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Purifying the Ark: A Story on Communicating Culture of Wellness

Introduction

A communicative perspective on organizational culture basically views communication as constitutive of culture. In this process patterns of human actions, its recursive behaviours and meanings are subject of scrutiny. Simply, of concern to organizational communication scholars regarding culture are those 'human'. texts Thus it comes to no surprise that studies on organizational communication culture concentrate on 'things' that people do such as on vocabularies, stories and talk, or what people have like emotion of happiness and wellness. The 'conversion' of culture into a kind of anthropomorphic studies is clearly demonstrated by Kumra, and Hassard, Holliday and Willmott. To these authors, organizations are now 'human'. With that claim, it is safe to say that organizations move on Ecclesiastes wisdom on 'time for everything', including sickness and mortality. At this juncture, it seems the line of division between the 'constructers' and the 'construction' of organization tends to be blurred. Such position is further aggravated if one looks at wellness as an obligatory adjective of quest for most organizations.

In this paper, a story on communicating organizational wellness, based on a quasi-ethnographic case study in Malaysia, is presented. Basically the discussion will revolve around stories on the utilization of religion as a way of achieving the future desired state of wellness through a planned change program.

Here, I take the view that stories told represent a sensemaking device of participants of change, through which they 'make sense', organizing and making meaning of events (see Boje 1991; Quinn 1992; Weick 1995; Polkinghorne 1988;Czarniawska, 2000) Meaning, in this light, is interpreted by the speaker (Cohen, Kahn and Steeves 2000: 6), or in the word of Gadamer (1989: 463), " the language speaks us rather than we speak it" Simply, the realities of the world under study are realities of the participant-in-action.

Methodologically, this paper is strongly coloured with hermeneutics of both the researcher and the participants of change. In this perspective, hermeneutics is viewed as the study of texts (see Gadamer, 1989). Similarly, as Tachankary noted the organization under study is also a text. The cardinal principle of Gadamerian hermeneutics is, 'there is no understanding without pre-understandings' is deeply entrenched in this work. In addition 'our experience of the world is bound to language and history, hermeneutic autonomy, meaningful coherence, intimacy with context and circular movement of understanding between parts and whole' principles are also employed. Consequently, analysis and the interpretation of stories at Borassus are hermeneutically prejudicial in nature. The term prejudice, *vorurteil*, refers to the existence of pre-understandings or prior knowledge that we bring along to our experience. As Hekman noted the failure to recognise the *vorurteil* is indeed the prejudice against prejudices itself (Hekman 1984:359). In the field, the spirit of the hermeneutic circle is widely observed.

With a position taken that a research is a mode of engagement (*see* Morgan 1983), Addison's list of practices are employed as a guideline to move forward. As such, immersing oneself in the participants' world in order to understand and interpret their everyday practices is of no alternative. In this light, "being there" (*see* Geertz 1983) at Borassus is not merely an epistemological or technical activity. Rather the activity noted Morgan is more about ways of gaining knowledge of the social reality and humanity in the fullest sense (Morgan 1983: 405-407). In fact, Gummeson's advice of sitting together and comparing facts with the researched has been done with full enthusiasm (Gummesson 1991:156).In this dynamic way, I view the engagement as an experiential learning process where the researcher is 'inside' the situation (Gill and Johnson 1997: 37).

Pre-understandings 1:
Change and the authoring of change

In organizations, change as a term has multiple meanings and contradicting interpretations, and in many cases seems to be over-used. Basically, change refers to any alteration in activities or tasks, modifications or mutations, be it new procedures and operations or transformational restructuring of an organization (see Kanter 1991), as part of survivability, adaptability or fashion in the wake of the present complexities. Change in this sense is about creating a new order of things (see Stacey 1993; Bass, 1990). In a similar vein change, which among others, aim for improvements in organizational performances

Is also about a process of reimaginisation. (Harrington, Hoffherr and Reid 1998:83-97). The said creative action is made possible by tapping and provoking creative skills, which have sat dormant for so long, that is includes suspending the normal rules of behaviour and shattering paradigms/coming up with something that did not exist before. In this light, unusual or unique points of view must be explored, and rules that dominate normal reality must be suspended.

