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The oral resources in the study of sebatik society's social history (malaysia-indonesia) between spatial and opportunity

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Abstract

Although oral sources can allow historians to reconstruct the past, they are not properly utilized by those who study them. This matter is made worse when oral sources are considered a method of collecting less relevant sources in retelling historical events. Indeed, its presence as a source collection method not only has the potential to gather new facts that have not yet been documented but can also confirm document sources and act to

straighten history regarding an event that has been too focused on the dominance of the political elite or contains factual inaccuracies. Therefore, based on the advantages of oral sources, this study seeks to elevate the position of oral sources as an authoritative method and source on par with document sources in history. The effort is made by highlighting the space and opportunities of oral sources in reconstructing the social history of the Sebatik community. In this regard, it was found that there is still much social history of the Sebatik community that is of national value that has not been documented and remains in the form of "collective memory." For this reason, the presence of oral sources can potentially document and preserve the social history of the Sebatik community using oral tradition and oral history methods. This situation proves that oral sources are not only necessary in the context of reconstructing the social history of the Sebatik community but should also be urgently and urgently needed.

Keywords

Oral History, Oral Tradition, Social History, Sebatik Island

Introduction

The development of documentation culture not only affects the development of source collection methods in the discipline of history but also gives a new perspective on the position of oral history as a source of history. This matter became increasingly evident towards the 19th century when historians widely emphasized the approach of definite knowledge to produce history "as it actually happened." Therefore, the role of oral history in preserving the knowledge of society has been replaced by the written system when people document their past knowledge on bones, stones, animal skins, fronds, paper, and media. With that, the function of oral history, which for a long time was responsible for passing on the knowledge of the past to future generations, became less critical, unpopular, and considered to have a low validity value. However, the shift in viewpoint only guarantees that the entire historical experience of a society and country has been perfectly documented because the culture of writing personal letters, keeping daily records, and preparing complete memos has become less critical. This makes it possible for oral history to continue to be relevant to determine whether the human experience is preserved as a source of history because past information can be recorded, even though the events involved took place over a long time.

Although oral history can give historians space to reconstruct the past until now, the method has yet to receive its proper position in the discipline of history. This matter is made worse when oral history is considered a less suitable source collection method because Rankean historians often question the credibility and validity of the information, as illustrated by the expression, "nothing can replace the function of document sources in translating past events." Unknowingly, this statement not only makes the historian's responsibility only as a collector and interpreter of existing documents but also closes the space for most communities

to highlight their history to the world. Indeed, the presence of oral history not only has the potential to obtain new facts that have yet to be documented but also to confirm or correct existing facts regarding a historical event. Based on this factor, it is not surprising that social scientists and humanities are increasingly active in collecting oral history to understand the past as historical evidence for the civilization of a nation and country.

This need should be expedited because historical memory in the form of collective memory takes place among the Sebatik community, considering that the culture of documentation could be better. As a result, most of the historical information that is a "collective memory" has not been documented and has the potential to disappear with the elderly, thereby harming the Malaysian community because these life experiences are national. In another sense, this historical information is essential to preserve because it is directly related to Malaysia's sovereignty, human security, and the formation of the ideal nation. Furthermore, this matter is not something exaggerated because until now, (i) the territorial dispute between Malaysia and Indonesia continues to occur on Sebatik Island, (ii) there is doubt about the national identity of the Sebatik community, whether centered on Malaysia or Indonesia and (iii) studying the historical experience of confrontation Malaysia-Indonesia who saw the border community on Sebatik Island show support for Indonesia over Malaysia. In such a situation, oral history is vital to ensure that an event on Sebatik Island is remembered and preserved as historical evidence. It also creates a new awareness in its community, bound by the same fate, history, and ambitions as Malaysians.

Social History: Democratizing History

In the late 19th century, several professional historians became increasingly disillusioned with the Rankean trend. As a result, this group criticizes the German history center's actions that focus too much on writing political history, history from above, and "big people" only (Burke, 2011: p. 20). In this regard, Karl Lamprecht, as one of the supporters of the criticism, has questioned the antiquity of the Rankean trend, then introduced a new concept of history known as "collective history." Lamprecht's concept of history is considered more advanced than Rankean's because it is not only focused on "political history", "history from above," and "history of big people." Otto Hintze considers this discourse of comparison presented by Lamprecht to be more advanced than Ranke because, according to him "we want to know not only the top of the mountain but also the foot of the mountain, not only the height and depth of the land but the entire continent" (Burke (a), 2011: 21). Although, Lamprecht's effort to end the monopoly of "political history", "history from above" and "history of big people" in Germany was less successful, but the flow of "collective history" received the attention of historians in America and France (Eko Prayitno Joko, 2014: 77- 78, and Eko Prayitno Joko (b), 2022: 145).

