watery rose apple"), which is a culture-specific item in Malaysia, is simply translated into *jambo-bome*, meaning "giant tree/fruit". In the Arabic language, the same term is translated into جوافه, which refers to the common guava. The translator also adds صغیر, which means "small" or "underage", as an adjective to the mousedeer, modifying the size and age of the mousedeer, while the use of the word طرغول refers precisely to "mousedeer" in the Arabic. The Persian translation refers to the mousedeer as آهو, which means "deer" and is not fully equivalent with the original. The translator could have used موش‌آهو, which means "mousedeer" in Persian. The same translator also renders *jambu air* into سیب, which means "apple" in Persian. *Karaca yavru* is used in Turkish for *kancil* which, however, means "baby (female) fawn" in Turkish. The translator could have used *cüce geyikgiller*, which directly refers to "mousedeer" in Turkish. The same translator also renders *jambu air* into *jambu elma*, which means *jambu apple* and is a gloss translation from English.

Although these randomly picked translations cannot be used to judge the collection, they do suggest that "domestication" was the preferred translation method, with only the Turkish translator having opted for "foreignization" as a strategy. Even though this observation corresponds perfectly with Nida's dynamic approach, the reviewers would have wished for more translator knowledge of the Malaysian natural environment, which would have been expressed and exemplified in the use of "foreignization" as an intercultural translation technique.

Overall, however, the publication of the *Kancil* story in 111 languages has proven a worthy gift for the 111th birthday of UM. The fact that a second edition is already in progress shows that the book has found much appreciation in the Malaysian market.

Works Cited

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