



The Campaign to Remove Si Kancil from Indonesian Schools (Kampanye Hapus Si Kancil dari Sekolah Indonesia)

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Article info

Article history:

Received: 07-01-2022

Revised : 16-05-2022

Accepted: 28-10-2022

ABSTRACT

In 2010, the Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) declared a campaign against the most well-known trickster fable or folktale in Indonesia, Si Kancil. They urged for Si Kancil's removal from the reading materials for young children in schools. This article aims to provide a literature review relating to the arguments over the campaign to remove or preserve Si Kancil from Indonesian schools. A comparative literature review is used to compare the arguments over trickster folktales' impact on children and how Si Kancil was put within this context. This article concludes that Si Kancil should not have been blamed for the difficulties of eradicating corruption in Indonesia. Si Kancil can benefit the cognitive and metacognitive development of Indonesian school children. It is also suggested that Si Kancil, as an Indonesian cultural artifact, should be preserved and indeed celebrated as reading material in Indonesian schools and bedtime storytelling.

Keywords:

fable

folktale

trickster tale

Pada tahun 2010, Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi (KPK) mendeklarasikan kampanye melawan fabel atau cerita rakyat hewan cerdas yang paling terkenal di Indonesia, Si Kancil. Si Kancil mengajarkan manipulasi dan tipu muslihat kepada anak-anak Indonesia. KPK mendesak agar Si Kancil dihapus dari bahan bacaan untuk anak-anak di sekolah. Artikel ini bertujuan memberikan kajian pustaka berkenaan dengan argumen penghapusan atau pelestarian cerita Si Kancil di sekolah. Metode tinjauan pustaka komparatif dipergunakan dalam rangka membandingkan argumen tentang dampak Si Kancil pada anak-anak. Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa seharusnya Si Kancil tidak dipersalahkan atas sulitnya pemberantasan korupsi di Indonesia. Di sisi lain, dongeng Si Kancil justru dapat bermanfaat bagi perkembangan kognitif dan metakognitif siswa di Indonesia. Malah disarankan agar Si Kancil sebagai artefak budaya Indonesia untuk dilestarikan dan dirayakan sebagai bahan bacaan di sekolah-sekolah Indonesia dan dongeng pengantar tidur.

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INTRODUCTION

Trickster tales can be found all over the world. Crawford (2007) compiles trickster tales from different cultures and shows that a trickster animal in one culture



can be the tricked animal in another culture. In Indonesia, the famous trickster tale is Si Kancil. The tale of Si Kancil has *kancil* or *pelanduk* as the protagonist, which is similar to a fox character in the West (Information Division Embassy of Indonesia, 1976) or a rabbit and rat in Chinese folklores (Peow, 2016). Kancil (*Tragulus Kanchil*) is the smallest deer in the world and is a native animal in mainland Southeast Asia, Malay Peninsula, Java, Sumatera, and Borneo (Carpenter, 1992; Low, Wai, & Lim, 2009). The fable story of Si Kancil (or Sang Kancil) originated from Javanese oral tradition. The oldest manuscript recording the story of Si Kancil is dated around 1650 and is believed to be from East Java (Malay Concordance Project, 1650) and came into print in the early nineteenth century (Behrend & Pudjiastuti, 1997).

A recent survey conducted by *Tirto* in October 2018, involving more than fifteen hundred respondents between the ages of nineteen and forty from all over Indonesia, revealed that Si Kancil was their favorite folktale (66.95 %). The majority of the respondents, 61.08 %, stated they knew the fable from their childhoods. They also preferred fables over other folktales and stories (Gerintya, 2018). This survey means that Si Kancil is not just a popular folktale in Indonesia (Sarahtika, 2018), but it is indeed the most famous folktale in Indonesia.

