



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**RISING POLITICAL CONCIOUSNESS:
TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING
AMONG EDUCATED URBAN MALAYS IN MALAYSIA**

MAZALAN KAMIS

FPP 2002 23

**RISING POLITICAL CONCIOUSNESS: TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING
AMONG EDUCATED URBAN MALAYS IN MALAYSIA**

By

MAZALAN KAMIS

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

April 2002



DEDICATION

To

My Dear wife

Noor Filzah Kamaruddin

And our beautiful children

Nasiha Sakina, Muhammad Shakir, Muhammad Syamil, Muhammad Syahmi

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia in
partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
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Chairperson: Associate Prof. Dr. Mazanah Muhamad

Faculty: Educational Studies

The purpose of this study is to explore the nature of perspective transformation in the aftermath of the economic and political turmoil of the late 1990s in Malaysia. The study is guided by the following research questions: (1) What triggered the perspective transformation among the selected individuals, (2) How did the process of perspective transformation occur among the selected individuals, (3) What facilitated the process of perspective transformation as experienced by the selected individuals.

The researcher conducted a case study on Malaysia's tenth General Election (GE) in 1999. Ten participants were interviewed in this study. They consist of educated Malays with an average age of forty years old, married with an average of four children, and living and/or working in the Klang Valley. The participants were selected using the snowballing sampling technique. They

were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) changing political party membership, (2) voting against one's own party, (3) applying to register as a voter, which was never done before, despite eligibility, and (4) being actively involved in election campaigns.

The primary data collection technique used in this qualitative case study was the interviews. A question guide was developed and refined for use in the interviews. The interviews were taped and conducted in a mixture of languages, Bahasa Melayu and English, as such mixture is common among the urban educated Malays. The taped interviews were transcribed verbatim.

The findings suggest that the reason for the perspective transformation was because the respondents' abhorrence to handling of the political issues surrounding the sacking of the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) in 1998. The participants revealed that they went through either six or seven stages in the process of perspective transformation. The findings indicate that the process of perspective transformation was not sequential but rather recursive in nature. A Majority of the participants did not go through a deep reflection phase as they were already in a state of readiness to change. The perspective transformation experienced by the participants was facilitated by socialization experience, conviction to value system, and prevailing context

Three conclusions were drawn from this study. First, political event can trigger perspective transformation if it is incongruent to one's value system, and threatens one's racial cultural identity. Second, affective emotional

dimensions play a significant role in the perspective transformation process.

Third, the perspective transformation is facilitated by personal and contextual factors.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi sebahagian keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PENINGKATAN KESEDARAN POLITIK: PEMBELAJARAN
TRANSFORMATIF DI KALANGAN GOLONGAN TERPELAJAR
MELAYU BANDAR DI MALAYSIA**

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Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mendalami sifat transformasi perspektif akibat dari kegawatan ekonomi dan politik yang berlaku di Malaysia pada akhir 90an. Kajian ini berpandukan kepada soalan-soalan berikut: (1) Apakah pencetus kepada transformasi perspektif di kalangan individu yang dipilih, (2) Bagaimanakah proses transformasi perspektif berlaku di kalangan individu yang dipilih, dan (3) Apakah yang mendorong proses transformasi perspektif dialami oleh individu berkaitan.

Penyelidik menjalankan kajian kes terhadap Pilihan Raya ke 10 yang berlangsung di akhir tahun 1999. Seramai sepuluh informan telah ditemubual dalam kajian ini dan mereka terdiri daripada golongan Melayu berpendidikan, berkahwin dengan purata anak seramai empat orang, purata umur empat puluh tahun, dan tinggal dan/atau bekerja di Lembah Kelang.

Informan telah dipilih menggunakan teknik “snowballing” Mereka telah dipilih berdasarkan kriteria berikut (1) bertukar keahlian parti politik, (2) mengundi parti lawan, (3) memohon pendaftaran sebagai pengundi, sesuatu yang tidak terlintas sebelum ini walaupun berkecayutan, atau (4) bergiat aktif dalam kempen pilihanraya, sesuatu yang mereka tidak pernah lakukan sebelum itu

Teknik pengutipan data yang utama dalam kajian ini adalah dalam bentuk temubual Satu garis panduan soalan temubual telah dibentuk dan dikemaskinikan untuk kegunaan temubual Temubual telah dilakukan dalam Bahasa Melayu dan Bahasa Inggeris, sepertimana yang lazim digunakan oleh golongan Melayu berpendidikan dan ianya dirakamkan Rakaman ini kemudiannya ditranskrip verbatim

