Oral History Program: Wayang Kulit Seri Asun (Shadow Puppet)

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Abstract:

Despite the dynamic economic drive in which attention has been devoted to industrialization and nation building, oral history programs has not been left behind. In fact, oral history development is consonant to the nation building and at time given priority. In order to pursue the content of oral history program in Kedah, Wayang Kulit Seri Asun (Shadow Puppet) been selected as a sample case study which represent the cultures, genealogy and heritage documentation. This Wayang Kulit Seri Asun (Shadow Puppet) is traditionally used as an entertainment to describe about the Malay Folklore or culture among the Northern people in Malaysia especially in Kedah. Wayang Kulit Seri Asun (Shadow Puppet) has long lived in Malay culture and also become heritage and Malaysia treasures. When this shadow puppetry been played, there are too many learning and lessons about the Old Malay culture which conveyed through the “Tok Dalang” (The Shadow Puppet Player) usussian language scripts should use the layout of this template and choose suitable fonts and font sizes.

Keywords: culture, Dalang, heritage, Kedah, oral history, shadow puppet, wayang kulit, Wayang Kulit Seri Asun.

1.0 INTRODUCTION OF ORAL HISTORY

Oral History is a technique to record primary sources from historical value or evidence in audio/video form. This oral history is record using tape, cassette or compact disc. Memory of a person who knows or involved in historical or sentimental event to be
completed as materials or subjects. Oral history is also a way in which a person's experience in recording and interview. The chosen figures are a part of contribution of historical information from the involvement and experiences from candidates. This oral history program is interacting directly with a specific respondent, time and event. The respondent consists of expertise from political, economic, social, cultural, sports, judicial and others background.

Besides that, Kedah Public Library Corporation also interviews non-elite groups refer to individuals or ordinary people in the community who are also involved in historical events. They are from government employees, private workers, teachers, farmers, soldiers, merchants, housewives and others. Information obtained from the interview revise and transcribes before being used as a teaching material and consider as primary sources.

2.0 INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

Research methodology used by Kedah Public Library Corporation is through questionnaire, interview and observation approach based on case study. For oral history project, Kedah Public Library Corporation is using the interview technique because the information received is highly valuable. By doing an interview, we personally satisfied with face-to-face interactions and reactions from respondents through their fruitful information.

There are two forms of interviews which are structured or unstructured. Unstructured interviews allow respondent to give their views, experiences or opinion freely. The schedule will be provided to control the session between interviewer and respondent. Besides, the schedule also will guarantee all questions answerable by the respondents. In addition, this interview method allows the interviewer to gather in depth information related to the experience, opinions and reactions as well as the perception of respondent compare to questionnaire. Within this interview session, the interviewer will get some of experience highlighted through bad or good of facial and eye movement also by the respondent.

3.0 KEDAH PUBLIC LIBRARY CORPORATION ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMS

Generally, oral history programs in Kedah are undertaken by three institutions; Kedah State Museum, National Archive (Kedah/Perlis Branch) and Kedah Public Library Corporation, (Yaacob & Zainol Rashid, 1994). In early 1980, Kedah Public Library Corporation had carried out of 50 projects of oral history programs. Now, Kedah Public Library Corporation had completed 499 topics for local history in Kedah, 156 transcription of project through respondents experience and 737 audio recorded. Traditionally, in Kedah Public Library Corporation the project manager used these three processes to carry out oral history projects:

- The selection and listing of scope and figures
- Interview
- Transcriptions

The selection of oral history projects are not limited to the historical value from the respondent but will be covered various disciplines topics such as:
1. Biographical
2. Music
3. Local History
4. Science and technology
5. Administration
6. Historical
7. Cultural
8. Shows
9. Economical
10. Public speaking
11. Malay Literature
12. Administrative history
13. Sociology
14. Education
15. Medical and health
16. Sports

Rules and regulations for process of oral history activities in Kedah Public Library Corporation:

- Determining the oral history project whether biographical or topical.
- Determine the background of the respondent.
- Provide a rough frame of questions to be presented to the respondent.
- Contact respondent to set the date, time and place before the day of interview session.
- The interview should be recorded in audio/video form.
- Make the Interview transcripts.

