

Writing minority history: perspectives on the historiography of Christianity in Malaysia.

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Introduction

Writing Christian history in Malaysia must take account of questions about who should write history, a broadening understanding of the scope of historical enquiry, the experience of Christianity as a minority religion, and the implications of being part of a world-wide faith.

History writing takes place within history and is itself subject to critical historical reflection. History is important for self-understanding and for the understanding of others. Shifts in the focus of historiography in general must be taken seriously by those concerned with minority and religious research. Just as Malaysian history must be about more than "wars, administration and economics,"¹ so must the history of minorities within Malaysia, such the Christian church, be about more than conflict, building and finance. It must be about culture and people not just leaders. It must deal with failure as well as achievement.

All history is subject to debate, to the interaction of ideology and reality, to the asking of new questions and the re-examination of old issues. In every generation it must take account of the reinterpretation of existing material and make the revisions required by the discovery of the forgotten. Judgements of significance as well as statements of fact are alike subject to change, and not all these are congenial.

Who writes history

Some years ago G R Elton observed.

At any given moment there are always four generations of historians at work (or, as the case may be, not at work). The respected elders, from about 65 years upwards, tend to consolidate their achievements, an exercise which envy sometimes terms resting on their laurels. The seniors (50-65) tend to get pre-occupied with running things and have lost their way to the archives, but they still think about it all. Those in their prime (35-50) find the calls of teaching exceptionally heavy, but nevertheless manage to put out the results they gathered when themselves in the junior class. These, lastly, are the newcomers of the day, the men and women with the egg of the PhD shell still sticking to their ears and the faraway look of pioneers in their eyes: they are the ones who supply the contents of learned journals. Which of these generations should write the nation's textbooks and surveys?²

This says something about the life of the professional historian and raises the question whether history, in contrast perhaps to science and sport, is a discipline in which maturity, perspective and experience of research and teaching over many years, should be the background of those whose judgements may be expected to stand the test of time. It is a reminder of where the results of history, including the history of minorities, must eventually be found. Text-books are a professional responsibility.

As soon as one asks whether minority groups have their stories properly represented in the history of a nation, it is necessary to note that contrary to Elton's apparent assumption, many are involved in addition to those in universities. It is not possible for one person or

group on its own to be responsible for the totality of the task,

It is a feature of Malaysian culture that plurality is affirmed as part of national identity, and the need to give attention to minorities is recognised. A test of a democratic society is not simply whether institutions carry out the wishes of the majority, but whether in so doing, they provide for the interests and sensitivities of minorities.

In this the historian has special responsibility not diminished by the fact that he or she will not always be listened to. The power of popular myth interferes with the historian's ability to be heard. Not everybody wants to know that heroes were not all saints and that saints were not necessarily easy to live with. Not all can cope with complexities and ambiguities, or the fact that on examination golden ages were not all they were said to be.

Any historian is subject to pressures and temptations and a historian identified with a minority group faces these from within and without his or her own community. In both there are misunderstandings and errors and people whose interests are better served by the maintenance of myths than by their correction. There are temptations to arrogance, exaggeration and defensiveness, quite apart from failures at the level of training, competence, industry and the determination of an appropriate critical framework. In the interests of objectivity or the desire to relate to majority concerns, some may be inclined to magnify the failings of their community; others may be inclined to gloss over mistakes, difficult personalities, and embarrassing evidence.

Minority groups tend to be sensitive about who is writing their story. There can be the feeling that the possibility of redress in cases of unfair reporting may be limited or counterproductive. Provided there is scope for scholarly interchange of opinion, it is important minority groups are open with their history rather than defensive - pleased rather than threatened that others take an interest in their role in the life of the nation.

A wide range of people may study Christianity in ways valid for them. It is of the nature of the case that a particular person, group or institution may be more or less sympathetic to the subject, more or less competent within their own terms, or far from the standards of research and reflection an academic community would like to see. Nonetheless they are part of the overall enterprise. The "professional" historian depends on the work of the amateur, not just that of colleagues or the sources provided by institutions. Without those who informally record the experiences of family members, religious and social history are alike impoverished.

This diversity of involvement applies between different parts of the minority group - which is seldom as unified as those without or within are apt to think. It applies between different churches, and between different religions. Those within a particular group have questions which are different from those outside. Questions the Western world, for instance, asks about the non-Western world are not the same as the non-Western world asks about itself, or which one part of the non-Western world asks about another.

While a minority group usually has more to be gained than lost by the participation of others in the study of its history, this is not to be confused with leaving to others what it should do for itself. Its own involvement is needed to ensure justice is done to its intentions, ideals and identity in a way others can never quite achieve. By working with others it stands to gain more from their insights than it is likely to lose from their misunderstandings.

At the same time those others are in a position of trust. That does not necessarily mean the suppression of the uncomfortable, but it does mean outside researchers must be willing for others to question their ideas, check their facts, revise their conclusions and formulate

alternative theses. The mutuality of this enterprise is vital to real progress.

What is done from outside has a role in enabling the international community to learn from the experience of another country, but cannot be definitive except within its own terms. Locally it acts to stimulate those who must write their own version of personalities and events. It is important to take advantage of an external perspective to draw attention to things missed by those close to events and personalities in time or culture. Outside researchers no doubt seek to be fair, objective and complete so that those concerned can recognise themselves in their own story. Nevertheless conclusions, however painstakingly reached, are inevitably partial and likely to be challenged.

The problem of Westerners making their reputations out of the documentation of other people's lives is not easily divested. History should not pretend to be something it is not. Whoever it is written by it should represent an attempt to be as objective as possible. It is of course from their perspective. Yet it is not *just* their history. It is shared with those it is about and without whom it would not exist. It is history given over to others, to use, criticise, engage with and modify as they write their own version of these events.