It is not surprising that the story of Si Kancil is reading material for children in the early years of schooling. The Indonesian National Education Department, for example, published a storybook for children in 2002 entitled *Petualangan Si Kancil* (The Adventure of Si Kancil). This book was part of a national project to provide good quality reading material for children (2002). In the book's introduction, the head of the National Language Center (2002) stated the book aimed to enhance their interest in reading and broaden their knowledge about life. Government-published books for primary school students also contain the story of Si Kancil. In *Gemar Berbahasa Indonesia I* (Love to Using Bahasa Indonesia I), a book for first graders, Si Kancil is presented in a famous trickster story of “*Si Kancil dan Buaya* (Si Kancil and the Crocodiles)” and “*Si Kancil dan Kura-Kura* (Si Kancil and the Tortoise)” (2010). The story of Si Kancil also exists in a book for third graders. In *Bahasa Indonesia untuk SD & MI Kelas III* (Bahasa Indonesia for Third Graders), Si Kancil appears in two stories. They are “*Si Kancil dan Singa yang Sulit Tidur* (Si Kancil and The Sleepless Lion)” and “*Si Kancil Hakim yang Cerdik* (Si Kancil the Smart Judge)” (2008). In *Bahasa Indonesia Membuatku Cerdas* (Bahasa Indonesia makes me smart), a book designated for Indonesian fourth-graders, Si Kancil can be found in the story of “Si Kancil and the Crocodiles” (2007).

From more than a dozen fable stories of Si Kancil (Behrend & Pudjiastuti, 1997), there are only a few stories well known today. Based on a survey done by Ratnafuri (2015) involving two hundred respondents on Si Kancil folktale, there were only three popular stories of Si Kancil remembered by the respondents. The most popular story was *Si Kancil Mencuri Ketimun* (Si Kancil steals cucumbers), with almost fifty percent of respondents mentioning this story. The second place was “*Si Kancil dan Buaya* (Si Kancil and the Crocodiles),” with nearly thirty percent of respondents remembering Si Kancil from this story, and “*Si Kancil dan Siput* (Si Kancil and the Snail)” took the third spot with 7.11 %. This finding is



consistent with dozens of various existing texts on Si Kancil in Indonesia dated from the end of the nineteenth century, where most of them contain these three popular stories. The only difference is that the story titled “*Si Kancil Mencuri Ketimun* (Si Kancil steals cucumbers)” in the modern-day fable was called “*Si Kancil dan Pak Tani* (Si Kancil and Mr. Farmer)” in the early texts. Overall, these three folktales are not just popular, but these trickster stories of Si Kancil have also been stories told to children for more than a hundred years by Indonesian parents.

However, only recently the story of Si Kancil sparked a debate over the use of trickster tales in Indonesian education. It all started in a press release given by the KPK (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, *The Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission*) vice-chairman Haryono Umar, accompanied by the Indonesian Minister of Education, Mohammad Nuh, in October 2010. Umar said that the trickster story of Si Kancil, especially “Si Kancil Steals Cucumbers,” negatively influences Indonesian children. The trickster stories of Si Kancil, according to Umar, do not help the government’s efforts to educate people to fight against corruption, for these stories teach children to steal and manipulate (2010). Umar continued his campaign against Si Kancil in his public lecture at Sangga Buana University on the 28th of April 2011, arguing that the existence of trickster fables of Si Kancil in school reading materials created obstacles to the eradication of corruption in Indonesia. He also implied that folktales of Si Kancil are not fit as reading materials for children because children’s books should give examples of good character such as honesty, integrity, bravery, and compassion (Syarif, 2011; Purba, 2011).

A senior columnist, Bersihar Lubis, also launched the campaign to remove Si Kancil from the Indonesian primary school curriculum. He believed that “Si Kancil Steals Cucumbers,” a story in school textbooks, set a poor example for Indonesian children. He stated that the protagonist’s cunning character challenged the corruption eradication program (Lubis, 2016). In the previous year, the director of the KPK Guntur Kusmeiyano also expressed his concerns about the presence of “Si Kancil Steals Cucumbers” in Indonesian schools. This trickster story, he said, taught young children to steal and become irresponsible and manipulative. He asserted that this story was contradictory to the spirit the government had to eradicate corruption and build good character in its citizens (Ispranoto, 2015).

