

Memory and Local Stories: Sources of History and Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left now. To reclaim the realms of memory, many countries have invested heavily in memory sites, such as monuments, museums, archives, and others though they can never replace the lost memory. But, they are just another way to refresh and nourish our memory of the past. In this context, oral history that touches particularly on topics scarcely touched in the available history books is important, especially oral history preservation that deals with the care and upkeep of oral history materials, whatever format they may be in is essential. Using interviews with living survivors, this method of historical documentation can fill in gaps of records that make up early historical documents. This method of collecting oral history through memory is getting popular the world over thinking that much of local history and wisdom and knowledge and other cultural memories would vanish with the loss of elders who were willing to preserve and pass along what they knew. With the advent of writing followed by printing and now digital media, it is possible for us to preserve these materials for future reference. After the spoken words have been transcribed, and the eyewitness accounts of those who lived through those significant and everyday events recorded, it is possible now not only to preserve, but also to add value and make other improvement to them from time to time, if necessary. This paper would explore some means to explore, capture, and share some of the memorable and collective memory from some parts of Malaysia to showcase the richness and complexity of our local story and history that need to be preserved for future reference and interpretation.

Key words: memory, local history, heritage conservation

ABSTRAK

Banyak sudah diperkatakan tentang memori kerana banyak yang sudah hilang. Sehubungan itu, banyak negara sudah berbelanja besar dalam membina tugu, muzium, arkib dan lain-lain untuk cuba mendapatkannya kembali, walaupun usaha itu tidak mungkin dapat menggantikan memori yang sudah hilang. Namun, yang dilakukan itu adalah cara lain untuk menyegarkan dan menyuburkan memori lama kita. Dalam konteks ini, sejarah lisan tentang perkara yang jarang-jarang dimasukkan ke dalam buku sejarah amatlah penting, lebih-lebih lagi pemeliharaan sejarah lisan dan bahan-bahan sejarah lisannya, tidak kira apa juga formatnya. Cara pendokumentasian sejarah ini dapat mengisi ruang kosong dalam pendokumentasian sejarah. Di sini, cara mengumpul sejarah lisan secara memori ini sudah semakin lama semakin popular di seluruh dunia setelah banyak sejarah, akal budi dan ilmu tempatan sudah hilang dengan matinya orang tua yang tahu dan yang mewarisi memori itu. Sekarang senario itu sudah menjadi lebih baik dengan adanya alat percetakan yang disusuli media digital yang telah membolehkan kita memelihara memori itu untuk rujukan selanjutnya di masa depan. Ini disebabkan setelah wahana lisan ditranskripsikan, kita bukan sahaja boleh memeliharanya, tetapi juga menambah nilai ke atasnya. Makalah ini cuba mencari beberapa cara lain untuk mendokumenkan sesetengah memori masa lampau kita untuk dikongsikan, sekali gus dapat menunjukkan betapa banyak dan kayanya cerita dan sejarah lokal kita, maka mesti dipelihara untuk rujukan dan penyelidikan selanjutnya pada masa depan.

Kata kunci: memori, sejarah tempatan, pemeliharaan warisan

MEMORY, LOCAL STORY AND HISTORY AND COMMEMORATION

We all have a past and history. But, most of us only know our past three generations before us. This is because we can all tell the names of our dads and granddads, but not great granddads and great-granddads, and their fathers (Huxley 1994). It will take time to search and research on them. In the

widest sense and context, it is living memory and history remembered by most living adults, extending to about a generation or roughly 30 years. The past possesses a distinct character of its own. Rightly so, our history tells a time past that is closely connected with us (Murtagh 1997). But, it has something to do with memory and collective memory. What then is exactly memory and collective memory? What have they been understood and interpreted in the past and

nowadays? Edward de Bono (2000) defines memory as “what is left when something happens and does not completely unhappen”. But, Aldous Huxley (1994) sees it differently and states that “every man’s memory is his private literature”. More interestingly, Barber and Alexander (2005) look at memory as “to look backward for a while is to refresh the eye, to restore it, and to render it the more fit for its prime function of looking forward”. Moving one step forward, we notice that collective memory is not a memory in itself, but many different acts of remembering, shaped by overarching social and cognitive forces may assume a purpose of unity in the sense that many different people share a common mind. In collective memory, which is a complex process, certain ideas and images are more important than others (Olick et al. 2011).