This fact was shown in the decade of the 1890s when the American historian Frederick Jackson Turner acted to criticize Rankean historians by stating, "all areas of human activity must be observed because no part of social life can be understood separately from the others" (Eko Prayitno Joko (b), 2022: 145). This statement indirectly opens up opportunities for the development of the oral history method in the writing of history in America, which is also dominated by "political history," "history from above," and "history of big people." In France, a similar movement was seen taking place in the 1920s as the starting point of the "new history" movement led by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre (Burke (b), 1990). The historian also opposes the dominance of political history over the writing of history and tries to replace it with a more extensive and humane historical theme. The emergence of this movement has attracted the interest of most other French historians, leading to the emergence of its school of thought in the writing of history known as the "Annales Sect." The presence of the new history of the Annales sect advocates cooperation between the disciplines of history and social science, causing scientific history championed by Rankean to increasingly question its position (Becker, 1955; and Beard, 1934). Therefore, historians who focus on the Annales Sect emphasize the importance of a multidisciplinary approach from other fields, such as psychology, economics, geography, and demography in understanding history.

This new understanding of the writing of history caused the center of history to change when "social history" replaced the position of "political history" as the backbone of French history writing, thus making history science multidisciplinary. Indirectly also, historical research focuses on the society itself by introducing new statements related to subordinate societies and acknowledging forgotten social groups. This means that social history succeeds in returning history to the community by introducing new facts among subordinate communities and acknowledging forgotten community groups. In fact, according to Trevelyn, without social history, then, political and economic history would be arid. For more clarity, note the following statement:

"Social history not only provides the necessary link between economic and political history. Its scope can include the daily life of the inhabitants of an area in the past, and this includes people and economic relations of various classes, characteristics of household life, labor conditions, and leisure activities, human attitudes towards nature, culture from their respective times that emerged from these general conditions and took shape in religion. Literature, architecture, learning and thinking"

(H. Dadang, 2007: 294)

In addition to bringing changes from subject emphasis, the rise of social history also opens up space for historical research methods (Paul Thompson, 1988; and William W & Peter C, 1986). Previously, most historians focused on document sources as the basis of their writing. Then social history gave new life to oral sources after being marginalized by historians for a long time because it was considered less valid than document sources. It is hoped that changes in the

discipline of history can give appreciation to marginalized community groups. This is because oral sources can break the boundaries between educational institutions and the world and between the elite and the lower classes. With this, the writing of history will be perfect, and its subjective nature can be reduced, even if not wholly. As a result, we increasingly hear historians talk about rediscovering the voices of victims of violence, the voices of the poor and the marginalized (Morrison, 2000: 15; Portelli, 1998). This factor led Paul Thompson to state that 'when biographies of figures only present the lives and views of the elite, then oral research can be seen as a biography of society' (Thompson, 1988: 7). This change in point of view is also felt in the context of the historiography of the Sebatik community which for a long time was too focused on political history. However, it is now balanced with an emphasis on social history. Due to this situation, space and opportunities are increasingly opening up in the study of Sebatik people who keep their experiences in memory rather than writing. Aware of this fact, it is necessary to expedite efforts to position the method of language in understanding the socio-cultural reality of the Sebatik community based on the process of documenting collective memory.

Historiography of Sebatik Society: From Political History to Social History

History, as presented by Becker (1938), Collingwood (1985), Benedetto Croce (1959), Qasim Ahmad (1991), and Muhd Yusof Ibrahim (2016), is a historical writing about historical events that are done to produce historical works as a view and guide future generations. However, each work produced by a historian is different from the work produced by another historian. This is because every work produced is greatly influenced by the sources used and the historian's assessment of the historical events studied. In the context of the history of the Sebatik community, there is still little research on it whether it touches on political, economic and social aspects (Ramlah Daud, 2010; Ramli Dollah et al., 2018; Fauzi Sarjono, 2021; Rudianti E 2012, Saleh M.H, 2015). Nevertheless, several reviewed works indicate that the history of the Sebatik community can be divided into three types of sources: Western, Malaysian and Indonesian.

Western Source

Although Sebatik Island is part of the jurisdiction of the Bulungan Sultanate, there are hardly any writings that describe the Sebatik community during that era. Therefore, Western sources can be considered the earliest sources that explain the development of Sebatik Island, especially involving the issue of Dutch power in the region. In this context, among the earliest Dutch writings that directly touched on Sebatik Island was the "Belanda" newspaper report regarding the ownership rights of the Bulungan Sultanate from Mount Tabor to Batu Tinagat, Tawau (Eko Prayitno Joko (c), 2014: 7). This confirmation was done because the Dutch considered the

