

From the Guest Editor

Translating Archaeological Artefacts and Architectural Remains at Lembah Bujang, Kedah through the Performance "*Bermulanya Di Sini...Kedah Tua*"

Translating Archaeological Artefacts and Architectural Remains at Lembah Bujang, Kedah through the Performance "Bermulanya Di Sini...Kedah Tua", is a collaborative effort by researchers from the School of the Arts and Centre for Global Archaeological Research (CGAR) Universiti Sains Malaysia, who embarked on a multi-disciplinary research project that fused both the disciplines of arts and sciences. The research titled, "Translating Archaeological Artefacts and Architectural Remains at Lembah Bujang through Dance", is a short term research grant funded by Universiti Sains Malaysia. The contributors of the articles in this special edition comprise of academics and administrative staff from School of the Arts, CGAR, and Division of Alumni and Graduate Employability Centre of Universiti Sains Malaysia. The discussions in these articles explore performance as a process and critically examine the relationship between performance, archaeology, and historical narratives within the framework of a site-specific performance.

The culture of Kedah Tua's early civilisation between the 2nd and 6th CE is retraced through the historical narratives based on existing literary sources, artefacts, and local oral traditions. This retracing allows for the re-imagining and re-creation of possible scenes of an industrialised community, one that revolved around the early iron ore industry. The focus of this special edition is to emphasise the importance of performance in disseminating complex historical and archaeological evidence to the local community. The amalgamation of acting, music, dance, and visuals enables the artistic re-identification of the archaeological discoveries. This in turn informs the understanding of a once thriving civilisation and its significance to Malaysia's historical context through a dynamic and contemporary approach of knowledge transfer.

The first article by Mokhtar Saidin and Shaiful Shahidan discusses the various issues of performing arts within the context of Malaysian archaeology. The confluence between performing arts and the interpretation of scientific archaeological data is widely discussed in this article, as it addresses the issue of performing arts as a mode that can be used to decipher archaeological information. This paper further addresses the possibility of performance arts becoming a live interpretation of an archaeological site and its scientific methods of data discovery functioning as a medium to further engage the audience in an artistic and non-academic platform.

Mumtaz Begum Aboo Backer, Halimi Mohd Noh and Husaini Yaacob propose the textual analysis method in deriving the script for the theatrical play, "*Bermulanya Di Sini...Kedah Tua*". This method looks at the process of describing, interpreting, analysing and evaluating performative prose of the available field texts. Their article further posits that a script acts as the writer's imagination, anticipation and messages which bind the actors and audience to the writer through a reflective communication. The writing of the script for the theatrical production of "*Bermulanya Di Sini...Kedah Tua*" personifies the multi-layered and multi-disciplinary of creative arts; stylised acting, dance, music, vocal and sounds, choreographic movements, dialogues, martial arts, and scenography through historically documented cultures that collided and co-existed during Kedah Tua's early civilisation. Language and dialogues were written in classic Malay form (spoken by aristocrats).

Nur Hilyati Ramli, Mumtaz Begum Aboo Backer and Pravina Manoharan explore how the architectural monuments of Kedah Tua helped curate the various dance movements for the theatrical production. They highlight the importance of collaborative engagement where directors, choreographers, archaeologist, ethnologist, and folklorist come together to creatively bring to life practices of an ancient civilisation. The paper is written on the axis that the arrangement of pure movements and patterned movements for the dances in this production are composed through a deep understanding of the archaeological discoveries, mapping of the excavated sites, and the dramatic text or script.

The next two articles by Johan Othman Awang and Pravina Manoharan discuss the role of music within the theatrical production of "*Bermulanya Di Sini...Kedah Tua*". In the first article, the author constructs and contextualises the idea and role of gender within the various musical compositions for the production. By drawing association between gender and music, the author discusses the notion of gender as a cultural construct. In the second article, Pravina employs the theory of soundscape ecology as the working definition to understand how the different sonic vocabulary of Kedah Tua's ancient history can be reimaged and repositioned within the musical compositional structure of the play.

The following paper by Najib Mohd Sani looks at the re-construction of the artefacts and architectural remains for the theatrical production of "*Bermulanya Di Sini...Kedah Tua*". He discusses the process of prop making for the stage performance from a designer-maker's point of view. The article asserts the entire process encompasses the imitation and reconstruction of two scaled building artefacts; which are the ancient iron smelting furnace to emphasise the iron smelting industry and the circular ritual monument that significantly embodies the early ritualistic religious civilisation of Kedah Tua society between the 2nd and 6th CE.

Muhizam Mustafa and Roslan Chin's article explores the role of visuals and images in a site-specific performance. The authors suggest that the symbiotic relationship between performance, audience and place, is often explored within site specificity and "theatreness" of a production. They postulate the function of images as one area of the theatrical's "visual systems" that affects the creation and reception of a play. This article combines the idea of theory and practice to decode literary and historical sources by triangulating the relationship between archaeological artefacts, architectural space, and time via a site-specific theatrical production in an attempt to re-enact the "everydayness" of a given location.

The final article by Hong Kim Lan, Mumtaz Begum Aboo Backer, Nur Hilyati Ramli and Muhizam Mustafa, present a critical review of the costumes, accessories, and body adornments used for the performance of "*Bermulanya Di Sini...Kedah Tua*". The article draws attention to the importance of data gathering from literature review and field study at the site in providing necessary information with regards to the selection of materials and design of the costumes. The authors discuss how the elements of metal and nature function as a conceptual framework that influenced the selection of materials, costume design, and the various adornments of the play, which have cultural and historical significance. This article addresses the symbolic meaning behind costumes and ornaments, which in turn presents a unique narrative that reconnects the contemporary with the ancient world, thus, bringing the entire theatrical production to life whilst reinforcing the "believability" of the various scenes.

Mumtaz Begum Aboo Backer, Mokhtar Saidin and Pravina Manoharan
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