All memories, including collective memories, are also social processes in the sense that they are shaped by the motivation of the groups to which the individuals belong. This is also because memory, especially the collective and historical ones aiming at some kind of truth that requires the support of a group of people in a particular space and time (Olick et al. 2011). In other words, our view of the past does not come only from professional historical scholarship, but also from a much more complicated interwoven set of stories and memories in reconstructing the past. Shaped by the present needs and contexts, collective memory is a product of social groups and their ever evolving characters and interests. Hence, the common notion of collective memory is constructed with the needs of the contemporary culture clearly in mind and our manipulation of the past in order to mould the present. Though impressionistic, they try to pinpoint the key questions on what is a living memory which is defined as remembering an event or a person, a ceremony or a monument that can prod memory, be it collective or personal ones, in some conspicuous ways (Bauer 2007).

One characteristic of local story and history is that it typically distinguishes one community from another (Finberg & Skipp 1967). Thus, they not only convey personal and spiritual meaning of the people in the community, but also reflect their general interests. It is in this way that many communities depend on their local stories for their histories, including the origin of almost everything, including the names of their places. This form of place-based story and knowledge has cosmological connections between the men and their stories in a given place (Huxley 1994). These stories may reflect some of

the struggles and also the interactions of the people with the land they claimed ancestry or heritage. With this, then come all kinds of myths about the place’s history: origins, growth and development. Along with that, they arise certain epics, folklores, tales and stories about the particular dishes, animals, birds, trees, flowers personalities, festivals, music, and others associated only with the place and have become connected almost inextricably with memory and wisdom of the local people in the sense that they penetrate all facets of our collective life as the works on commemoration continue to multiply. It is the differences in worldview in these stories that distinguish the local story and history of one place from the other (Finberg & Skipp 1967). One example is residents of Port Klang were rudely awakened by explosions when fire from a warehouse ripped through South Part in Klang in the wee hours of 5 June 1980. The damage was colossal, crippling the port for months and scarring the lives of many for months long after the flames were doused. The fire spread ferociously, destroying everything in its paths that there is little that can be done even with the tug boats from the sea to help fight the fire. After so many years, how many of us still remember the tragedy? To help to remember it, we need to document the event and share the experience of the survivors on that calamitous day. There are so many heart breaking local news that have developed into local memory and become connected almost inextricably with memory and become a local history of the local people. It was a bus accident at km 63 of Merapoh-Kuala Lipis, Pahang in the early hours of 30 November 2003. Killing 15 people, it was one of the country’s most horrifying road accidents involving bus. Many survivors can still recount that fateful day.

RETRACING LOCAL STORY AND ADDING NEW MEANING

One fact is that memory interpenetrates one another. The two local events that have become local news, local story and history, like many others that occur from time to time at different places are the hardest in research and thus have haunted much of the scholarship on memory of oral traditions that preserved the memory of the community (Huxley 1994). Pursuing questions like these may help to bridge the gap between the politics of commemoration and the more inconspicuous workings of tradition in the sense of how the past is

produced, consumed, internalized, and acted upon will remain a rich and complex problem. The key issues here are also whether there exist conspicuous acts of commemoration relating to the everyday practices of reminiscing, a kind of consciousness and habit that carry the local story from one generation to the next to enter history book eventually. The power here is commemoration.

Before the advent of writing, local events that eventually develop into oral tradition and lore in the form of folktales, sayings, ballads, songs, or chants are transmitted orally. It is in this way that pre-literate society transmit oral history, literature, law, and other oral information that form part of local knowledge across generations without a writing system. All the oral information is believed to be held in common by the local people as a group over several generations. Only now that we may distinguish oral tradition from oral history. The former refers to the transmission of cultural material through vocal utterance which was long held to be a key descriptor of folklore. The study of oral tradition is distinct from the academic discipline of oral history, which is the recording of personal memories and histories of those who experienced historical eras or events. This is also not the same as orality, which is the study of thought and its verbal expression in preliterate societies where the technologies of literacy are unfamiliar to most of the people.

