

Democratisation of Media

Issues and Realities



Edited by

Siti Zanariah Ahmad Ishak • Siti Haslina Hussin •
Khadijah Mohamad Tuah • Malia Taibi •
Awang Ideris Awang Daud •

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Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
Kota Samarahan

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Geography, but educating our young about space, place and time. We have to understand the new media's role in evaluating the tangibility of the past and constructing its evidence - the roots of the present and the future. History is both about the abstract and the concrete. The young and the community need to be the beneficiaries of efforts at popularising history not as a subject, but as values imbuing tolerance and civic-mindedness.

History is not nostalgia. It is as consumable as chicken or rice. It is a practical discipline - we cannot help but live it. It is not a science of the past, but about concrete and living historical time, and to borrow from history scholar Marc Bloc - understanding the present by the past and understanding the past by the present. Much of understanding present-day Malaysia needs informed judgment of the past. It is not the past as in the nation-state but cognizant of its recent invention of that political unit.

It is also critical to imagine the construct of what we have come to call Southeast Asia, and its overlapping geo-historical existence to the Malay Archipelago. It is also being engaged in the history of the Indian subcontinent and that of China and Japan. Coming to terms with what is Malaysia compels us to engage with Europe and the Occidental world.

Our history is part of the European history and events and policies in Europe - in particular those formulated by the Colonial Office and Whitehall - and its intertwining relations with other colonial powers, especially in the late 1800s through the 1900s through post World War II. Subsequently, the ideological influences of the Cold War in the 1950s and 1960s have configured much on our institutions.

These developments captivate us on notions of democracy, governance and ethnicity, not to mention citizenship and connectivity. History and histories have to be made public not only through museums, libraries and archives but also monuments and everyday living artefacts. Efforts and initiatives at producing and reproducing history are integral to space, place and origins. And this is where the national community has to contribute to its narrative. Never mind the contradictions. We have to live with the imperfections of the moment. The consumption of history at the popular level is of critical importance. And it is at this level - through the mass media, the new mass-self communication - that the different communities would see its representation, misrepresentation or under-representation. What this means is that even, and especially for a nation such as Malaysia, there are not one but many histories.

And this poses the following questions: What is national history? What is official history? What is mainstream history? Are these the same things? Some, as we have seen, perceive national history to be anti-colonial while others see it as rakyat-centric.

Who are the storytellers of Malaysian history? Malaysia has to go back to its constitution - the conscience of the nation - because it contains the ideals of nationhood. The new media can challenge the sovereignty of the Constitution. The Federal Constitution, for all its ideals, complexities and abstractions, must be integral to the new narrative.