To most leaders and managers, change can be planned and managed. Many of them, in this light, consider and think the term change rests absolutely in their domain of control. In this logic, managers and leaders believe they must decide and define what are ordered/disordered, sense/no(n)sense organizational realities. The idea of such exclusiveness on the part of managers is indeed being promoted widely in many texts on change. Such perception is being reinforced further by the common owlish belief that managers and leaders are chosen people with the permanent ability to act 'wisely and rationally' (*see* Wasbush and Clements 1998). The claim can be seen clearly if one syndetically relates metaphorical description on managers and leaders with various adjectives use to describe change and the change process. Among others they are being described as a person who knows how to do organizational 'trimming' through pruning excesses (Brooke 1995: 9), a competent conductor who knows how to create good teamwork (re)arrangement and performance (*see* Brooker 1991), a good sense-maker who can sense organizational foulness (*see* Kanter 1995), or even as a person with the 'rejuvenating' power of a doctor or a shaman who can give

wellness to a sick organization. In simple term, they are (change) masters who can create new and bright tomorrows (Belasco 1990:6).

In a high context society, the place of the leaders is always in the centre. The position is being reinforced further by the socio-cultural construction of reality where power distance and issues on face are not taken lightly (see Hofstede 1980; Metts 2000). Regarding the issue of 'cleverness', the subordinates must bring and place it to the margin unless being invited to be deposited in the centre. Politeness of 'not knowing', on the part of the subordinates, is indeed an expectation, at least in the front region (*see* Goffman 1959). In the public sector the position of the superior is tied tightly to the bureaucratic hierarchy, and it is difficult to be ignored entirely. It seems, the status of 'cleverness' go hand in hand with the power and authority 'outlined' on the organizational chart. Here, the leader acts a kind of a 'protector' (see Muzaffar 1979) whose task is to lead and give 'nourishment' to the 'small' people. In this type of environment it is uncommon for the manager to not become the omnipresent author who writes and rewrites the change script. Indeed to challenge the cleverness of the 'upper hands' could end up with miserable life, banishment or even death (*see* Brown 1931).

In authoring change, the author often creates a new social reality that is compelling, plausible and attractive. Otherwise, the invitation (Bennis 1986: 65) for the said reality is not welcoming. If an advertising phrase is utilized as relevant to the above, the authored text must have the quality of sneaking past the defenses of the participants and creeping into their dreams (Chenow 1998: 5). One such method of penetrating and collapsing the defenses is through resonating and inducing with the information already stored within the participants (Ferguson 1999: 126). In the context of Borassus, the author of change and the participants share strong similarities in their 'stored information' as both parties are coming from a similar ethnicity (Malay). As such they more or less have common collective remembering (see Wertsch 2002) over spirituality, history and cultural issues. In Malaysia, Malays is synonymously related with Islam. It is of no coincidence that the author of change (the management) utilizes data from Malay culture and Islam as his main

narratives account. Thus, authoring change with a religious narrative at Borassus is not an unexpected action.

Pre-understandings 2:
Religion, management and the status of work

In many societies, religion resides in the realm of the privacy of individuals. Such belief overwhelmingly coincides with the theory of secularization, which promotes the idea that modernization necessarily leads to a decline of religion, both in the minds and in the society. The term secularism in modern times is basically derived from one G.J. Holyoake, who described it as ' a doctrine that morality should be based on regard to the well-being of mankind in the present life, to the exclusion of all considerations drawn from belief in God (Edwards 1969: 15). The situation of religion in this environment is analogically described as where 'the grand symphony' of religion has gone only to be replaced by 'small groups of enthusiastic music makers' (Bruce 1996: 234). Religion then is equated as 'the land that time is rapidly forgetting (*see* Percy 2000). Although debates about the provinciality nature of the secularization thesis continue, religion in the secularized society largely remains as something private although in some cases public displays of mass religiosity, such as those noted around the funeral of Princess Diana , prevailed. Religion, in this context, is caged within traditional institutions.

In recent years, signs of the desecularisation of the world began to show up in many places of the world. According to Berger (1999: 11), such resurgence of interest on religion roots deeply in uncertainties as modernity tends to undermine the taken-for-granted certainties, and claims of religion to give certainty have greater appeal. The author also noted that 'the return of God' to the masses has something to do with the arrogance of purely secular view of reality of the elite culture, which subjected Others to accept their beliefs and values. The workplace is no exception to this reflowering of religions phenomenon, to paraphrase Nagata. Indeed resacralisation of work (*see* Bell and Taylor 2001) has gained strong interest in many workplaces as seen in various discussions on organizational spirituality, morality and religiosity (*see* Ackers and Preston 1997; Ashmos and Duchon 2000; Bolman and Deal

1995; Cavanagh 1999; Conroy and Emerson 2002; Mitroff and Denton 1999; Turnbull 2001). In this regard, Neal, as highlighted by Bell and Taylor compile a long list of bibliography on this subject. (*see* http://www.spiritatwork.com) Perhaps this trend of returning and discovering the 'faith of the past' is part of postmodernism (see Cummings, 1996).