Local history based local stories is now a complex research on leaders, heroes, pioneers, events and others in the past using historical records and other circumstantial evidences, and certainly the personal memory of the figures through interview. Serious efforts made all over the world to retrace local story is a reflection that it has become fashionable to honor the achievements of early leaders, heroes and public figures as well as conspicuous events, monuments, battlefields and so on and to frame the relevant and meaningful story and history in specific localities within the early ideological framework of pride (Finberg & Skipp 1967). The information in this research is mainly primary, or firsthand, information based on memory and interviews. We usually start the search with the present and work backward in time. In the process, source citation from the others involved, whether as partners or observers, is also important. To keep track of material, interviews are conducted with the people, or their descendents and any other people who know the events.

All local stories are incredible reference sources on living memory shared by many people (Finberg

& Skipp 1967). Sharing the memories through reminiscence and acts of commemoration is not only to bring them together, but also that the people involved can learn from one another, feel valued and respected. From these memories too, many exciting and new stories, books, magazines, displays, exhibitions, photographs, videos and dramas can be produced. Encompassing the wisdom, knowledge, and teachings of the community, many of these local stories may eventually develop into popular and memorable stories, legends, folklores, rituals, songs, and even laws that a society has inherited as different forms of traditional knowledge.

This brings us to the so-called traditional knowledge, indigenous knowledge, traditional environmental knowledge and local knowledge refer generally to the long-standing traditions and practices of certain indigenous local communities that have been traditionally passed down without writing for generations. Almost all the preliterate societies depend on their traditional knowledge for survival. This is particularly true of traditional environmental knowledge, which refers to particular forms of place-based knowledge relating to specific plants, animals, landforms, watercourses, and other biophysical environment available only in a given place like the unique local stories mentioned earlier. Thus, traditional knowledge that reflects a community's interests tends to distinguish one community from another like local stories too. Let us start tracing some footprints of a bygone era in Malaysia in the following section.

HERITAGE IN MEMORIES AS ICONIC PIECES OF LOCAL STORIES AND HISTORIES

Local history is not selling a place to visitors and tourists foreign to a particular locality. Instead, it is about the local people having pride in his or her culture and history and knowing them well. Interestingly, all kinds of old and new local history can be found almost everywhere (Finberg 1967). This includes traditional dishes which are in danger of being forgotten. Now, many Chinese families in Malaysia opt to eat out for their reunion dinner rather than spend hours toiling away in the hot kitchen in the ancestral home the reunion dinner is traditionally held. Some "replacement" is also happening to Hari Raya Aidilfitri in the 21st century when *halwa maskat*, *kuih makmur* and other Malay traditional food have been replaced by pasta, plastic wares and a preference for mutton. Back to the reunion dinner

among the Chinese, the best “home-cooked” dishes are offered to rekindle familiar ties, instill values, such as filial piety and to reunite the families for generations. The must-have items in the menus are raw fish and glutinous rice cakes (*nian kou*), stand as symbols of happiness, prosperity and luck. This is how many Chinese view this annual get-together dinner.

Stepping backward some 40-50 years, when the wives and daughters of rich *towkays* – Chinese ladies of high social standing- were used to adopted the painful practices, a legacy of bound feet among women of the 15th century Ming Dynasty. The process of forcing their feet into the tiny shapes of 3-4 inches long shoes was very painful. The point is not only the agony and tears were suffered in silence, but also their stories were seldom told. What is left during the recall of the past is the excruciating pain these women had to bear to get the so-called “lotus feet”. They did not walk, but tip-toed. They were brought-up to make their own shoes too. On the other hand, women from the working class were not granted the privilege, thus were spared the torture. Now, there is a shop, still makes lotus shoes for souvenir in Jalan Tokong in Malacca. Documenting them is to keep them not only in the households, for example on the kitchen stove, but also in our collective memory. If the former ends up in the so called heritage in pot, then the latter heritage in memory. They are certainly food for thought, including what is called savouring Rawang’s old flavours as Rawang town also tempts visitors with its many splendid meals and a rich history stretching back to the record half of the 19th century, the sighting of moon, a traditional means of determining not only the start and end of Ramadan, but also the exact day for *Hari Raya Aidilfitri*. Why the sighting of moon is still used today in Malaysia despite technological advances is a tradition deeply rooted in Malay culture. For *Hari Raya Aidilfitri*, *ketupat* is another must have food item. Like *nian-kau* in Chinese New Year celebration, making, eating and sharing *ketupat* is also essential in *Hari Raya Aidilfitri* celebration. Thus, such celebrations as forms of commemoration of the festivals continue to survive. Embodying a delicate art of long tradition in intricate folds of leaves, the art of making *ketupat* is yet another intricate art and local knowledge and wisdom woven in tradition. Related to the call to keep alive dying tradition and culture alive, there are calls made from time to time to wear the traditional *nyonya kebaya* and *sarong*, *sampin*, for example, is not only to boost tourism in Malaysia,