Joining those opposing Si Kancil were Indonesian educators and national politicians. Ari Nursenja Rivanti, a writer and an educator, believed that “Si Kancil steals cucumbers” and “Si Kancil and the Crocodiles” show children how to manipulate others for one’s advantage. She declared that Si Kancil was unfit for instilling good values in Indonesian children (Rivanti, 2014). An Indonesian folklorist, Setya Yuwana Sudikan, also criticized Si Kancil. According to Yuwana, Si Kancil was smart but also a cunning character which made Si Kancil a flawed role model in character building (San, 2017). The same message was also voiced by Jusuf Kalla, a vice-presidential candidate, in the 2014 Indonesian presidential campaign. In a public debate aired nationally, he claimed Indonesian children should read heroic stories instead of trickster folktales like Si Kancil (Rastika, Ihsanuddin, & Febrian, 2014). Kalla’s statement on Si Kancil was indeed part of



the character education program in the Indonesian mental revolution concept brought by Jokowi-Kalla, the winning side of the presidential campaign that year (Rimadi, 2014). The war against Si Kancil has been growing stronger ever since.

As a result, “Si Kancil Steals Cucumbers” was removed from Indonesian school reading materials, or Si Kancil exists in new different stories. In *Kebersamaan: Buku Tematik Terpadu Kurikulum 2013* (Togetherness: An integrated thematic book based on curriculum 2013) (2017) for second graders, Si Kancil becomes a wise and caring character in “*Si Kancil dan Cicak Badung* (Si Kancil and the Naughty House Lizard).” In this short story, Si Kancil wittingly helps solve the problem of ants getting apples from the disturbance of a naughty house lizard. In another book, Si Kancil is presented as a witty character solving the problem of the animals. He appears as a religious character. In *Kalah oleh Si Cerdik* or Defeated by the Witty (2017), Si Kancil is depicted as a small but intelligent animal. He provides a solution to the animals in the jungle in a long-lasting drought. In another story in this book, Si Kancil is portrayed as a calm and religious character in a life-threatening situation. Si Kancil prays before God and solves his problem calmly.

The changing character of Si Kancil from a trickster character in Indonesian folktales to a good, idealistic character in Indonesian school’s reading and storytelling materials was also confirmed later on by the acting Chief of Badan Pembinaan Ideologi Pancasila (BPIP, Agency for Pancasila Ideology Education Hariyono on the 25th of November 2019. He claimed that Indonesian storytelling activists supported changing Si Kancil from a trickster to a good character. Some Indonesian storytelling activists also supported it (Aditya, 2019; Rifa’i, 2019). The campaign against trickster folktales of Si Kancil in Indonesia is a unique phenomenon of how folktales’ narratives change through a public discourse involving scholars, politicians, and educators. There are articles on Si Kancil from Indonesian academics but those articles have not addressed the campaign to remove Si Kancil from Indonesian schools. This article discusses this issue from various perspectives to answer the question of whether the stories of Si Kancil should be removed from Indonesian schools or not.

METHOD

This article provides a comparative literature review. Academic papers relevant to trickster folktales or stories for children are referred to and compared. This approach modifies a research article on the effect of drama on English learning conducted by Ustuk & Inan (2017). In this research, the academic articles used were collected using Google search. The keywords used to gather articles on the use of trickster folktales in education and Si Kancil in Indonesian education were Indonesia, Indonesian, folklore, folktales, fable, trickster, education, character, *folklor* (folklore), *fabel* (fable), *dongeng* (tales), *pendidikan* (education), *karakter* (character), and Kancil. The search for the articles discussed in this research was done from May 2020 to June 2022. This data collection method was adopted from the same method used by Cooke, Veen, & Wood (2017) in their research to compare theories, policies, and practices from a collection of academic articles or by Nugraha & Octavianah (2020) in their research on the discourse of Indonesian