To the people of Borassus (Malays), religion (Islam) is not a faith of 'believing without belonging', to paraphrase Davie. Almost all participants of change are practicing Muslims. Attendance for daily communal prayers is very high so is the people fasting during the obligatory Ramadan (Muslim fasting month). Many members are adding the title 'Haji' to their names as a sign for successful pilgrimage to Mecca. Moreover, 'God' is not fully present at Borassus as the working paradigm is deeply embedded with 'the worldly life' (al Attas 1978:36) world-view. In this regard work is not seen, at least officially, as having an eschatological dimension. In Islam, this world is only a place to toil while the 'real' harvest is in the Hereafter. As such work must be seen and interpreted as a kind of calling rather than just for getting monetary reward at the end of the week. Here, work must be recognized as having spiritual meaning, and implemented as *ibadah* (conscious submission to the will of the Creator).

With reference to work is *ibadah*; the sacredness could be attained upon embracing the *Tawhidic* paradigm. *Tawhid* in summary is the state of man's commitment of accepting the Only One, the Creator, as his Lord (Allah). In this paradigm, the focus of man's reverence and gratitude, and the only source of value is Him. Thus, what the Lord desires of man becomes a value to him, the end of human endeavour. Man, on the other hand commits himself to the Will of the Lord, recognizes no authority except His and accepts no guidance other than His.

'Forgetting' and marginalizing about the sacred status of work, as *ibadah*, is about not having 'proper conduct' or *adab* (*see* al Attas 1979). It is a sickness. In Islam, man through his pre-existent soul has made a primordial covenant (*mithaq*) and recognised and acknowledged God as his Lord (*al-Rabb*) prior to arriving in this 'second world'. It is an *adab* to recognize and acknowledge that Lordship, and to behave in such a manner to be worthy of approaching nearer to Him. If not, man is said

to a selfish being that disregards his indebtedness to God for His gift of existence (al Attas, 1993:2). The spiritual dimension of *adab* is analogically like 'an invitation to a banquet, where the host is a man of distinction and standing and the guests would be worthy of invitation by virtue of their refined character and upbringing expressed in their speech, conduct and manners' (see Henzell-Thomas 2002). Indeed by practicing *adab*, man is said to be 'returning to the centre'.

A manager or a leader in this *tawhidic* perspective is not a 'speciality' as (s)he is burdened with the responsibility to ensure that justice (*adl*) prevails. (D)evil behaviours must be eliminated, and ensuring *adab* at work is the main priority of the job. Metaphorically, they are shepherds. In the context of the workplace, an *adab* is placing right person at right place. Justice in this paradigm not only refers to the state of affairs that can operate only within a two person relation or dual party relation, but also to his relation to his own self. Briefly, doing wrong to others is seen, as an act of injustice to one's owns self. Thus the loss of *adab* implies the loss of justice, which in turn 'creates the condition that enables 'false' leaders to emerge and thrive, causing the condition of injustices (al Attas 1979: 2).

Western colonialisation is claimed largely responsible for the loss of *adab* through the promotion of the colonisability (*see* Bennabi 1988/2002) state of mind. Colonisability as a term depicts the state of internal weakness and susceptibility to succumb to the colonial point of view and ideas without scrutinizing it in the light of Islamic parameters (*see* El Mesawi 2002). One glaring example of the above state of mind is marginalizing God in the workplace. Indeed, in this period of colonisability the purity of the soul is tainted, which in turn leads one to the state of 'darkness' or disorder (*zulm*). In some texts, the impurity of the soul is being equated with the state of 'ignorance' (*jahili*) and injustice. According to al Attas (1979: 26), *zulm* refers not only to man's relation to others, but also his relation to his own self. The state of *zulm* is an antonym to the state of *saadah* (wellness).