Dapatan mencadangkan bahawa sebab berlakunya transformasi perspektif adalah kerana informan tidak berpuashati dengan pengendalian isu-isu politik yang menyelubungi pemecatan Timbalan Perdana Menteri pada tahun 1998 Informan juga mendedahkan bahawa mereka mengalami samada enam atau pun tujuh fasa proses transformasi perspektif Dapatan menunjukkan transformasi perspektif tidak berlaku secara urutan tetapi lebih kepada berulang Majoriti informan tidak melalui fasa fikiran refleksi yang mendalam kerana mereka telah pun berada di tahap kesediaan untuk berubah Transformasi perspektif yang dialami oleh informan

didorong oleh (1) pengalaman sosialisasi, (2) keteguhan pegangan terhadap sistem nilai, dan (3) kelaziman keadaan

Tiga kesimpulan dapat dibuat daripada kajian ini Pertama, peristiwa politik dapat mencetuskan transformasi perspektif sekiranya ia, berlawanan dengan sistem nilai seseorang dan dianggap menggugat identiti budaya bangsa seseorang Kedua, dimensi afektif emosi memainkan peranan yang penting dalam proses transformasi perspektif Ketiga, transformasi perspektif didorong oleh faktor-faktor peribadi dan keadaan

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research could never have been completed without the support and encouragement of some very special people. To Dr. Mazanah Muhammad, your insight, encouragement, and understanding of the entire process helped make the endeavor one of seeking genuine contribution and understanding. I owe you, and to each of my committee members, Dr. Khairuddin Idris and Dr. Bahaman Abu Samah, my sincere thanks. I was also very fortunate to have worked with excellent individuals through out the duration of my study at the Department of Professional Development and Continuing Education. Dr. Raja Ahmad Tajuddin, Prof Rahim Sail, Prof. Azimi Hamzah, En. Ismi Arif Ismail and all the other teaching staff, many thanks to you. My heartfelt thanks also goes to all the wonderful support staff of the Department, Pn. Siti Rabaah, Pn. Aishah Bibi, and En. Muhamad Razi, just to name a few. Not forgetting, of course, Sherry, for the wonderful editorial work.

I would like to thank my employer, Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB), and my sponsor, the Ministry of Education for giving me the opportunity to embark on this journey. I would also like to thank my colleagues in IAB for their support and encouragement. Also to my graduate friends Adenan, Hasnah, Hadina, and Rohaida who were willing to share some of my burden, my prayer for the successful completion of your work. To Huzaimi and Zihan, who helped me at the office, many thanks for the great job.

I do not know how to express what I feel for my mother and my late father, Hjh. Embon Mat and Hj. Kamis Rahiman. The only way of saying thank you to them is by being resilient in this endeavor. I know, they must be very proud of their youngest

child's achievement. To my brother and my sisters, who had to give way for my education, I can only say that I hope I can be a good model to your children. To my parent-in-laws, Hj. Kamaruddin Shafie and Hjh. Halimah Yusuf, your guidance and contribution are way beyond words to describe. May Allah continue to bless you with good health.

No one could have a finer family than I. My daughter Nasiha, my sons Shakir, Shamil, and Shahmi, and my wife Filzah have never wavered in their support for me. My heartfelt gratitude goes to each one of them for they have sacrificed so much throughout my study. To Filzah, thanks for being a father as well as a mother to our children whenever I was away, which seemed all the time.

Finally, I bow my head in reverence to Almighty Allah for the many blessings He has showered upon me. To You I attribute all my abilities, and convey my utmost gratitude. Subhanallah walhamdulillah.

This thesis submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia has been accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee are as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABIM	Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia
AF	Alternative Front
CIA	Criminal Investigation Agency
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DPM	Deputy Prime Minister
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Growth Domestic Product
GE	General Election
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISA	Internal Security Act
KeADILan	Parti Keadilan Malaysia
KLSE	Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MU	Malayan Union
NEP	New Economic Policy
NF	National Front
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NIC	New Industrialize Country
PAS	Partai Islam SeMalaysia
Perkim	Persatuan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia
PM	Prime Minister
PRM	Parti Rakyat Malaysia
UK	United Kingdom

UMNO United Malay National Organization

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose and research questions, significance of the study, and the definitions used in the study.

Background of the Study

We live in an era whereby the pace and the scope of change are unprecedented. This observation is even more salient in a rapidly developing nation like Malaysia. This small country has progressed from an agrarian to a technological based economy in a short span of time. Recent moves by the government to embark into K-economy proved the seriousness of the Malaysian government to move ahead towards attaining a developed-nation status by the year 2020, as envisaged by the Vision 2020. The Vision 2020 is a national agenda with specific goals and objectives for Malaysia to become a fully developed and industrialized country (Abdul Hamid, 1993). For this to happen, Malaysia needs to overcome nine strategic challenges (Mohamad, 1998): (1) establish a united Malaysian nation made of one Malaysian race; (2) create a psychologically liberated, secure and developed Malaysian society; (3) foster and develop a mature democratic society; (4) establish a fully moral and ethical society;

(5) establish a mature, liberal and tolerant society; (6) establish a scientific and progressive society; (7) establish a fully caring society; (8) ensure an economically just society, in which there is a fair and equitable distribution of the nation's wealth; and 9) establish a prosperous society with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient. Almost all of the challenges listed are concerned with creating a society in a uniquely Malaysian mould.