Sultanate of Bulungan to have surrendered its territorial sovereignty to them in 1850 and thus other Western powers should not interfere or try to dominate the said area. In addition, other early Western records about Sebatik Island were also found through map sketches produced by Alexander Dalrymple (1770), George August Tindal (1842), Blackie, W.G (1882) and Eugene Murray Aaron (1852), thus proving that Pulau Borneo has begun to be explored and attracted the interest of Western powers to dominate. The production of this map also allows social scientists and later humanities to make it one of the main references in understanding the territorial ownership conflict between the British and the Netherlands after the Agreement of 1824 until the division of Sebatik Island into two countries today (Malaysia-Indonesia). This dispute was debated in detail by Graham Irwin (1967) debated this dispute in detail in detail, who studied the diplomatic competition between Western powers over the Borneo Islands, including the British-Dutch conflict in Batu Tinagat and Sebatik Island. This kind of political debate continued to be expanded by Western scholars after the outbreak of the Malaysia-Indonesia confrontation by making Sebatik Island part of the center of their discourse. This matter can be found in the writings of Mackie (1966), Nick Van Der Bijl (2007), Will Flower (2009), and Ian Pfennigwerth (2008), who states that a great battle has taken place on Sebatik Island because of its position as the territorial border between Malaysia and Indonesia. Even so, the role played by the "border community," and the "paramilitary army" between the two countries is not included in this writing, thereby eliminating the role of subordinate communities during the Malaysia-Indonesia confrontation. Based on the existence of these Western sources, it can be concluded that his research focuses more on writing political history, diplomatic relations and history from above. As a result, there is still much historical information about the people of Sebatik Island that Western scholars have not touched on and needs to be documented for the sake of Malaysian national historiography.

Malaysian Source

In the context of Malaysian scholarly writing, studies on Sebatik Island and its people were less produced before the outbreak of the territorial dispute over Sipadan-Ligitan Island. Therefore, this initial interest parallels the dominance of Western scholarly discourse that focuses on the Malaysia-Indonesia confrontation. This matter can be observed through the writing of Kunaseelan (1996), who debated the relationship between Malaysia and Indonesia throughout the years 1957-1970 before being developed by Syed Othman Syed Omar (1999), Nik Anuar (a) (2000), Yeow (2005), Mariappan (2006) and Abdul Rahman (2021). Despite that, only Abdul Rahman's writings discuss the event in detail, including documenting the experiences of "paramilitary forces" and "border communities" that Western sources and local Malaysian scholars do not explain. Apart from that, the discussion about the political history that includes Sebatik Island can be

observed through the writings of Nik Anuar (b) (2003) as well as Wan Shawaluddin and Ramli (2005), Kadir Mohamad (2009) and Azlie Ismail (2019). All of these writings discuss the ownership issue of Sipadan-Ligitan Island but also mention the Malaysia-Indonesia territorial border that ends at Sebatik Island after the signing of the British-Dutch agreement in 1824. Therefore, Sebatik Island is not the main focus of the debate that is to be presented, but instead simply makes "Sebatik demarcation history" as a strengthening of Malaysia's ownership rights over Sipadan-Ligitan Island. Even so, it can be concluded that the initial interest of Malaysian scholars to observe the history of Sebatik Island is focused on "political history" and the year of events selected while under colonial rule with the use of British sources that are quite dominant but written through an ethnocentric approach.

Although the dominance of the initial discourse on Sebatik Island focused more on political history since 2010, there has been an effort by Malaysian scholars to observe the economic and social history of its society. This action was set in motion by shifting the approach and theme of Sebatik Island history writing, which for a long time was dominated by the writing of "history from above" to "history from below," from focusing on the narration of "big people" to "ordinary society," from relying on "document sources" to "oral history." In general, social scientists at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) initiated this kind of study through studies related to issues of identity and security of border communities. Based on this factor, Ramlah Daud's (2010) study debated how ethnic Bugis in Kampung Sungai Aji Kuning manifested their ethnic and national identity as a livelihood strategy at the border. This study using ethnographic and oral history methods was then continued by Abdul Rahman (2021) by highlighting the role of "paramilitary forces" and "border communities" on Sebatik Island during the confrontation. Since then, the position of the Sebatik community, which is marginalized from the discourse of sovereignty and national security, has been increasingly noticed. With this development, the theme of writing the history of the Sebatik community continues to be democratized with the emergence of village history and economic activities that touch on the role of suppliers of goods and trade commodities such as pepper plants, cocoa and vegetables. Among such writings were produced by Ramli (2007) and Amrullah Maraining (2019), who touched on barter trade, as well as Amelia (2013) and Fauzi Sarjono (2021) related to the informal economy sector on Sebatik Island. This effort continues to be developed with the publication of writings about the urban management model and border community planned to be developed on Sebatik Island by Mohamad Faizal Rashid and Ramli Dollah (2018), Modwin Robin (2018), La Masri Mansyur and Zaini Othman (2018), Marsitah Mohd Radzi (2023) and Eko Prayitno Joko (2023). The dynamism of the study produced by Malaysian scholars needs to be continued as a reaction to the Jokowi administration's policy to "develop from the border" as well as the transfer of the Indonesian capital to Kalimantan so that the people of Sebatik and Sabah Malaysia get a positive impact from it.