Pre-understandings 3:
Wellness and Al Gazel

In the context of this paper the order refers to wellness (*sa'adah*). The term *sa'adah* relates to two dimensions of existence, that is to the present world and to the Hereafter. In general *sa'adah* is the exact opposite of *shaqawah*. In the position of the latter, the related adjectives of misfortune and misery are dominant. Basically *shaqawah* is an illness. Al Attas (1993) writes,

> *With respect to the hereafter sa'adah refers to ultimate happiness, which is everlasting felicity and bliss, the highest being the Vision of God, promised to those in worldly life have lived in willing submission and conscious and knowing obedience of God's commands and prohibitions. ... [T]he relation of sa'adah to the hereafter is very closely connected with its relation to the present world, with respect to which it relates to three things: (1) to the self such as pertains to knowledge and good character; (2) to the body such as good health and security; and (3) to things external to the self and the body such as wealth and other causes that promote well being of the self, the body, and the external things and circumstances in relation to them. (p: 1)*

To Al Gazel, the renowned Muslim scholar of the 11th century, as seen in *Kimya' al Sa'ada* (The Alchemy of Wellness) later compiled as chapters in his magnum opus, *Ihya 'Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of Religious Sciences), purification of mind and soul are pertinent as a way to attain a state of *saadah*. To him, the purification is not possible without knowing and having certain types of knowledge, namely 'the knowledge of the self, the knowledge of his Creator, the knowledge of this world as it really is, and the knowledge of the next world as it really is' (see Al Gazel 1954). Simply, 'cleverness' is a must in this purification process. In Islam, an act of worship without having proper knowledge about the act is not divinely rewarded.

A point to note is the 'seat of knowledge in man is a spiritual substance variously referred to in the Quran as his heart (*qalb*), or his soul or self (*nafs*), or his intellect (*`aql*) or his spirit (*ruh*)' (Al Attas 1993:4). The four terms, according to al Gazel, basically conveys two meanings: the one referring to the

body and the other to the soul of man (*ibid.*). To Shariati the terms metaphorically can be divided into two contradictory dimensions, the compound of mud and the divine spirit. Shariati's explanation is based on the Quranic verses on the creation of man. To some others, the mud refers to the bestial realm while the other relate to the angelic realm.

Muslim scholars believe that the spiritual substance (*qalb, nafs, 'aql* and *ruh* [soul], are always in the state of motion where one tries to outdo each other. " [It] is man's will that enables him to decide whether to descend toward the (negative) pole of sedimentary mud, or to ascend towards the (positive) pole of exaltation, of God and the spirit of God. This constant striving and struggle takes place in man's inner being..." (Shariati 1979:74). As the spiritual substances are energies (Faridi 1985:56) that work in a circular system, the swing to any direction of the pole will affect one another. Moreover, the spiritual heart (*qalb*) is said to be the controlling center of the spiritual substance mentioned. In *Ihya* al Gazel writes, as quoted by Badri (2000), about the 'superiority' of the heart.

> *When knowledge enters the heart, the state of the heart changes. When this changes, the function of all organs change. Functions follow the state of the heart, and this follows knowledge, and knowledge follows thought. Thought, then, is the beginning and the key to all good.*
> *(p: 28)*

In order to 'tame' the energies to move towards the positive pole of exaltation, as part of spiritual purification process, Al Gazel suggests that religious virtue, external (*zahir*) and internal (*batin*) must be acquired. The appropriate external virtues include the fulfillment of divine commandments, practices directed towards well being of Others, praying five times a day, reading the Quran, invocation, and clothing oneself according to Islamic etiquette. With regards to internal virtues, al Attas (1993) elaborates the matter beautifully:

> *The internal virtues refer to the activities of the heart (qalb); activities that are grounded upon knowledge of God and of the self derived both from reason and from revelation, and that require a positive disposition in the self inducing good intention to be followed by action*

with sincerity of purpose and truthfulness to oneself. Knowledge of the self leads to knowledge of its good and bad qualities, [which is important] in order to purify the soul of impurities. This action means ... the rational soul must keep watch over the animal soul to ensure that the duties assigned to oneself are carried out. It also entails self-examination to observe whether the carrying out of such duties has been executed in the proper way, and to correct any deviation from what is proper (muhasabah). [In the process of attaining the internal virtues one will involves himself, among others with] contemplation, [which includes activities] of repentance, patience, gratitude, trust and love of god. (p: 12)

Al Gazel maintains that every act produces and has an effect on the soul that in turn influences the body. The latter on the hand then will create an effect on the former. Consequently, with the purification from the 'rust of passion and resentment', it will make the heart a clear mirror that is able to reflect the light of the Creator.

In general *sa'adah* can be best described as a situation of flourishment where tranquility and calmness descend upon the heart with the help of proper knowledge. In other words, this inward peace, satisfaction, joy and happiness are fully realized upon embracing 'cleverness'.

