



Mencari Malaysia

Reading Historiography & Social Thought

Date: Friday, 13 April 2018

Time : 3-6pm

Venue : History Department Resource
Centre, Faculty of Arts & Social
Sciences, University Malaya

Moderator : Prof. Syed Farid Alatas

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Reservation



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Mencari Malaysia Reading Group

How do we understand our history? The Malaysian nation-state is a relatively young entity, formally coming into being less than 60 years ago. There are many Malaysians today who were born into a territory that was not named or even conceived as Malaysia. How do we understand our collective past and the trajectories that influenced our current present? How does this understanding shape our identities, our affiliations, our constitution? Are we really made up of 'imagined communities'? Why should our national territory get truncated at our international borders? If 'the past is a foreign country', what is the value of studying our history? Is it even necessary to have a common history?

Malaysia is often described as a development success story in official discourse - rapidly reducing poverty, increasing standards of living and implementing effective strategies to achieve high-income nation status. How do we conceptualize the different, often competing, narratives of change? How do we describe the contested landscape of transformation - whether in terms of power relations, class struggle or new social movements? What does liquid modernity mean for a society stepping out of the shadows of the *Kerajaan*? How do you fit-in the 'Islamic' in the anthropology of the state? Can a common history help enhance the reflexivity of Malaysians in an increasingly 'risk society'?



These are some of the fundamental questions that confront students interested in the study of Malaysia and the forces of change affecting Malaysia. The ability to answer these and other related questions rests on our knowledge of not only the facts of the past, but how we frame the trajectories of change and the nature of society in the past. Thus, social thought and theory become indispensable to the construction of our picture of the past and understanding of the present.

The **Mencari Malaysia reading group** will meet once every two months to read seminal works that stimulate discussion on the theoretical history, historiography and historical sociology of the Nusantara. The readings will deal with problems surrounding the issues of Eurocentric and nationalist history and how social thought and theory can contribute to an understanding of history that resonates with contemporary issues shaping the public discourse. The objective is to stimulate debate and develop richer understandings of who we are as Malaysians.

If you need an electronic copy of the paper, please write in to shah.faez@gmail.com with your request. Please provide your name and mobile number for Whatsapp announcements.

All are welcome.

For session #1, we will be reading:

Cheah Boon Kheng

“WRITING INDIGENOUS HISTORY IN MALAYSIA:
A Survey on Approaches and Problems.”

*Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of
Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1996, pp.

33–81



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