but also to boost our country’s rich cultural heritage following the trend that traditional outfits in many countries appear to be losing appeal, especially among the young, who prefer jeans, skirts and Western fashions.

In other words, keeping alive traditional culture is like fighting a losing battle. This is certainly the experience of Tan Khar Mee in Ipoh, for example, who has been keeping lion and dragon heads for more than 60 years. He is passing his skills to foreigners who are keen on learning the art. What about the making of *labu* (clay water jug) in Kuala Kangsar, famous for it? Now, friendly competition among *labu* makers has led to the creation of many exquisite designs, with modern touch that has added color to the age-old tradition of Malay pottery creation. This cottage industry, and heritage art, can be made intriguing and informative at the same time, like the shadows and puppet shows (*wayang kulit*) which still command a certain degree of attention in Kelantan, especially. In *wayang kulit* performance, *dalang* who sits behind the screen and tells the story also manipulates the characters in accordance with the intensity of the drama and in tune with the music. Now, we have to find ways to save the mentioned stories, wisdom, knowledge and culture. We need more books and galleries so that the intricate handwork of *wayang kulit* figures and the others can be examined in close quarters. It is these that gives us many reasons to celebrate. But, we run the risk of losing out to foreigners due to no proper documentation. This happens too to the lion dance in Sabah which is different from that in China. Troupes in Sabah have incorporated the Kadazan-Dusun’s “sumazau” and Murut’s bamboo dance “magunatip” dance moves in its performance. Is it good or bad is food for thought. We have so many such intriguing local stories, including that of Kampung Duyung, Malacca, related to stories of the merfolk, legendary creatures who are believed to be half-human, half fish, that have been handed down the generations. Though many have not seen the animal, the local people there believe the existence of the mythical being. It is said that once, a poor fisherman had cast a net in Sungai Duyung, hoping for a catch. Miraculously a mermaid became entangled in the net. Though she managed to escape, the fisherman managed to catch a glimpse of her features. It is also not common for us to come across a person who advertises himself as someone with special quality, identity and ability or celebrity. One such example is Raja Rock Tabung Buluh in a village in Assam Java ini Jalan Bukit Rotan, Kuala Selangor.

Another related question is how much do we know the procession of chariots and devotees carrying the *kavadi* and *paal kudam* in *Thaipussam* celebration annually, besides other religious festivals in Indian temples? And how much do we know the practice of veneration of the dead in Chinese community? The social and religious functions of ancestor veneration amongst the Chinese is to cultivate kinship values, including filial piety, family loyalty and continuity of family lineage. Thus, it remains an important component in modern times as reflected in Ching Ming celebration on the fourth day of March in lunar year, when millions of Chinese all over the world visit the graves of their parents or other ancestors, leave flowers and pray to them to honour and remember them. It is not the same as the worship of gods with the goal to ask for favor that can be granted by the powerful spirit and deity. The purpose of ancestor veneration among the Chinese is to do one's filial duty as many still believe, under the influence of Confucianism, that their passed-away ancestors still need to be provided for by their living descendants. Based on the belief that the deceased members of the family not only have a continued existence - some kind of belief in an afterlife, prayers, food items and others are offered to the unseen dead that roam the earth during the seventh lunar month. This belief gives rise to rituals appeasing the wandering spirits among some Chinese.