Entering the horizon: The case study

Borassus is Latin for a kind of palm tree. Before the introduction of the printing machine and (Qu) ink, a mark of modernity to some, the tree was symbolically linked with literariness among Malays as its leaf was being used as a pen. Today, Borassus is a name associated with a publishing house. In late 1990's, the organisation embarked a change program, natively known as the re-organisation program.

Abraham, the CEO is the main author of the program with Aaron, the personnel senior manager, as his 'ghost (writer)'. He is an avid reader on Islamic texts, being influenced largely by his association with a certain Islamic movement on campus during the period of 'reflowering Islam' (*see* Nagata 1984) in Malaysia. Texts written by al Attas on secularism, and discussions on topic such as Bennabi's 'colonialisation of the mind' are known to be one of the staple

diets of the movement. It is also known that Abraham and Aaron are familiar with al Gazel as the scholar's works are 'compulsory' topics of learning among Malays. Aaron indeed kept a copy of *Minhajul Abidin* (The Path of the Pious) on his table at the office. The book is a summary of some of the topics of *Ihya*, al Gazel`s magnum opus.

To Abraham, who mentioned in his seminal speech as the CEO, Borassus is metaphorically a 'leaking ark', which needs repairing, as it is unable to charter the challenging seas of the new millennium. Anthropomorphically, Borassus is in the state of sickness that needs healing. (A long poetry about the malady state of Borassus is part of the speech. The image of a ship at sea adorned his office wall). In an interview he says,

> *This organization must be seen as an ark. I prefer an ark rather than a ship. An ark has more relationship with our religion. Remember the Noah's ark?*

The morale of staff were low. Most of the staff believed that they were on the plateau for a long time. The situation is further worsened by the attitude of the previous CEO who acted more like a pensioned 'headmaster' who wiles his time waiting for the evening to pass by. The 'ark' is in a mess, said Aaron. Such predicament is further aggravated with the government's 'reverse' policy of uplifting the English language. This shift creates many 'impurities' for the Malay language as seen in the media. The 'core business' of Borassus is under attack. To Borassusians, who believed and still upholding in the dictum, that the (Malay) language is the soul of the nation, the 'attack' is unacceptable. As such the arrival of Abraham is like waiting for a Messiah. Indeed he is perceived of having that kind of attribute as one senior staff described him as a 'half-saint' (*setengah wali*) man. Earlier on, the rumor mill at Borassus is already churning all the 'Islamic' things about him such as his good personality and characters. With all the above dirtiness, the idea of purifying the ark under his leadership is a welcoming.

Realising that Borassus for a long time has been 'chaining' itself to the secular idea about work, Abraham asserts that work should be seen and accepted as *ibadah*. As part of purification process, `self mirroring' is suggested for members to be performed every morning and evening. The

management in this regard spurred such a process by putting a long mirror above the clock-in and clock-out machine. Aaron says,

> *The physical mirror is a reminder to staff early in the morning and before going home of the importance of doing muhasabah. (Muhasabah is an Islamic concept of self-mirroring and auditing associated with doing right or wrong). As such you could count your good deeds at the end of the day. Implicitly, by looking at the mirror staff are reminded about their mortality. In our religion, the more you think about the next world the less you would adhere to wrong doings such as not doing proper job at work. Furthermore as often emphasized by the CEO, you could easily turn your work into a mill that churns pahala, as work is a trust. (The concept of pahala is very much related to the reciprocation of rewards in the hereafter). Work is ibadah.*

Clothing with proper Islamic etiquette was encouraged. In this climate, for women not to cover their head was seen as being deviant. Congregational daily prayer, with almost full attendance by Abraham and Aaron, was becoming a ritual that members fear to miss. Meetings and speeches were laced with invocations, Quranic verses, and Prophet Muhammad's s.a.w sayings. The status of the prayer room at the top floor was now upgraded into a mosque and being known as al *Hukama* (Wisdom). Religious talks were conducted during office hours. Regular night prayers were now officially part of the organizational activities.

The highlight of the purification process in a week happened on Thursday, which is after the compulsory afternoon prayer. This is a session of 'remembering the mortality of man' on this earth. During the session Quranic verses were recited, especially from the thirty-sixth Surah, *Ya Sin* (O Thou Human Being). Muhammad Asad (1980: 673) writes,

> *This surah is almost entirely devoted to the problem of man's moral responsibility, and hence, to the certainty of resurrection and God's judgment; and it is for this reason that the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. called upon his followers to recite it over the dying and in prayers for the dead.*

In relation to the above, all participants of change are given a small religious booklet. Its content includes the above surah, invocations materials and guideline of doing good deeds.