Indonesia Source

The history of Sebatik, produced by Indonesian scholars, seems quite balanced with the writing produced by Malaysian scholars. This situation is, to some extent, influenced by the administration's policies before Jokowi, who focused on "Java Island as the center of Indonesian debate". So, with that, the position of Sebatik Island and its people in Indonesian history is not noticed. However, existing studies have been carried out and can be proven by publishing books related to the Malaysia-Indonesia confrontation. Although the Indonesian side produced many writings related to the confrontation, the writings did not touch on (i) the involvement of the Sebatik community or (ii) the presence of Indonesian troops on Sebatik Island during the fighting. Until now, only the writings of Supoduto Citrawijaya (2005) and Julius Pour (2007) describe the deployment of Indonesian troops under the Malaysian Ganyang Operations Command (KOGAM) and the Supreme Operations Command (KOTI) on Sebatik Island in Indonesia's effort to capture the city of Tawau, Malaysia. The rest focuses on the socio-economic history of the Sebatik community related to economic activities, social welfare, migration and the development of nationalism on the island. In this context, themes related to economic activities and development began with the emergence of the writings of Krishna Samudra (2005), who identified the potential resources of Sebatik Island based on ethnic groups, followed by Endang Rudiatin (2012), who looked at the geographical factors of Sebatik Island which borders Tawau, Malaysia as opening opportunities for the Aji Kuning community to activate potential resources to develop their economic interests at the border. Meanwhile, Lily Kusnowati (2002) tends to associate the migration process with the economic activities carried out by the Sebatik community, while Andi Nurlela et al. (2012) appeared with writings that debated the socio-economic situation and the survival of the Sebatik community. Something interesting to note about this writing is the strategic crossing of borders as a rational choice of the Sebatik community. At the same time, ethnicity and dual citizenship protect economic activities.

The theme of the social well-being of the Sebatik community is, among others, brought up in the writings of Sutaat (2006), Dadang Ilham (2013), Ary Setiawan (2013), Ari Sasmoko Adi (2012), Sonny Sudiar (2017), Mahendra Putra Kurnia (2018) and E Yulianti (2020) which debated the need to improve infrastructure facilities and empower the economy on Sebatik Island to avoid the continuation of the "vicious cycle of poverty." This kind of desire needs to be mobilized because it can lead to problems of nationalism among the Sebatik community. This factor allows the emergence of themes related to border community nationalism on Sebatik Island, especially after Indonesia's defeat in the Sipadan-Ligitan Island ownership issue. The meaning of this nationalism was debated by Chairil Sinegar (2008), Sugih Biantoro (2011), Muhammad Hairul Saleh (2011), Sitti Syahar Inayah (2017), Roby Zulkarnain Noer (2017) and Nurlela (2018) by looking at the seriousness and "common sense" that they have to be

part of the Indonesian people. In this regard, Indonesian scholars found that most of the border communities on Sebatik Island with dual citizenship still focus on Indonesia as their "land of bloodshed" compared to Malaysia. From the focus of this kind of research, it was also found that the tendency of Indonesian scholars who previously focused more on political history but now focus on the development of the socio-economic history of the Sebatik community. This tendency is driven by changing the theme and data collection method by placing oral history as the voice of the "narrative of the Sebatik community." With that, the historiography of the Sebatik community becomes more varied in sources and information because it is not limited by document sources alone. This situation allows oral sources to be one of the best ways to trace the history of the Sebatik community, considering that their lives are very close to oral culture as a process of imparting knowledge.

The life of the Sebatik Community with a culture of oral history

History is an ongoing dialogue between the present and the past; understanding and planning for the future requires reading and researching each source. This situation causes historical documents and oral sources to be optimized for use because both have strengths and weaknesses. In this regard, the position of document sources has received widespread attention from the aspect of validity because conventional historians focus on excavating historical sources from archival materials and other document sources. This tendency is due to, since the 17th century, there has been criticism from conventional historians against oral sources that information obtained through interviews will record less accurate facts. This notion further influenced the development of oral sources until the 19th century when it showed a linear line, marginalized and its position was always questioned because it was considered not to have the strength to do historical reconstruction (Eko Prayitno Joko, 2022: 131-132, Thompson, 1988). This view is based on the understanding that less important information is likely to be magnified, but on the other hand, important information has the potential to be left alone. Certainly, this view related to "memory in history" cannot be completely disputed since human memory is also influenced by the factors of time differences, personal interests, ideologies, beliefs and the age factor of the informant so that a person's experience may contain errors and be biased. However, it does not mean that oral sources cannot present the validity of historical sources as shown through document sources. The authority of informants determines whether the matter is obtained from perpetrators, observers, or listeners of a historical event.

