

Oral traditions in Malaysia

A discussion of shamanism

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses Malay oral traditions and emphasizes the shamanistic aspects of these traditions. Shamans often recite mantras in the execution of their role in society. The role of the shaman, their self proclaimed knowledge, shamans and their economic activities, black magic and healthcare in Malay society are discussed, as well as the shaman's role in Dayak ritual. Each aspect is discussed in combination with the mantra the shaman utters.

KEYWORDS

Malaysia, oral traditions, shaman, mantra, black magic, Dayak ritual, water spirit.

1 INTRODUCTION¹

Oral traditions are usually divided into two categories: verbal and non-verbal. Both were created by one person or a group of persons and involve narrative, offering, worship, ritual and such like and thus, oral traditions constitute an extremely extensive field. It is impossible to discuss all of it in one article and I will limit myself to shamanism. In the Malay world, shamans include *pawang* (specific kind of black or white magicians), or *dukun* and *bomoh* (spiritual counsellors, traditional healers, or medicine men).² A shaman is an expert in sorcery involving veneration and incantation by means of supernatural power.

¹ I would like to thank Dick van der Meij for his translation into English of my Malay article.

² [Http://www.oralchelation.com/taheebo/foottah/shaman.htm](http://www.oralchelation.com/taheebo/foottah/shaman.htm) (Haron Daud 2009).

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