4.0 WAYANG KULIT

Kedah Public Library Corporation had covered 499 topics through the oral history projects which contain cultural, historical and others. Nevertheless, these projects were depending on user’s demands. For example, in 2002 and 2015, Kedah Public Library Corporation had interviewed respondent who’s expertise in shadow puppetry. The information about shadow puppetry collected by Kedah Public Library Corporation will help the researchers to acquire the primary sources about Malay culture. Besides that, in cultivating Kedah Heritage field, Kedah Public Library Corporation had taken responsibility to keep and preserve the information through the Oral History Program: Wayang Kulit Seri Asun Projects.

“Wayang kulit” is a form of traditional theatres or shows that uses light and shadow principles. The shadows from the puppet leather will represent the shows, characters and images which conducted or played by a “Dalang” (mastermind). Wayang Kulit performances are usually accompanied by a band of music and blowing instruments. The meaning of the “wayang” in Malay is the shadow which moving around. The “Dalang” means the person performs a shadow puppet show (mastermind). The stage also carries the meaning of the enclosed shelter around it and is used for puppet shows.
Wayang kulit is an entertainment to the Malay culture which represents the performance through their old story to the society. Despite, being an entertainment, shadow puppets also serve many advice through the stories been performed. The lessons and examples will lead the community to be a good person. In addition, this wayang kulit shows been lived the Malay community and become a national cultural heritage. One of the famous, wayang kulit in Northern Region of Malaysia is Wayang Kulit Seri Asun Group. The Wayang Kulit Seri Asun group was formed on August, 1966 in Kampung Kunluang Jitra, State of Kedah, Malaysia. It is founded by Allahyarham Encik Mohd Noh bin Haji Mahmud (Pak Noh). He was not only served as a leader to his group but also as Dalang (mastermind) to the group.

5.0 ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMS: WAYANG KULIT SERI ASUN PROJECTS

The name of Wayang Kulit Seri Asun was taken by the name Asun Town which located near Kampung Kunluang, Jitra Kedah. This Wayang Kulit Seri Asun group had 12 members including Pak Noh himself and his two children; Allahyarham Encik Abdul Majid bin Mohd Noh (Pak Majid) and Encik Mihad bin Mohd Noh. After Pak Noh died, this genealogical of Wayang Kulit Family continued over by his son, Abdul Majid bin Mohd Noh or better known as Pak Majid. Wayang Kulit Seri Asun Group has not only perform their shadow play in Malaysia, but also travelled to several countries across the world such as Australia, Munich, Frankfurt, Bremen, Berlin, Milan, Rome Sicily, Paris, Vietnam, Laos, Hongkong and some other parts in the world (http://pakmajid.weebly.com/, 2018). On 14th May 2015, Kedah Public Library Corporation Oral History team was interviewing Pak Majid regarding the culture, history and everything about Wayang Kulit Seri Asun. The information received as follows:
5.1 RESPONDENT BACKGROUND

Full Name: Abdul Majid bin Mohd Noh.
Date of Birth: January 24, 1949.
Date of Death: July 13, 2016 (67 years old)
Occupation: Dalang (mastermind)
Education: Sekolah Kebangsaan Binjai
Sekolah Menengah Lanjutan Jitra
Name of Wife: Che Amah bt. Kechik.
Address: Kampung Kunluang, Mukim Binjai 06000, Asun Jitra Kedah.