In this context, Amin Sweeney once stated that oral sources are never separated from literacy and are intertwined, thus urging social scientists and humanities to preserve them (Sweeney, 1980 and 1987). This call has relevance to be defended if the Sebatik community is used as a basis for the debate. Due to this situation, the Sebatik community indeed lives with a culture of an oral tradition that consists of various oral traditions, oral testimony and oral testimony as

evidence of the culture and value of the community's life. Therefore, it is clear that the life of the Sebatik community today is still familiar with the life of the previous community through the remains of historical and cultural heritage. Despite that, a historical search of previous studies produced by Western, Malaysian, and Indonesian scholars has seen that there is still much information of national value to the Sebatik community that has not yet been documented. With that, historical information, and cultural values in the "collective memory" of the Sebatik community may disappear if not preserved. Meanwhile, understanding these matters is important to enabling future generations to find something useful from the lives of previous communities, such as historical and social value for the development of Malaysia and Indonesia. In general, the dispute over the oral sources of the Sebatik community as an authoritative source of history can be observed through two forms, namely (i) oral tradition and (ii) oral history as classified by Garraghan as follows (Garraghan, 1957 pp. 3-7; and Mohd Amin Hassan, 1974: 27-42):

- i. Word of mouth about events that are difficult to accept as true. This language is known as oral tradition and is spread through three methods, namely (i) stories told by fathers to their children, from teachers to students or from generation to generation, (ii) historical stories introduced through customs, institutions, and religious ceremonies and (iii) historical stories are immortalized in writing and pictures.
- ii. Verbal dissemination of events that are new or still stored in someone's memory. This oral information is known as oral history. It is obtained through two methods, namely (i) eyewitnesses closest to the incident and (ii) intermediary witnesses due to the difficulty of finding the closest witnesses.

Implementing these two methods needs to be immediately mobilized because the older generation of the Sebatik community is dying more and more. However, the process of preserving historical information is not going well. If this unfavorable situation is allowed to continue, it is certain that the history and culture of the Malaysian-Indonesian Sebatik community, which is its precious heritage, will simply disappear. The loss of national historical value means the destruction of some cultural and historical values of the Sebatik community which are also important to know in the establishment of the Malaysian-Indonesian nation-state. Therefore, one of the possibilities to prevent this from happening is through the documentation and research of the oral tradition and oral history of the Sebatik community. In this case, both methods use oral sources to gather the living testimony information. This is because oral sources are obtained from living people and at least the recording of information on tapes or historical documents is derived from the statements of living people. Of course, a good interaction between social scientists and humanities with the Sebatik community can bring closer to the truth of an event being studied (Okihiro, 1981, p. 33).

Oral Tradition

The oral tradition has indeed been known for a long time by the people of Pulau Sebatik because oral is the main communication tool to pass on the knowledge of the past to future generations (Mustafa, 1987, p. 1; and Abdul Shukur, 2007: 1). Therefore, in addition to being a source of knowledge of the past, oral tradition also has the same function as documents, which is to teach and convey knowledge to the later society. The culture of the Sebatik community is, in fact, the result of the work of the community, which has been adapted to the surrounding community to improve its standard of living. In this regard, the Sebatik community sees culture as an aspect that consists of all the manifestations of their virtuous and spiritual lives shown through religion, art, philosophy, science, and history. However, until now, many oral traditions that function as social control still have not been collected and researched. As a result, the oral tradition of the Sebatik community is lost because many of its supporters have died, while the process of passing down the story to the younger generation is not going well. However, the Sebatik community, which consists of various ethnic groups such as Tidung, Bugis and Bajau has its own culture and is different from each other (Ramlah Daud, 2010). The culture of each ethnic group is growing due to (i) internal factors related to population growth and generational change as well as (ii) external factors that touch on the entry of other cultures to Sebatik Island. With that, the culture of the Sebatik community nowadays shows its increasingly complex and dynamic nature. According to Koentjaraningrat, a complex culture shows the following characteristics (Herlan Kasimin, 2008: 1):

- a. Culture exists as a complex of ideas, ideas, values, norms, rules and so on.
 - b. Culture exists as a complex patterned behavior activity of humans and society.
 - c. The existence of culture as a product of human works.
- (Herlan, 2008: 1)