literacy movement. By adopting this method, academic articles and research on Kancil were collected via Google search and then contrasted to conclude whether trickster folktales are suitable for school reading materials and storytelling for young children. The interactive model of analysis from Miles and Huberman was used to guide the process of data collection, data reduction, data displaying, and conclusion drawing (Nugraha & Suyitno, 2022). This model of analysis was also used by Septiaji, Zuriyati, & Rahmat (2020) in their research to depict women's lives in Indonesian contemporary short stories. Hence, the answer to the question of the justification to remove or preserve Si Kancil from Indonesian schools could be obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The story of Si Kancil can be traced back to *Hikayat Raja-raja Pasai*. In this manuscript, Si Kancil was a respected creature who gave a king inspiration in building a castle on the top of the hill. In the old manuscript of *Hikayat Raja-raja Pasai*, from around the 14th century (Mead, 1914), it is told that Sultan Malik Al Saleh has a trip to a beach with troops and a dog named Si Pasai. The king sees a *kancil* and wants his dog to catch this *kancil*. However, the *kancil* is not afraid of a king's hunting dog. The *kancil* is so smart to stand still on the top of the hill, making himself look bigger. He makes the king's dog scared. From this moment, the king gets inspired and orders his people to build a castle for his son, Sultan Malik Al Tahir, on the hill where the brave and smart *kancil* stands against Si Pasai, the dog. This is the oldest story involving Si Kancil.

The stories of Si Kancil then developed as fables and circulated in the Dutch East Indies. In the past, the story was not explicitly dedicated to children's literature (Proudfoot, 2001). Some versions came in the form of epics instead of anthologies (Proudfoot, 2001; Behrend & Pudjiastuti, 1997). The fable stories of Si Kancil were used in traditional society to teach about the continual manipulation of values and belief in society (Proudfoot, 2001). In modern times, the epic version is not popular. The anthology versions are the popular ones, and these versions circulate in public. Unlike in the epic version, the figure of Si Kancil has been made childish in the derivative stories in the anthologies of Si Kancil and categorized as part of children's literature.

In modern times, Si Kancil is also desexualized (Carpenter, 1992). The story of Si Kancil going to marry Mr. Farmer's daughter in "Si Kancil Steals Cucumbers" from the early version has shifted to Si Kancil having the opportunity to go to a big festival with Mr. Farmer's son (Suyenaga, 2005) or getting adopted as a son by Mr. Farmer (Damayanti, 2010). The sexual union with a tiger in one of the Si Kancil stories has been wiped out (Carpenter, 1992). While Carpenter (1992) argues that in the modern stories, Si Kancil "has shifted from cunning to wise."

The trickster tales of Si Kancil have always been part of Indonesian folklore for a very long time. Modern storytellers have tried different approaches to the story of "Si Kancil steals Cucumbers." They changed the narrative of "Si Kancil Steals Cucumbers." In "Tertangkap Pak Tani," Damayanti (2010) gives a reason why Kancil steals cucumbers from Pak Tani (Mr. Farmer). In this new story of Kancil steals cucumbers because the dry season has ruined the vegetable field. He has



nothing to eat and is about to die. When he sees Mr. Farmer's cucumber garden, Kancil cannot hold himself. He steals some cucumbers to stay alive (Damayanti, 2010). The capture of Kancil by Mr. Farmer happens just when Si Kancil wants to apologize for his misconduct to Mr. Farmer. Unluckily, when Kancil walks to Mr. Farmer's house, he gets stuck to a large sticky doll Mr. Farmer had set up as a trap (Damayanti, 2010). In this story, Kancil is notorious as a tricky animal among other bigger and naughty animals but is also depicted as caring for weak animals (Damayanti, 2010). Kancil is also an honest and responsible character. If not as a means of survival, he would not have stolen cucumbers from Mr. Farmer.