Encik Abdul Majid (Pak Majid) was the second son to Encik Mohd. Noh bin Haji Mahmud (Pak Noh), founder of the Wayang Kulit Seri Asun Group, Jitra. According to Pak Majid, he started playing wayang kulit since 1965 when he was 16 years old. His interest in this field starts when he was following and seeing his father (Pak Noh) played and conducted wayang kulit during that time. From then, he just likely doing and love to follow his father’s footsteps to play wayang kulit. Starting from that, he begins to play and perform the wayang kulit to the audience.

5.2 WAYANG KULIT EQUIPMENT

5.2.1 STAGE

Wayang Kulit was played on the special stage. The stage was set up about 5 feet from the ground to avoid and prevent the audience from stepping to wayang kulit equipment. The length of the stage is about 12 feet and the width is also 12 feet. The height of the front roof is about 7 feet and the back of the roof usually lower and its only 5 feet height. A 12 x 7 screen will be installed before the show is held. Before the theatre begun, the wayang kulit puppets usually to be poked onto bananas trunk by Dalang (mastermind) at the back of the screen. Puppets with good character will be located on the right while puppets with evil character will located on the left of bananas trunk. During the characters and the shapes show, the Dalang will be sited at the back of the screen. Between the Dalang and screen, the lamp is hung to give the best shadow for each character. From the light of the lamps the shadow of the puppets will appears on the screen.

5.2.2 PUPPETS

There are different characters and shapes of wayang kulit puppets. This puppets character’s represents Malaysian Society such as young people, girl, king, queen, giant, good and evil and others. There are also puppets with animals’ character such as tiger, lion, deer, fish, elephant and others. These puppets were made by the cow leather. In general, human-shaped images consist of four types:

- The puppets with one hand moved.
- The puppets with both hands moved.
- The puppets with both hands and mouth moved.
- The puppets with one hand and mouth moved.
5.2.3 CHARACTERS

There are six important characters in the Wayang Kulit Seri Asun:

- King character.
- Queen character.
- Prince (hero character).
- Princess ( heroin character).
- The giant ( cruel character, divided into male and female giants).
- Jokers (comedy characters) – Aidin Keow, Aidin Tong, Aito, Nui Nui, Aipun and Aiteng.

The funny characters will turn the story into comedies as well as attraction and entertainment to audience.

5.2.4 MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

Musical instruments are important role in playing wayang kulit to give the best performance to audience. Music plays a role as follows:

- Provide an incredible atmosphere to the audience.
- Provide sounds to announce the starting of wayang kulit as well as to attract the audience.
- Provide atmospheres scenes by scenes.
- An instrument to the Dalang for singing.

Musical instruments used in puppet show such as:

- A Geduk and a pair of stick
- A pair of Gedombak
- A pair of Gong
- A pair of Kerincing
- A pair of Canang
- A Serunai

Geduk and Gedombak are made of jackfruit and preserve to decades.

6.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, oral history project is a valuable platform to capture explicit knowledge among society. In cultivating the area of Malaysian cultural heritage, this oral history program also being a medium to get primary sources in original form. The sources and knowledge such as wayang kulit will retrieved from the expertise in this field. So, by doing the interview technique through oral history program, the researcher will apply to develop their skill in order to improve preserving Malaysian’s culture and heritage.
APPENDIX:

Gallery of Wayang Kulit Seri Asun Oral History Program

1. Kedah Public Library Corporation Oral History Program

Pak Majid (Dalang) was ready to be interviewed

The crew of oral history was interviewing the Dalang
2. Stage and Puppet’s Character in Wayang Kulit Seri Asun
Pak Majid (Dalang) was demonstrating how to play *wayang kulit*

The *Wayang Kulit Seri Asun*’s audience

The *Wayang Kulit Seri Asun*’s puppets (Prince and Princess Character).
3. Musical Instruments for *Wayang Kulit Seri Asun*

The musical instruments of *Wayang Kulit Seri Asun*

A Geduk and a pair of stick
A pair of **Gong**

A pair of **Gedombak**
A pair of *Kerincing*

A pair of *Canang*
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References