This complex culture covers all the ways of life of the Sebatik community, including literary works that result from their creativity either in written form or orally. In this regard, written literary works include prose, short stories, connected stories, novels, and others, while oral literary works are literary works that are passed down from generation to generation orally, such as folk tales, proverbs and folk songs, the summation of which is known as oral tradition (Herlan, 2008: 2-3). However, due to the lack of documentation regarding the oral traditions practiced by the Sebatik community, many of these heritages have been lost. This situation is not surprising because the Sebatik community does not have the skills to record and document interesting aspects of their ancestral culture (Eko Prayitno Joko, 2022). So, for that reason, the presence of oral tradition is important to collect and record the treasures of the Sebatik community so that it remains preserved despite the speed of modernization hitting Malaysia and Indonesia. The survival of the oral tradition of the Sebatik community should be preserved so that it remains constant, unchanged, and continuously transmitted from one generation to another due to:

a. On Sebatik Island, the community's folklore faces the danger of rapid destruction. This danger threatens the destruction of the historical and cultural resources of the Sebatik community more than before. This situation is due to the potential to communicate more quickly between people through the use of mechanical equipment such as the telephone or the opportunity to interact through virtual space or meet directly, resulting in the birth of a generation that is less interested in listening to or documenting oral traditions from their ancestors. For this reason, the effort of documenting the oral traditions of the Sebatik community can help preserve the heritage treasures to be used as evidence of the culture and history of the community.

b. The ability to rewrite the oral tradition of the Sebatik community well lies in the presence of oral tradition storytellers who can be found in various parts of Sebatik Island. To this day, only a few parts of Sebatik Island can still be proud of having the oral tradition of its community. Most of the oral traditions of the Sebatik community, which are separated according to the part of the settlement, have not yet been documented, and most of them have been lost along with the memories of the community's elders. This situation is due to the fact that the Sebatik community lacks the tradition to record folk tales either in poems or poems presented to them once upon a time in the form of daily records. Therefore, documenting the oral traditions of the Sebatik community can play an important role in overcoming the problem.

Due to the lack of research on the cultural heritage of the Sebatik community, there is already an impression that the number of speakers of this oral tradition is decreasing. As a result, the cultural heritage of the Sebatik community is also threatened and is most likely not known by future generations. Due to this situation, today's young generation is less interested in using the oral tradition of their ethnic group, causing the survival of the cultural heritage of their ancestors to face the danger of extinction. The problem is becoming increasingly worrying because the tendency occurs in almost every village on Sebatik Island, causing a lot of valuable information about the Sebatik community to be lost. After all, it was not documented. Even so, this effort is not too late to be corrected because social scientists can still find storytellers knowledgeable about customs, folklore, poetry, poems, and folk music. This documentation will not only ensure the sustainability of the cultural heritage of the Sebatik community. However, it can also help future social scientists to trace and understand the existence of the Sebatik community in the past. This is because the documented cultural heritage allows social scientists to understand in detail about the Sebatik people who were born and isolated their lives through their ancestral culture. With that, the research that will be produced can characterize historical factors in understanding the existence of the Sebatik community and how the inherited culture can provide understanding to social scientists and humanities regarding who the Sebatik community is.

Oral History

For the first time, the term oral history was introduced by Joseph Gould in the publication of *An Oral History of Our Time* (Mohamad Jefri 2007: 145; and Eko Prayitno Joko (d), 2017: 101). However, this field has been pioneered since the time of Herodotus and is considered to be ahead of its time and not follow the discipline of historical science (Lang, 1984: p. 93; Mona Lohanda, 1998: 103; and Nadzan Haron, 1979: 44). Although its implementation has started much earlier than the writing method in history, however, oral history only gained a place among historians around the 20th century (Mariner, 2005: p. 59; and, Asvi Warman, 2000: 13). This is because historians began to see the need for oral history as a recommendation to support historical sources that are too focused on written documents. In the context of the study of the Sebatik community, oral history can document not only new facts but also correct and confirm existing facts. Due to this situation, oral history can make a significant contribution to developing the chronology of Sebatik community history writing, which is increasingly critical because (Mona Lohanda, 1998: 104; Hilmar Farid, 2003: 144; Kuntowijoyo, 2003: 29; and Aryo, 2007: 7):

- a. Oral history is contemporary in nature and provides a wide opportunity to dig up sources from the perpetrators of a historical event.
- b. Oral history can reach actors that document sources cannot reach.
- c. Oral history can expand historical problems because written document sources do not limit it. With this, oral history can delve into issues never discussed in document sources.

So, it is for this reason that oral history is considered a source of information for historians who use the historical approach as the subject of their study. As expressed before, the Sebatik community is rich in using oral sources to pass on experiences to the next generation. For this reason, many questions can be asked directly to the Sebatik community, not only to the upper class, but also to the lower class, who have a lot of valuable experience. This kind of face-to-face interaction cannot be found in document sources, causing oral history to offer the possibility for historians to be more selective in gathering information sources about the Sebatik community. If there is a part that is not clear, the historian can directly ask the Sebatik community that was interviewed. With that, oral history can provide a kind of discovery (giving an opportunity to develop research about the Sebatik community in the future) and recovery (returning the oldest skill in the profession of the Sebatik community, namely speaking).