It is in this way that we find living memory form the base of local history, living memory, and certainly contemporary history. Based on human lifespan, contemporary history covers a period of some 80 years, i.e. the history remembered by most adults currently living. By sharing stories remembered by other people who are still alive, we hope to learn from one another, feel valued and respected (Olick et al. 2011). More importantly that it is In this way that there is possibly less chance of another World War, as the suffering of the last one is still in our memory. This is an lesson form the last to younger generations. And, it is In this way that there is possibly less chance of another World War, as the suffering of the last one is still in our memory.

HERITAGE PRESERVATION GIVES A GIFT OF THE PAST TO THE FUTURE

Up to the present, many written histories have been produced based on oral story which is acknowledged as a record of the past. As mentioned earlier, authors such as Studs Terkel (1975), Haley (1976) and Lewis

(1978) have made extensive use of oral story from witnesses and interviews in their books which have become standard references the world over. This means oral history has become a respected discipline in history writing after the relevant memories and perceptions skillfully assembled as well as direct and indirect evidences verified to build a reputable and cohesive history. In this way, we can leave a record of who we are and what events have occurred for future generation. It is great for collective memory as it is this living memory that gives us a solid platform to remember the past and plan for our future (Murtagh 1979). Such a fond memory comes naturally to residents from Johor Bahru after visiting Johor Bahru's Kwang Siew Heritage Gallery, an association for Cantonese people built in 1878. In the visit, one would learn more about Johor Bahru's early iconic figures, including Wong Ah Fook, as among some of the Johor's prominent *kangchus* who are invited and given deeds to open land to cultivate pepper and *gambir* in Johor under the Temenggung Ibrahim administration.

This comes to the issue of preservation as discussed by Murtagh (1979) which can be done in many ways. One is to issue guidebook such as *The Fondie's Guide to Ipoh's Best Eats* of 170 pages, covering 50 restaurants and hawkers within Ipoh City Council. The compiler, See Foon Chan-Koppen shares her experiences on Ipoh's gastronomical delights after tasting a variety of food, including Ipoh's fried *kway teow*, *laksa*, Ipoh bean sprout and chicken served with curry bee hoon. Like in many places in Malaysia, we also find in Ipoh the Indian counterparts, such as traditional *Mongo ambula*, a type of sweet and sour pickled mango made from ingredients such as curry powder, sugar and herbs. We have too the traditional Sri Lankan chicken curry which is bursting with flavor in Ipoh which is also the birth place of Old Town White Coffee. Established in Ipoh in 1999, it has now grown into a franchise giant. Therefore, it is no surprise at all in 2012 when Old Town White Coffee was named the International Franchise of the year by the Malaysian Franchise Association. This success is based on a unique approach of roasting a mixture of coffee beans with innovative business practice from Andy Goh's grandfather who came from Hainan. Interestingly, and the coffee shop he first opened in the late 1930s is still standing in Ipoh.

Without proper care and preservation, all things will disappear one day, including the old and iconic buildings and public monuments, supposedly built to last. Before they are gone, we are lucky to be able

to see some stone and wood structures erected some time back. Among them is Seri Menanti Palace in Kuala Pilah. Until now it could be considered as a perfectly preserved grand timber palace-turned-museum. It still manages to draw in crowds of visitors with its distinctive architectural design. But, we need to know more about the rich history of the building, besides being a wooden palace built without a single nail, and acknowledged as the tallest wooden palace in Southeast Asia. Apart from Seri Menanti Palace being a great example of Negeri Sembilan Malay architecture which is also a part of the rich history of Adat Perpatih, we still have the fond memory of the distinctive Malay kampong houses in Kampung baru, in the middle of Kuala Lumpur, as pillars of Malay architecture manifesting the genius of Malay creativity. Another beautiful and yet not so popular Malay palace is Istana Sultan Aleuddin in Jugra, Kuala Selangor. Legend has it that it was Sultan Aleuddin who built the magnificent new palace, called Istana Bandar, near the old palace of Sultan Abdul Samad following a dream. He moved into the palace, a magnificent building on a 5.26ha land, and resided there for 35 years. The last major royal event was the installation of the seventh Sultan, Sultan Sallehudin Abdul Aziz Shah in 1926.

