Making Heritage in Malaysia

Sites, Histories, Identities

Edited by Sharmani Patricia Gabriel
## CONTENTS

**Part I  Introduction**

1  **Postcolonialising Heritage and the Idea of “Malaysia”**  
Sharmani Patricia Gabriel

**Part II  (Re)Telling Museum and Community Stories**

2  **Negotiating Museum Narratives: The Sarawak Museum, the Brooke State and the Construction of Cultural Heritage, 1886–1963**  
Jennifer R. Morris

3  **The Serdang Folk Museum and the Performance of Heritage: Community Museums as an Alternative to National Heritage**  
Sunitha Janamohanan

4  **Dual Triumphantist Heritage Narrative and the Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement**  
Heong-Hong Por
Part III  (Re)Mapping Multicultural and Folklore Heritage  137

5  Cultural Mapping and the Making of Heritage  139
Susan Philip

6  Re(con)figuring the Nenek Kebayan Through Folktale Adaptation: Malaysian Folktales as Literary and Cultural Heritage  163
Sharifah Aishah Osman

Part IV  The Small Town, Nostalgia, and the Environment  185

7  The Small Town as Heritage in the Writings of Rehman Rashid and Shih-Li Kow  187
Carol Leon

8  “The Unmovable Self Situated in the Quicksand of Memory”: Nostalgia and Intangible Natural Heritage in the Weather Poems of Shirley Geok-lin Lim  209
Agnes S. K. Yeow

Part V  Imagined and Cosmopolitan Heritage  229

9  Imagined Heritage: Ee Tiang Hong’s “Eternal” Melaka  231
Siew-Teip Looi

10  Add Place and Stir: Origins, Authenticity and the “Malaysian” Kari Kapitan  257
Leonard Jeyam
11 “Boria Everywhere in the World”: A Penang Burlesque and the Politics of Heritage 275
Simon Soon

Index 311
CHAPTER 9

Imagined Heritage: Ee Tiang Hong’s “Eternal” Melaka

Siew-Teip Looi

INTRODUCTION

Heritage is an important marker of identity for the nation, and is, like the nation, an imagined social construct, as demonstrated by Benedict Anderson (2006) in his seminal work *Imagined Communities*. For many newer nation-states, especially those that came into being in the wake of the process of decolonisation in the twentieth century, the concept of heritage also became an important tool of nationalism and nation-building. The process of negotiating a national identity in the face of the complexities and contradictions of many of these multilingual, multi-ethnic and multicultural postcolonial societies often resulted in fraught contestations over heritage as a marker of this identity.

In Malaysia, the tacit acknowledgement of the multicultural realities on the ground of the early years of the postcolonial period gave way in the 1970s to an assertive Malay nationalism that culminated in the introduction of the National Culture Policy in 1971, which defined Malaysian culture in terms of the centrality of Malay culture and of Islam as an important marker of Malaysian identity. Elements from other communities were to