What is interesting about Damayanti's version is the addition she makes to the story of "Si Kancil steals Cucumbers." In this story, Mr. Farmer is well known as a cruel character (Damayanti, 2010). The dog in this story has a name, Si Pawon (Damayanti, 2010). Another vital addition to this version is moral, stated explicitly at the end of the story. Si Kancil apologizes to Mr. Farmer for stealing cucumbers from Mr. Farmer's garden, and Si Pawon is ready to take responsibility for releasing Si Kancil from the cage (Damayanti, 2010). This version is a typical Si Kancil story in modern Indonesian education (Carpenter, 1992). Those who disagree with children learning Si Kancil's tales overlook this story. Moreover, Damayanti simplifies the title to "Tertangkap Pak Tani (Getting caught by Mr. Farmer)." It removes the focus in the narrative from "mencuri (stealing)" cucumbers done by Si Kancil to "tertangkap (getting caught)" because Si Kancil wants to apologize.

Ariyo Zidni or Aio, a national storyteller, rewrote the narrative of "Si Kancil Steals Cucumbers" (2016). This version was the one used by Franka Franklin, the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture's wife, on National Storytelling Day in November 2019 (Harususilo, 2019). Si Kancil, named Kanchil in this version, is a real hero. Aio adds a setting, Hutan Timur, to the story. Aio also radically changes the narrative of "Si Kancil Steals Cucumbers." In this story, "*Kanchil: Kisah Sebenarnya*," Kanchil is the one who has the cucumber garden. He is a diligent and generous farmer. He shares his cucumbers with other animals when the cucumbers are ready to eat. One day he finds out a remote village is facing a severe dry season. Nothing grows in this village. He shares his cucumbers with the village people and then teaches them how to grow cucumbers. He gives them one condition before teaching them how to grow cucumbers: they must share good things with others. As time goes by, Kanchil visits the village. He is disappointed to see the people have fenced off their cucumber gardens. The village people had forgotten their promise to Kanchil that cucumbers should be shared freely with anyone. Kanchil then destroys all the fences. The people of the village have also forgotten who Kanchil is and shout at Kanchil as a thief. Kanchil is captured and caged and later gets out after a flood hits his cage. Aio changes not just the narrative of Si Kancil; he also changes Kanchil's character and removes Mr. Farmer from the narrative. On the contrary, he makes Si Kancil, or Kanchil in his version, become a farmer teaching village people how to grow cucumbers. This is quite profound.

Aio's (2016) version makes Si Kancil a hero. The title, "*Kanchil: Kisah Sebenarnya*" or in English "Kanchil: The Real Story," also implies a sort of clarification on the story of "Si Kancil Steals Cucumbers," which has been lasting



for generations in the Indonesian storytelling tradition. As if this version tried to clear Si Kancil's reputation as a thief.

Some people seemed to respond positively to the KPK's stance against Si Kancil. New literary works for children were produced and reviewed (e.g., Ariatmi, Widayarsi, & Hidayat, 2018) and Si Kancil was about to be eradicated from Indonesian storytelling tradition. Moreover, Salam (2009) for example, criticized the existence and preservation of fable trickster stories of Si Kancil in Indonesian schools and storytelling tradition. He argued that the fable trickster stories of Si Kancil would continue to affect Indonesian children negatively. In Si Kancil stories, Salam claimed, a model of cunning character solving problems through manipulation, impulsivity, and emotional thinking is presented to children. He then suggested that Si Kancil be removed from Indonesian children's reading materials.

Trickster Tales in Education

Trickster tales exist in different cultures worldwide and are taught in schools (Crawford, 2007; Peow, 2016; Young & Ferguson, 1995). In the context of education, trickster tales are used everywhere in the world and can be positive to develop children's cognitive skills. In this matter, the involvement of teachers and parents in delivering the trickster tales is crucial. Children will learn moral wisdom and what is right or wrong from Si Kancil by their teachers' and parents' guidance. The story of "Si Kancil Steals Cucumbers" needs teachers or parents to explain the moral. The story teaches us not to do bad things such as stealing because, like Si Kancil, one will get caught eventually.