Regarding the issue of the physical 'suffering' faced by the organization's members, Abraham introduced a (physical) change program. With the help of Aaron, staff were moved from one floor to another regardless of experiences, qualification and portfolios. Aaron justified the move as to him Borassus' staff are not 'professionals or experts like engineers or scientists' but 'arts based workers' who must be rotated for new experiences and exposures. The action is important, he said as a way to dislodge staff from claiming themselves to be expert in an area of work by virtue of being there, lets say for fifteen or twenty years. In asserting his 'cleverness' of re-positioning staff, Aaron quoted his experiences of being able to move from one portfolio to another, which is from being an officer in fisheries sector to a book-marketing executive prior to holding the present post, the senior personnel manager. (The emphasis on the management cleverness in running the Borassus is clearly stated in their official website).

In the new re-arrangement, a new elite group headed 'unofficially' by Aaron emerged. They were known as the *tali*s. Literally the term denotes a group of people being a connected by a 'rope'. In the realm of Sufism whose aim is to be a person of having pure, clean heart like a sparkling mirror, the term *tali* is relating to 'linkages' with their masters. In this case, the term is referring to the parochial sentiments of 'tribalism', as almost all elite members are coming from a single state, G. Members without the 'purity of G type of blood' were accepted though as *talis*, due to their marriage connection with G's.

Indeed, the change participants from the state of G admitted that a kind of 'wellness' descending upon them as they receive more ' pastoral gaze' (see McAuley, et. al., 1999) from the management. Jokingly, they felt sorry for non-G participants. By now, local patois spoken by G people is more or less gaining the status as the official language in meetings. Scholarships to further studies and 'passing the interview for promotion for key positions' are some of the perks gained. The outcome of this tribal activity creates a rift among participants of change, which in turn give birth to two 'unofficial' groups, we and Others. The climax of this differentiation arrives with

the 'constricting' of the deputy CEO, a non-G through re-working the organizational chart. The deputy CEO domain of control is being reduced while Aaron's is being enlarged including the finance department. Then the stories about the deputy CEO 'impurities' begin to roll from the rumours mill. The new potential deputy CEO (a non-G), with hearing problems, is then assigned to a new office on the far end of the top floor even though the fourth floor is where the engine of action is. (The deputy CEO later resigned. A few months later Aaron takes the vacated post). During this period the cleverness of the non-G is largely neglected by the center. Many of them with higher degrees and experiences were re-positioned as officers with special functions. With this marginalisation and the center redefinition what cleverness is, the 'clever' non-Gs were no more in the centre and becoming part of the decision-making team as before. A lady with experience on looking after books (a librarian) not on book publishing production was elevated to a senior position as part of tactic of sidelining non-G officers to the periphery.

Abraham meanwhile makes himself busy by flying around the globe. Under the assignment of promoting Malay language around the world, he entrusted Borassus to Aaron and his *talis*. Abraham, indeed followed the footsteps of the earlier CEO, the 'headmaster' who himself was a global trotter through 'visiting book fairs' program. This situation of 'empowering' Aaron is being described as 'giving the throne to Wak Long, the clown'. (Wak Long is a character in Malay shadow play. As a clown, he likes and loves to make changes in the king's palace. The king laughs at the foolish acts. On an occasion, he removed pillars of the palace. The king still laughs at the clown tricks. The power of a clown over a leader, as part of the latter hubris, is being described beautifully by Gabriel..

Staff, especially the non-Gs, upon being marginalized by the rise of the elite group and uncompassionate gazing from the center goes to the periphery and conduct their own strategy of resistance to the new realities. Here, they promote the weapons of the weak (see Scott, 1985; 1990) strategy of employing 'hidden transcripts' as a way of showing their *shaqawah*. Among the strategy are writing short stories by using archaic Malay vocabularies about the 'impurities' of the *talis*. Some of these stories are serial in nature, and they are written by unknown writer/s and being 'published in the

toilet' next to the mosque. One female staff bravely sends her story to a national magazine. Most stories about the dysfunctional state at Borassus contain 'negative' metaphors and the 'camouflaged' taboo words. As such the word 'pig' is being interchangeably with the word 'Napoleon', the boar in the *Animal Farm*. Religious laced nicknames suddenly become popular vocabularies among non-Gs. During this period the talis and the change masters were known among others as 'the untouchables' or the Brahmins. Interestingly, the two terms are derived from ideas on the caste system in Hinduism. In some cases, they were implicitly described as 'prophets' who received 'revealed' messages from the Sky. Accounts on tyranny as mentioned in the classical or historical texts were distributed widely. One of account mentioned about the fate of a 'false' king who would end up himself in the Hell. The Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. sayings about injustices were pasted on the board next to the main entrance to the upgraded mosque. The famous one noted that if leaders were not putting the right person at the right place, the destruction is not far away. The employment of this indirect communication is line with Malay politeness character that loves to 'stab' others by using language. Besides, Malays at Borassus still believe in face work theory. It is of no secret that the fear of Damocles sword of the center hanging over their head was present too.