However, not all past events of the Sebatik community can be accurately expressed due to the limitations of historical sources. This is because most of the historical sources of the Sebatik community were destroyed during the Second World War, the Malaysia-Indonesia confrontation, or fell into the hands of irresponsible people. At the same time, most individuals who were directly involved in a historical event died and did not have time to document their experiences.

Situations like this make the historical sources of the Sebatik community more important in revealing a past event. The history of the Sebatik community is subjective because each person or each generation has its point of view on a past event with various interpretations according to life experience, approach, or orientation (Dudung, 2007, p. 16). However, to produce the best Sebatik community history writing, historians cannot escape the responsibility of obtaining authentic and reliable sources. For this reason, this writing tries to highlight the role of oral sources as an alternative method and source in writing the history of the Sebatik community.

The Potential of Oral Resources: Alternative History of Sebatik Society

United States President Abraham Lincoln once said that 'we cannot escape history' (Ascher, 1992: 65). It is true that humans cannot avoid the consequences of events that occurred in the past. Humans today are products of the past and our attitudes and efforts today will determine the direction and have consequences in the future (Teuku Ibrahim, 1969: 4). However, the events that happened today are usually forgotten as historical events that have happened in human life because the tradition of writing private letters or daily notes has become less important. Because of this, many historical events cannot be recorded in historical writing due to the absence or lack of sources. Realizing this fact, historians began actively conducting interviews to gather back the history of the past that was not recorded in any written work.

The Sebatik community, for example, keeps a variety of valuable experiences based on historical events that were very little expressed before. Indeed, they were witnesses to the majesty of the Bulungan Sultanate, which was marked by the presence of the Tidung people as the earliest inhabitants of Sebatik Island. The 4° 10' latitude marks the British-Dutch Treaty of 1824 that physically separates Malaysia-Indonesia today through Sebatik Island as its border. The latitude is used as an argument by the Indonesian government in the dispute over the ownership of Sipadan-Ligitan Island, which Malaysia won, and now in the dispute over the sovereignty of Ambalat. Although the relationship between Malaysia and Indonesia is often tinged with conflict and opposition, on Sebatik Island, a harmonious relationship is shown among subordinate communities through economic activities, whether formal or informal. It turns out that until now, information about the event has been difficult to obtain since the study and writing about it is not carried out. The need for this historical information is strongly felt on the part of Indonesia compared to Malaysia, which began to take steps to document all the activities and historical events regarding Sebatik Island and its people.

This kind of existence makes possible the presence of oral sources, which is essential to ensure that all valuable information is not lost along with the supporting community. This role is in line with Louis Starr's statement that oral history is the

successor to the process of gathering historical facts after the disappearance of the tradition of historical writing. This means that oral sources are a data collection method that can produce historical facts through interviews with selected informants (Thompson, 1988). Moreover, oral sources allow historians to collect photos, personal letters, tape recordings and historical facts that have not been researched or re-recorded (Rozeman, 2004: 149). This requirement is very relevant so that the information of national historical value regarding Sebatik and its people is not lost in the modern era. In fact, through oral sources, it is possible to complete a historical event regarding the Sebatik community and not rely too much on colonial document sources.

In addition, oral sources can straighten out the historical events of the Sebatik community, which are most likely biased towards certain parties or even nationalize the history of the community, which is most likely Euro-centric. In this regard, several writings about the Sebatik community were written by Western writers. This situation causes the writing to be written from a Western perspective rather than a local one. However, it is unrealistic to say that Western scholars cannot penetrate the value system of the local community in their writing because sometimes they can master it better than local historians (Qasim, 2004: 22). This situation is because the writing produced is through direct observation of the events being studied and not just their fabrications. However, if no re-historical effort is made, the local historians of both countries will only repeat the facts written by Western scholars. This history can only be made by collecting oral sources by interviewing selected informants with valuable experience.

The success of implementing oral history in correcting history can be seen by taking the example of historical writing regarding the Malaysia-Indonesia confrontation on Sebatik Island. Most writings about this conflict not only highlight the important role played by the Western military when the war broke out but also tend to produce history from above by only highlighting the role of the military between the two countries in defending the sovereignty of their respective countries. Indirectly, such writing will deny the role of the lower classes, the marginalized and the poor in drawing their history based on their experiences and observations of an event (Morrison, 2000: 1; Asvi Warman, 2000: 13; Lynd, 1993: 8; Ahmad Murad, 2009: 3; Badriyah Salleh, 2010: 14). A situation like this that finally opens up space for oral sources to shift social history research that has been more oriented towards the political elite and tends to treat the lower classes such as the working class, women and the poor as objects of capitalist oppression but rarely sees their active role in a historical event.