According to Ogbalu (2018), trickster tales should be taught to children because they teach students to believe in justice and equity. Teaching trickster tales in school requires skilled educators to teach children right from wrong (Ogbalu, 2018; Wibowo, Budiman, & Untari, 2018). It is already known that trickster tales are not designed to be read without guidance because they were originally orally told and explained by adults to children (Hawkins, Agnello, & Lucey, 2015). With the guidance of teachers and parents, the characters in trickster tales, indeed, can build moral literacy in schoolchildren (Wachidah, Suwignyo, & Widiati, 2017). The role of teachers and adults in trickster tales also helps prevent misinterpretation (Iseke-Barnes, 2009). Furthermore, the story of Kancil is already used internationally in kindergartens and primary schools to teach character education and self-reflection on trustworthiness, fairness, and cleverness. It also gives children humor from the animal world (Pugliano-Martin, 2007; Fuerst & Freeman, 2019). However, the most important thing about using animals in folktales to teach moral values to children is the ability of trickster tales to foster an understanding of the complexities in life (Burke & Copenhaver, 2004) and how sometimes it is not just as simple as right or wrong.

MacKenzie (2014) uses the Bakhtinian perspective to argue that trickster tales are like carnival stories that allow anyone in society to laugh at the notion of absolute power. In trickster stories, the powerful party is made low, and the weaker side is made smart or wise. Trickster tales give entertainment to the whole element of society and benefit their psychological state. Trickster tales also give inspiration to the weak in society. These tales give the weak the message that they do not



always need to become the subjects of the powerful. With their imaginations, they can see how to face power with trickery. MacKenzie (2014) believes that the educational value of trickster tales does not lay on a greedy attitude toward wealth and power but on how trickster tales teach how to survive. Trickster tales learning should also provide a moral dilemma between following ethical norms and reality. Furthermore, trickster tales can also teach children how people may manipulate other people for their benefit and allow children to reflect on the tales of their situation of being agents and or subjects of trickery (MacKenzie, 2014). All in all, trickster tales take people to use critical thinking skills when facing reality.

Young children can also learn creative writing from trickster tales. Trickster tales provide positive and negative characters that would give young children a straightforward narrative to follow in their writing. Jarvey, McKeough, & Pyryt (2008) show that trickster tales benefit young children's metacognitive language development from how young children identify trickster characters and the motive behind the trick in their narrative development. Moreover, young children develop moral and social judgment (Jarvey, McKeough, & Pyryt, 2008) through learning about trickster tales.

Furthermore, folklore learning, such as trickster tales of Si Kancil in the Indonesian context, will indeed strengthen the unity of a nation-state because every citizen will have a united national consciousness of a particular cultural artifact. Kheong, Satkunanathan, & Hamdan (2019) show in the Malaysian context that using Si Kancil as national reading material for children can become a part of Malaysian cultural identity and a cultural artifact (Kheong, Satkunanathan, & Hamdan, 2019). Trickster tales also make the world human (Frank, 2010). In some trickster tales, as in Si Kancil, children can learn about right and wrong and be inspired by the fight against unjust power (Zipes, 2019) or oppressing authority (Wittenberg, 2014; La Bania & Milawaty, 2019). In moral and character education, trickster tales like Si Kancil teach humans with lesser power or lower status to stay alive and survive in an unjust situation by using their wit. Indeed, most trickster tales involve small animals against larger animals (West, 1996). They tell stories of how a small animal can survive in the wild world of the animal kingdom. They give their audience a lesson that size does not matter in the survival game as long as one has and uses one's wit.

Positive Perspectives on Si Kancil

It is important to note that fable stories are closely related with moral teaching (Reistanti, 2018). Wibowo, Budiman, & Untari (2018), Syukria & Siregar (2018), Puteri (2020), dan Immerry & Dahlan (2021) show that the stories of Si Kancil could help educate young children on character-building and moral literacy. Fables like Si Kancil really give children a chance to become imaginative and engaged in the story, helping them understand the principles of right and wrong. The trickster tales of Si Kancil also convey to students that a small animal like Si Kancil uses his wit to overcome any obstacles and escape from life-threatening situations. Thus, young children learn a positive lesson from Si Kancil's use of his intelligence, not to do bad things, but to stay alive and help others.