Because they are important culturally and historically to the country, there is no question that these palaces will continue to remain as “timeless legacy of Malay culture and tradition” intertwined with living memory of the people in this age of relentless and rapid urbanization and development. So, there is no question that they will continue to have new forms of commemoration from time to time as they will never lose their appeal to political and cultural elites. But, we are not so sure about the future of China town in Petaling Street, in Kuala Lumpur. So far, it has withstood the test of time by retaining its heritage and history, despite burgeoning redevelopment in its vicinity through rapid urbanization. The challenge now is how to redevelop Petaling Street and maintain its cultural and historical value to become yet another example of living heritage of Malaysian history and development. We know that to have a future, we must know our past. It is for this reason that concerted efforts are being made to preserve Chan She Shu Yuen Clan Association Hall in Petaling Street, a clan house with well-defined architecture and curved-ceramic green-glazed tiles set in wave like patterns. On China Town, what do we know about some 326 pre-war Chinese shop houses in Kampung Cina or Teng Lang Po in Kuala Terengganu, the first Chinese

settlement in Terengganu. Before World War II and up to the 1960s, Terengganu was the poorest and least known state in Malaya. Few people travelled to the state as there were no proper roads. They either travelled in trishaws or had to use ferries crossing the rivers from one place to another.

In this context, modern societies all over the world have tried desperately to resurrect the past that has already disappeared from living culture by erecting new structures, like Tugu Peringatan Kebangsaan in Lake Gardens. Now, the reverence for war dead has reached new heights in Hari Angkatan Tentera. These stories are more than just stories. They embody meanings and legends and give rise to beliefs and fond memory of the people all over the country of other battle and battlefields. That is partly to celebrate victory of our soldiers against communist during emergency period. But, how many of us really know that every war veteran is a custodian of unique and heartfelt stories and memories. Among those in the narratives of sacrifice and woe are Nuri helicopter pilots and crew members. They also played a pivotal role in the struggle against the communist insurgency in the 1970s and 1980s. They were to save lives and not to take lives. Other than the protective vests, they carried on board a Browning 9mm pistol and a M16 rifle. We need to document their vivid experience. On the same note, many villagers, including those in Kampung Tanjung Bangkung in Malim Mawar, Perak, can still recount the atrocity of Japanese soldiers beating men to death with wooden batons spiked with nails, while the others were forced to stand holding a bucket of water and beaten violently, if they refused to do so. In other words, wars and battlefields have been important sources in generating many local stories and histories, and have thus dramatically changed the patterns of commemoration. Many battlefields, including that in Green Ridge in Kampar, have been declared as sacred places where local heroes used to fight to protect their country. From the revered battlefields, we have military heroism like Hang Tuah, Mat Kilau in the past and Lieutenant Adnan and others in the contemporary and certainly military history, involving resistance. One major new participatory phenomenon of memorialization is the spontaneous offering of personal momentous at national memorials.

Other than Tugu Peringatan Kebangsaan, public structures including Sungai Besi Airport and Central Market in Kuala Lumpur, had been the most prestigious forms of commemoration. But, how much do you know the stories behind them? Designed as

permanent showcases of public memory to last, they have spawned immense interest in them in modern society. Today, Central Market and other historic buildings nearby in Kuala Lumpur are a must-see-and-visit for locals and tourists alike. The former is gem of the Malaysian tourism industry. Currently serving as a Malaysian culture, arts and handicrafts centre, it has some 128 years of the city's nostalgia. In 1888, the spot where the Central Market now stands was an open-air wet market that catered to the increasing numbers of miners in the town. Sungai Besi Airport also witnessed Kuala Lumpur's progress and development. Now referred to as the Sungai Besi Air Base and used by the Royal Malaysia Police air wing, only a few will recall that the airport located at the start of the KL-Seremban Highway, was once the transport hub of the nation. When started operation as Sungai Besi Airport in 1 June 1941, it only has *atap* huts serving as its air terminal. Another venue which reflected the nostalgia of Kuala Lumpur is the Panggung Anniversary in Lake Gardens.