However, when the Malaysia-Indonesia confrontation broke out, the Sebatik community was directly involved in defending their country. Therefore, by gathering the experiences and observations of the Sebatik community regarding the event, it will not only make history writing more democratic in nature, but also open up space for them to tell the events that happened from their point of view. With this, the function of oral sources becomes wider and not only as a collector of

historical sources but also a method that can maintain the position of ordinary people in history. This is because oral sources can transform historiography by introducing new facts about the Sebatik community, shifting the focus of research and acknowledging the existence of the forgotten Sebatik community. Indirectly, the emergence of an oral history approach that researchers increasingly accept has re-stabilized historical records that are too biased towards the ruling and educated classes. Doesn't this mean opening a new dimension for history or, in the language of Paul Thompson, 'returning history to society' (Thompson, 1988)?

Using oral sources to understand the events of the Malaysia-Indonesia confrontation will open a window or view regarding past events based on individual experiences. According to Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia stated that oral sources are more detailed in talking about a historical figure or event because they can highlight things that document sources cannot achieve. The statement explains that oral sources have the potential to recapitulate real events that take place behind the scenes or stages of human thought that are deeper and hidden and are not expressed in written records (Nadzan Haron, :54). This is because oral sources can be used alone to support information obtained from document sources (Asvi Warman, 2000, pp. 26-27). The strength of oral sources that can stand as a single method is not only able to capture the problems of a historical event, but in this modern age, can reveal historical events that cannot be explained through document sources (Kuntowijoyo, 2003: p. 27; and Aryo, 2007: 7). This is because documented sources can only explain the important events of a historical event, but do not preserve individual movements and steps. For this reason, oral sources that function as complementary material to document sources are very suitable to be applied in the historical study of Sebatik Island and its people to obtain a perfect chronology of an event.

The relevance of the use of oral sources in the study of the Sebatik community is also evident because the culture of writing has not developed in the community. This situation causes the Sebatik community to rarely write daily notes about important events experienced, seen or heard from other individuals. The matter is made worse when the speed of modernization hits Malaysia and Sebatik Island is no exception, allowing its people to communicate quickly by phone, fax, email, or face-to-face with the surrounding community. At the same time, the tradition of writing long letters, keeping daily records and preparing detailed memos has become less important. As a result, a lot of valuable information about the Sebatik community has been lost. What remains in the collective memory of the community faces the danger of extinction if not documented. In existence like this, the collection of oral sources can ensure the sustainability of historical information that once happened on Sebatik Island or other events close to the community.

The potential of collecting oral sources in the study of the Sebatik community is becoming more and more evident when more and more of the elderly who keep valuable information have gone along with their experiences that were

not documented. The situation is detrimental to Malaysia and Indonesia, who rely heavily on Western sources to understand their past. For this reason, documentation efforts regarding the Sebatik community need to be implemented immediately, considering that the information obtained through oral sources is more recent and more complex when compared to previous writings. Therefore, the researchers should not rely too much on primary and secondary sources but instead need to make an effort to collect oral sources that are still abundant in the older generation and have not been documented. The effort to record and document these oral sources is important because historical documents will remain, but humans who inherit historical events will not remain forever. This picture can be explained through Louis Starr's expression:

For deeds do die, however nobile donne, and thoughts of men do as themselves decay, But wise words taught in numbers for to runne, Recorded by the Muses, live for ay..."

(Mabel, 1984)

Conclusion

The truth in history can only be revealed through collecting historical sources. However, with the existence of limited document sources in the present, not all events of the past can be expressed accurately. This situation is caused by most existing sources regarding an event being destroyed or falling into the hands of irresponsible people. At the same time, historical sources need to be rewritten due to the availability of existing writings that may be biased towards certain parties or written from the perspective of Western science so that it is considered to ignore the local community's point of view. In this existence, the historical source becomes more important in revealing a past event. In general, the space for reconstructing the history of a country or a society is highly dependent on oral sources because of their uniqueness, which can confirm, document and correct existing historical sources. This matter is seen in the study of the Sebatik people, who still keep much valuable information in their collective memory.

The wealth of valuable information about the Sebatik community is not surprising because of the island's position, which recorded many important events, whether under the Bulungan Sultanate, the colonial era, or even under the Malaysian-Indonesian administration. So with that, the space and opportunity for oral sources to reveal the history of Sebatik Island and its community are still wide open. This situation is not only due to the ability of oral sources to make the history of Sebatik Island and its community more democratic by raising the voices of marginalized groups but also as a continuation of the process of gathering historical facts after the loss of the tradition of history writing. It is no longer relevant to defend the concept of 'no document no history' in understanding the historical development of Sebatik Island and its people. The historian's dream to present the past *wei es eigentlich gewesen ist*, in a radical sense, can only be achieved if oral sources are elevated to their proper position, which is as a complementary source

to existing document sources, such as the dependency that insists on Sebatik history in the context of time studies now.

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