Purwantoro (2017), in his research on Si Kancil, argues that the negative representation of Si Kancil is the result of misinterpretation. He believes that Si Kancil is a representation of a character who solves problems in a non-violent way. Si Kancil is also a character who keeps the balance and preserves order in the jungle. Being a trickster to survive and or help others' lives in fable folktales like Si Kancil does not equal being a cheater in life. Furthermore, he argues that the stories of Si Kancil should be taught in Indonesian schools. It will provide young children with an animal character suited for their age and teach them to become caring individuals.

Ethnography research using Propp's narrative structural model by Sukmawan (2014) asserts that Si Kancil is suitable for Indonesian schoolchildren. Sukmawan (2014) describes that Si Kancil is not a bad character. Si Kancil is truly a representation of the Javanese people, the largest ethnic group in Indonesia, by believing in superstition, avoiding open conflicts, and staying calm in any situation. This conclusion confirms McKean's (1971) article that Si Kancil represents the ideal type of character for Indonesians. McKean (1971) describes Si Kancil as a symbol of "*cool intelligence to be emulated and appreciated by those who would overcome danger, difficulty, or impending chaos by the resourceful use of wit.*" Because people in the Nusantara archipelago have acknowledged Si Kancil folktales since the end of the nineteenth century, this means that Si Kancil could be the national character needed to unite the different ethnic backgrounds of Indonesian children, as an issue brought by Indonesian folklorist Danandjaja (1995) almost thirty years ago.

An academic article search on Google uncovered Ratnafuri's research about the Javanese people's social psychological perspective on the fable trickster tales of Si Kancil (2015). She surveyed 200 Javanese people about the cultural values of Si Kancil. The survey revealed that Si Kancil represents creative ways of solving life-threatening problems. There were three fable stories the respondents remembered from the Si Kancil folktales: "Si Kancil Steals Cucumbers," "Si Kancil and the Snail," and "Si Kancil and the Crocodiles."

These respondents knew these folktales from their childhood memories and or school reading materials. The first story is about how Si Kancil is so starving that he has to steal one or two cucumbers from Mr. Farmer's vegetable garden. The small body of Si Kancil should give readers a clue that the stolen cucumbers by Si Kancil are not many. However, Mr. Farmer knows about stealing from the half-eaten pieces of cucumbers left behind. He sets a trap and catches Si Kancil. When Mr. Farmer leaves the caged Si Kancil with his dog at night, Si Kancil tricks the dog into releasing him from the cage. Si Kancil tells the dog that he will receive a gift [there are many versions of the promised gift claimed by Si Kancil that Mr. Farmer will give] from Mr. Farmer. The second story is like the story of "The Fox and the Snail" in Western folktales (Wignell, 2004), where the arrogant fast-running fox challenges the slow-moving snail to bully the snail. It is just like this story; the snail wins the race. The third story of Si Kancil tells about Si Kancil tricking crocodiles into helping him cross a river. Si Kancil asks crocodiles to line up across the river as Si Kancil steps on the back of every crocodile. Previously, Si Kancil informs these crocodiles that he needs to count the number of crocodiles in the river,



as something good [there are many versions] will be given to them. After Si Kancil successfully crosses the river, he runs away and leaves the crocodiles. In one of many versions of this story, Si Kancil comes by the river after escaping from Mr. Farmer's dog chasing him (Rahimsyah, 2013).