In response to the various voices of unhappiness, especially on the outcome of the promotion exercises, from the periphery, the change masters again waived al Gazel works, in particular the *Minhajul Abidin* (The Path of the Pious Worshippers), as part of their 'clarification' process. The management, through the voice of Aaron, noted that 'the displaced' should behave like a good Muslims do as described in the text. According to Aaron, they should always thanks (*syukr*) the Sustainer of Life for what they are getting at the moment. He said there must be wisdom with that present state. Perhaps, Aaron says, they are not yet able to carry the burden of the responsibility of the post. In this regard he advised those being 'displaced' to acknowledge that their *rizq* (sustenance) is not yet given by the Lord. Upon being questioned further concerning the issue, he exclaimed the following: I am a manager! I am a manager! I am a manager.

Meanwhile, some 'able' staff takes a flight by going overseas to further their studies or accepting invitation to do

language or literary research. Another type of flight is by 'beautifying' the body. During this period, many staff have started to wear neckties and suits as a way of coping with stress. They believed the 'feel good' factor could evade the (d)evil situation away. A few take the optional retirement scheme while a large number remained waiting for another Messiah.

Reflections

Religion relatedness with wellness has been mentioned in several literatures, and even being acknowledged by medical professionals (*see* Levin 2001). At Borassus, the importance of religion is re-emphasised with the introduction of the Tawhidic paradigm. Indeed for many participants it is rather awkward not to accept the 'sacralisation' program as it amounts to be an unIslamic behaviour to do so. Furthermore, the change program provides an opportunity to reclaim the 'loss of innocence', due to the 'injustice of secularism' brought by previous CEOs. In a similar vein, the promise of practicing 'cleverness', having voices and healing from the suffering due to the abandonment of the 'headmaster' (the previous CEO) as enshrined in the concept of *saadah* is something that one must not waste. In general, the content of the change program is well accepted by the change participants.

To the change masters, the script of change should begin with 'purifying' the heart of the participants through 'intellectual conversion' (*see* Lofland and Skonovd 1983). The idea is in line with Al Gazel's thought as seen in his magnum opus. At Borassus, the idea is further emphasized through monthly religious lectures. Almost all participants were happy with this 'liberation' from the shackles of secularism or *jahili* (ignorance) to the state of the enlightenment. As such, many 'personality remoulding' (Ackers and Preston 1997: 689) or 'behaviour modification' (*see* Bandura 1969) works, such as night prayers were agreed as important in 'cleaning' Borassus. Attendances at the mosque increased dramatically while the number of women not adhering to the Islamic concept of 'covering' (*aurah*) for modesty and chastity almost not visible. This positivity on the part of the community of change is understandable as most participants are not alien with 'faith factor' (*see* Mathews 1998). The factor suggests that

religiousness is associated with the healing of physical and emotional problems, and improving the quality of life. Thus, positive expectations towards the change program are very high.

However as the new realities developed with the emergence of *talis* and change masters preferences towards participants from G, the 'displaced' viewed the utilization of religion, through al Gazel's interpretations, as just theatrical. Metaphorically, they described the situation as a script in a Chinese opera or a medicine pedlar selling snake oil. The sacred stories in this regard attain the status as performances (*see* Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo 1983).

In simple terms, a performance is an enactment (Browning 1991) of events with motives (Murray 1997: 12) presented in a certain fashion (Todorov 1981: 33-39) of choice and preferences (*see* Czarniawska, 1997). In this view, the presentation of sacred stories by the change masters is an act of selecting 'past significant' narratives and arranging them into a significant sequence (Alasuutari 1995: 72) with certain logical appropriateness (Browning 1992: 287) for the participants' absorption arising out of their hope for wellness at Borassus.