But, how much do we know the story and history behind the construction of Panggung Anniversary and also Kellies Castle that stands magnificently amid verdant tropical greenery in a secluded corner of Batu Gajah? From a distance, the latter looks spectacular. Its spacious halls and ample ventilation lend a relaxing atmosphere to the castle's interior. It was built by William Kellie Smith from Scotland a century ago. He had a dream at the age of 45: wanted to build a castle to be entertainment centre for the rich British planters who governed over the Malayan estates. This is a legend now like the interesting legend of the origins of Batu Gajah, a former capital in Kinta District. The legend has it that it got the name from two boulders resembling elephants in the Kinta River. There is another oral story that two large rocks were sculpted to look like elephants in an attempt to frighten off elephants that were destroying sugar cane cultivated there. Similarly, it is intriguing to know that there are no threats of sharks at Lubuk Yu waterfall, 30 km from Maran, Pahang. There are many stories or legend to the place. May be it is just a gimmick to draw the crowd to the area. Certainly Lubuk Yu gained notoriety in 2010 when six people rescue mission died of bacteria infection during a search of a drowning victim in the area. Arising from this is the belief that this place has a supernatural keeper and that the six men who died had accidentally disturbed it, thus they did something unlawful. Such a story reminding us of place name is also found in Kampung

Pokok Asam in Taiping, once rich with tamarind trees before settlers moved there in 1950s during the Malayan Emergency period. During the period, the two entry points to the village would be closed in the evening and re-opened only in the next morning. Today, it has only one surviving tamarind tree to boast of. It is the only reminder about the origins of the place named after the name of the tree. Apart from a few bungalows, most houses in the village still maintain the old design and architecture, giving the village a rustic feel, except that the roofs have been changed to zinc as the *atap* is hard to find now.

LOCAL STORY AND HISTORY: SOURCES OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Collective intelligence and other benefits can accrue from local story and history which are also sources and an art of writing history. This is mainly because in these stories there is a collection of perspectives that allow us to look at the relationship between national and local history. More importantly, local history could also add colours of human stories to our nation. From education point of view, all kinds of story can be used in engendering moral consciousness in children (Bauer 2007). This should not be underestimated because of the power of the narrative. As discussed earlier, interest in oral and local history has turned them to become an international movement in historical research now following the trend that historians in different countries have approached the collection and dissemination of oral history more seriously. This is because information about individuals, families, important events in the past that cannot be found in written sources could only be done through interviewing the old people who had participated or observed the events and are able to share their memories, thus allowing others to share their memory.

All local history and collective memories are spiritual in tone. It may refer to stories of the leaders and heroes as founding fathers "favoured" by gods, and other supernatural beings. Given a mythical supernatural life history, they are made to be seen as gods with supernatural power. This personality cult is to inspire civic virtue, self-sacrifice, shore up the power of dominant groups and legitimize their rule and used as instrument of political mobilization. Such a story may serve many social and political purposes of propaganda. It is these stories that bind. This is how families stay resilient and connected through generations. Most of these stories remain

hidden from the children who need them most in this globalizing age. We have to save and protect them after knowing the importance of local story and history to us. As explained earlier, it is through the local history that we can learn from the experiences of others. In this way, we are able to place all our collective memory, experiences and intelligence in perspective. We learn by example which gives us a common basis for understanding one another. Within this context, it is hoped that commemoration in any form – festivals, books, exhibitions, would continue to multiply and penetrate all facets of our collective life because local story and history would have weight in creating core values to our memory that would persist over long periods of time. Not only that this is great for memory work, but also an incredible resource to supplement memory in the sense that it is memory within memory. In other words, we will not find another book as rich, touching and informative like our own living memory. To protect and share our memory with the world in the globalisation age, we need digital collaboration not only to bring back our cultural heritage and natural treasures in foreign collections, but also our memory to the world. Now, specimens taken anywhere can be studied via digital means. There is also no reason why technology cannot play a big role in removing the barrier to share and access to our heritage. This is how we can change our history for the better. This pioneering and innovative approach can bring our culture to an international audience. I would like to end this article by quoting Cynthia Ozick (accessed 6 August 2013).who says that “what we remember from childhood we remember forever - permanent ghosts, stamped, inked, imprinted, eternally seen”.

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