Notable here is that the impressive economic growth over the last decade has resulted in Malaysians enjoying a better standard of living, compared to her neighbors, with the exception of Singapore and Brunei. The nation's per-capita GDP is expected to grow by 5.8% to RM 21 640 in 2010 from just RM 10 680 in 1998 (Asiaweek, August 20, 1999). Historically, Malaysia's development was punctuated by events that became catalysts for change in the phases of development (Khairuddin, 1999). The ethnic riot in 1969, due to economic disparity among the ethnic groups, prompted a review of the development policy and led to the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971. The economic recession in 1985, partly brought on by the country's aggressive drive towards industrialization and heavy external debt, led to a more prudent strategy for development. The 1988 Asian Economic Crisis led the government to impose some drastic and controversial economic measures in the hope of cushioning its impact.

However, the 1998 crisis brought a far more devastating effect to Malaysia and other countries in Asia. The crisis spread like wildfire and affected

many countries in the region Malaysia, after years of remarkable rates of economic growth, suffered her worst economic crisis with collapsing currencies and plunging stock market (Mc Kee, 1998) The crisis brought together with it many social, economic, and political turmoil that shook various facets of life in the country What started of as a currency collapse led to financial crisis, then to economic recession and, finally, to political turmoil (Gomez and Jomo, 1999) The political uncertainty in Malaysia was very evident during this period For the first time, thousands of people took to the streets demanding for reforms Hundreds were arrested each week and such public defiance of the authority had never been witnessed before since the seventies

The results of the tenth General Election (GE) held in the aftermath of this debacle showed that the people had significantly changed their voting preferences (Kuppuswamy, 1999) This was especially evident among the Malay voters The Malays, who make up the biggest majority of people in a multiracial Malaysia, are known to be strongly supportive of the ruling coalition party headed by UMNO that has governed Malaysia since independence in 1957 The United Malay National Organization (UMNO), the party that represents the Malays in the coalition, suffered massive decline in votes in Malaysia's election history, especially in areas where Malay constitute the majority voters For the first time in Malaysia's history, "the political equation has changed to Malays versus Malays in the country (Kuppuswamy, 1999 2)" The results indicated that UMNO

experienced its biggest election crisis ever, where, for the first time, it had to depend on non-Malay votes for its survival (Biro Analisis Politik, 2000)

Why did the Malays show a different voting preference during the 10th GE? According to Imel (1998), the way people choose to vote is influenced by their meaning structure or frame of reference. Changes in meaning structure occur when individuals experience a transformative learning process. Transformational learning theory concerns change – “dramatic, fundamental change in the way we see ourselves and the world in which we live in (Merriam, 1999: 318)” Once individuals undergo the transformational learning process they become different “in ways that both they and others can recognize (Clark, 1993: 47)” Thus, the political development in the aftermath of the economic recession of the late 1990s provide the context to this study. The way individual Malaysians, particularly the Malays, experience the transformative learning process may be different from what is presented in the literature. Current literature on transformative learning are largely based on the understanding of such a phenomenon from the perspective of people in a developed and industrialized nation.

The Country

Malaysia is located in South East Asia and composed of East and West Malaysia, with a total land area of about 330 000 square kilometers. West or Peninsular Malaysia is located at the tip of the mainland adjoining the

South China Sea and is made-up of eleven states. The states are: Perlis, Kedah, Perak, Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan (Federal Territory, Labuan, and Putra Jaya), Negeri Sembilan, Malacca and Johore. Sabah and Sarawak which makeup East Malaysia are on the island of Borneo. Both West and East Malaysia have coastal plains and mountainous areas in the interior. The country is also almost free of natural disasters such as earthquakes, massive floods and volcanic eruptions (Shamsul Amri. 1994). Also, its location along the Straits of Malacca and on the Southern South China Sea gives it a strategic location in the heart of Southeast Asia.

The capital of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, is located in Wilayah Persekutuan. Wilayah Persekutuan is situated in the Klang valley, surrounded by hilly terrains. As the hub of the nation, the Klang valley boasts of excellent physical infrastructure comparable to many cities developed nations.

The People

Archeological records indicate that Peninsular Malaysia had been inhabited since the Pleistocene era. A permanent and structured community was established with the arrival of the Malay descendants between 2500-1500 B.C. The emergence of the Malacca Malay states in 1400 as a regional hub of commercial activities resulted in an influx of traders from around the globe. The Malacca Sultanate era ended when the Portuguese conquered Malacca, marking the beginning of Western power intervention in this