It is interesting to note that the 'deprived' members in the program of change do utilize narratives for their own performance for the consumption of the change masters. In this regard, they play with the narratives as a way to inflict guilt, set up tensions and pain on the consciences of the change masters. Narratively speaking, it is a play about the narrative of the periphery confronting the narrative of the centre. In this play, as shown in their jokes, short story writing and graffiti, the non-Gs have fun through their creative constructions and productions. Indeed through this play, they shape their (negative) emotionality (see Van Buskirk and McGrath 1992) of 'madness' to the change masters. As Malays who understand the limitation of voice where your mouth is your tiger dictum works, this indirect communication of 'slaying' is a perfect choice of action. In Bakhtinian term, the play of this 'rational madness' (*see* Lawrence 1998; Sievers, 1999) is part of carnivalesque (Vice 1997: 183-184), where a temporary liberation from the established order of the centre is celebrated. Gabriel suggests that the suspension action acts as a release valve for pain, a mechanism of psychological

survival from the disorder. In other words, the play provides the displaced with a sense of liberation and empowerment from being a victim, making the unheard voice audible, and at the same time have the opportunity to enjoy them as an effective therapeutic tool.

Conclusion

Organisational change creates a lot of ramifications: dislocations and disruptions of normal routines, the creation of a new state of unfamiliarity, anxieties, tension and disorder, besides hope of a new dawn. These phenomena are shown clearly in Armenakis and Bedeian works. As an activity of enactment change overlaps with the social construction of reality. In the case of Borassus, the new reality is constructed through the utilization of sacred stories authored by the change masters.

Generally speaking, the sacralisation thesis, which promotes wellness (*saadah*) by purifying the ark (Borassus), is overwhelmingly accepted by the change participants. Their intimacy with their religion makes the process easier. However the rate of 'healing' absorption is straitened by 'prejudices' (*see* Allport 1954) of the change masters who give birth to *talis*. At the end the displaced viewed the re-emphasis of religion at the workplace as extrinsic exercises, where the religiousness of the program is more for appearance's sake, or for worldly gain.

Moreover, the 'conversion' on the part of knowledge understanding about the eschatological dimension of work is kudos for the change masters. Ironically, the result of altering the state of 'ignorance' nurtured by secularism resulted in 'unexpected' subtle energies on the part of the non-G who perceived themselves to be victims of unequal charismatic and pastoral gazing from the centre.

At this juncture, it is worth to template the above scenarios with the two 'healing' model as suggested by Heimbrock as part of hermeneutical understanding. The two models are:

a) *Projection*. In this model, healing or cleansing the body is identified with purification. Illness is viewed as a kind of infection or pollution of the body with the unclean materials. Here, illness is the effect of contacts with

unclean substances. Healing is basically about eliminating the dark forces.

b)   *Integration.* In this model healing is about the restoration of harmony. Illness is conceived as the interruption of the harmonic functioning of the whole. Healing in this regard is about reclaiming or restoration of the harmony, which has been lost. Thus balancing between two opposing inner forces (positive and negative) in the soul is a priority.

With reference to the two models it is clear that the change masters at Borassus tend to concentrate on the first model in reaching out the participants. Paradoxically, they tend to forget about themselves in achieving the harmony of their own, and in due course losing the *adab* as a 'shepherd'. To paraphrase Argyris and Schon, the situation is about the theories in action outdoing the espoused theory. In sum, purifying the ark of Borassus is just another long array of list about the supremacy of the managerialism in re-imaginasation about change. As such the centre continue to uphold its hegemony as a source of privileges on learning, knowledge, control, rightness and sensibility, and the libido of productivity (*see* McAuley et al. 1999). If one look at Al Gazel's works (*see* Yasien 1996), this is a situation of erosion of the angelic element of self. In Al Gazel's celebrated Ihya, he says,

> Withhold thy gaze from others fault and defects
> But note the fault that thine own mirror reflects
> In all men much there is to praise and to blame
> The blame ignore, the praise then only proclaim!

Metaphorically, the change masters at Borassus while busying themselves to clean the ark are men who forget to look at mirrors.

To conclude, every organizational change creates shadows. As a manager/leader one should 'know the sunlight while confronting the shadows'. Dreher (1996: 256) writes,

> *(The) dragon is a symbol of the shadow, the powerful unresolved forces of our unconscious. For every dragon we face outside, there's a corresponding dragon within. The test of the*

> *dragon brings up all our unresolved anxieties, our
> old hurts and fears. Facing the dragon is the
> ultimate test of confronting ourselves.*

As a point of ponder, I end this paper with this maxim:
Men who ignore shadows are shadows themselves.

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