From the survey, the Javanese people in the survey had different opinions on the story of "Si Kancil Steals Cucumbers." The action of stealing by Si Kancil in "Si Kancil Steals Cucumbers" should not be copied. However, they agreed that the tricky way Si Kancil used to escape from the farmer's cage was approved [because it was a matter of life and death] (Ratnafuri, 2015). On the contrary, the story of "Si Kancil and the Snail" gave an important lesson according to these respondents. They expressed that the story taught them not to be arrogant to others (Ratnafuri, 2015). Meanwhile, the story of "Si Kancil and the Crocodiles" was regarded by the survey's respondents as an example of how they could use others' help to overcome any problem (Ratnafuri, 2015). In general, the respondents agreed that the folktales of Si Kancil inspired them to solve any problem cleverly. However, they also understood that Si Kancil in "Si Kancil Steals Cucumbers" was a bad example of stealing. These respondents understood good and bad behavior and learned what is and is not accepted from the story of Si Kancil. Thus, people do not actually consider Si Kancil stories as harmful reading materials for children.

Learning from Other Countries

In the neighboring countries of Indonesia which have quite similar literary traditions of Si Kancil like Malaysia and Singapore, Si Kancil is used as reading material for children and school, as a cultural artifact (Kheong, Satkunanathan, & Hamdan, 2019), and even as a national allusion (Pwee, 2009). In terms of corruption perception index data for 2018 released by the World Economic Forum, Singapore ranked as the fourth least corrupt country in the world after Denmark, New Zealand, and Finland (Moulds, 2019). In the Netherlands, a country ranked as the eighth least corrupt country from the same data, trickster tales as parts of folktales are taught to kindergarten and primary school children to share cultural differences among children and teach multiculturalism (de Bruijn, 2019). In the context of Si Kancil folktales, different versions of Si Kancil found in Indonesia and neighboring countries like Malaysia and Singapore are suitable materials to teach young children the similarities and differences of these countries' cultural traditions. It is problematic to view trickster tales of Si Kancil as the campaign against them has been depicted.

From those various perspectives on trickster tales, it can be said that Si Kancil should stay in the school curriculum and be preserved as bedtime story materials for Indonesian children. It is an exaggeration to claim that the trickster folktales of Si Kancil are against the Indonesian government's effort to eradicate corruption. It is also a baseless opinion to say that preserving the trickster fable stories of Si Kancil can harm the future Indonesian generation. Through trickster tales, children can gain an understanding of moral literacy (Hawkins, Agnello, & Lucey, 2015; Ogbalu, 2018). Trickster tales also provide indirect instruction on moral wisdom, the accepted standards of morals, and basic survival (Thorpe, 2015). Trickster tales also create a rich classroom reading experience. Furthermore, these tales also give



examples of overcoming problems without violence (Young & Ferguson, 1995). Teaching trickster tales like the story of Si Kancil in the Indonesian classroom would help children develop their cognitive side and assist teachers in the character education program. At home, parents could use Si Kancil as a bedtime story for their children. Any version of “Si Kancil Steals Cucumbers” used for children’s storytelling material in Indonesian education should be okay as long as teachers and parents are active in delivering the moral of the story, which benefits children’s character-building and lifelong learning.

Thus, the fight against the use of folktales of Si Kancil in Indonesian storytelling does not really hold merit if the main reason is to combat the spread of corruption ideas in Indonesian youth. Si Kancil has been in Indonesian literature for nearly four hundred years. Si Kancil, as a trickster figure in the Indonesian storytelling tradition, should not be blamed for the high level of corruption in the country. Trickster tales benefit children, and these tales are taught in other countries as reading materials in school and bedtime stories at home.

CONCLUSION

In the case of Si Kancil, it is crucial to address how the campaign against Si Kancil is fallacious. The trickster tales of Si Kancil, just like any other trickster tales around the world, give children joy and moral education. The trickster tales of Si Kancil are essential to keep in Indonesian schools as storytelling materials for children because folklore tales are a part of national heritage and cultural traditions. Si Kancil, in the Indonesian cultural context, is not just an ordinary folklore tale that contains unique animal characters to stimulate creative thinking and imagination in youth. Si Kancil has more things to offer Indonesian children than any contemporary fable. It contains a long tradition of storytelling and is a cultural artifact for Indonesians to pass down to the younger generations.

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