Whoever we are, we approach our task from a certain time, place and culture. There is something provisional about all we do, yet we also aspire to integrity and competence. We write to say this is how, from these assumptions, things seem to be. But ownership is not possession; our work is handed over to others to form their own conclusions and write their own story. The real need is to remove the assumption that any one perspective can be above critical comment or investigation.

Christianity as a minority religion in Malaysia

Christianity has been in world history both a majority faith and a minority religion. It has experienced the temptations of power as well as the realities of persecution. It shares this with other faiths, and can learn from and contribute to their reflections. Such interchange is of relevance in connection with the needs and problems of minorities in general. Although beyond the scope of this paper, writings in the *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, for instance, are of particular importance in this respect.

In Malaysia, Christianity may not always have been considered a minority religion. Statistics are misleading on their own, because it depends how large an area is being considered. The overall population is small, but in some places it is concentrated. An insignificant minority over a large area, may be a threatening majority in a small one.

The situation is not simple, and reality and perception may be at variance. It is not just a matter of numbers, but of perceived relationship to political authority and institutions such as the media, education, and trade. The dynamics of being a minority group can apply to a majority if they feel threatened. Under the Portuguese in Melaka, the influence of the Church on the surrounding area was minimal. It was not unknown for visitors from Goa to feel that despite the churches, and being the seat of an Archbishop with enormous geographical jurisdiction, Melaka was not a Christian place at all - not just because of the moral failures of the Portuguese, but because of the numbers of those of other faiths within the area. Those of other faiths saw things differently.

Until early in the 18th Century Catholicism was banned under the Dutch - in theory if not always in practice, - producing the situation where one form of Christianity was a minority relative to another.

In India until 1813 the priority of trade concerns made missionary activity illegal under the British East India Company. Later in the Straits Settlements all faiths were allowed but something of the same attitude existed. Christian missionaries were able to establish themselves, yet churches were often more conscious of government restriction than grateful for state assistance. Although the state made their presence possible because of the need to minister to expatriate Christians - British, Indian and Chinese; government aid was limited and largely confined to Anglican chaplaincies in Taiping, Melaka, Penang and Singapore. These arrangements were terminated at Merdeka if not before.

The chaplaincy system was a provision for expatriate British as part of East India Company obligations. The British were cautious about promoting Christianity, and the Treaty of Pangkor was a formal element in this restraint. An exception was Templer's efforts from 1952 onwards when the government was prepared to fund church activity in the New Villages. Churches were reluctant to avail themselves of such funding and more sensitive than the government to its implications. This included awareness that even though Christianity was a minority in terms of numbers, that was not necessarily the perception of others and association with the Colonial power was a mixed blessing.

Changes in Christian historiography.

Traditionally the role of the church historian was to serve the need of a particular community to justify itself over against those who said it should be different in the present or had acted wrongly in the past. In an age more concerned to bring Christians together, concerns have shifted towards understanding the historical and social basis of conflict and resolving differences rather than perpetuating them.

This dramatic change can be seen by comparing two standard Catholic Encyclopedias, and examining articles relating to Protestants and to other Faiths. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* produced at the beginning of this century is not lacking in thoroughness or scholarship, but its attitude to those outside its own community is defensive and critical to the point of hostility. By contrast, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* produced in the 1960s and 1970s seeks to describe and understand rather than condemn. Its authors have aspired to writing about those with whom they disagree in a manner which that person or group is likely to recognise as at least attempting to be fair.

The moves in wider historiography towards social history not just political, to look at those on the margins of society, not just the leaders, are also reflected in Christian writing. Yet the question how much the historian should also be theologian is one which recurs. There are calls for historians to demonstrate the hand of God in history; but Christian historians, as historians, generally feel reluctant to accept that role. It is not that their faith and their convictions about God in history are irrelevant to their calling, far from it. However, their task is primarily to tell the story of the church as a human story, full of elements to which humanity is prone. Whatever overarching theological beliefs there may be, the role of the historian is to draw attention to social, economic and political elements in the history of a community which as well as being a community of faith, is also a community in history operating in a similar manner to other groups of human beings.

Christian historians today are more open to those of different Christian traditions and other faiths providing insights which must be taken seriously. There is a fresh willingness to be involved as part of team rather than attempting a solitary enterprise. The amount of work to be done once Christian history includes all the people and factors involved, not just heroes, leaders and institutions, also requires a

team approach. This is reinforced by the need to deal adequately with minorities within minorities, with women's issues, and youth, and the new questions and issues which every generation produces. A commitment to understanding, more than to the defense of a particular cause - unless evidence requires that be done - means it is possible to aspire to a more irenic rather than combative style of writing and analysis.³

Issues of minority experience

For any minority there is benefit studying the experiences of similar groups. In the case of Christianity there have been many situations in church history where Christians have been in a minority in conflict with the ideology of the majority. These experiences raise questions of the variety of responses made to being under pressure - whether at the hand of opposing and secular ideologies, other faiths, or fellow Christians.

Such study may serve as a warning of the dangers inherent in these situations, elements which historians must be aware of. Minorities are likely to be misunderstood and judged harshly by the majority. It is the task of the historian to rectify this, but it is a mistake to assume those who are wronged are never wrong themselves. It is possible for those on the receiving end of oppression to perceive disagreement as oppressive even if it is minor. In a situation of conflict it is easy to misinterpret the reasonable claims of those in authority. Minorities are as capable of misunderstanding as anybody, and their position is not always an aid to objectivity. Their treatment may be disproportionate or otherwise unfair, but being on the receiving end of religious persecution does not answer the question whether or not some offence has been committed.

While one has to be aware that innocent beginnings may be a cloak for evil ends, a suspicious mind can be a liability.⁴ If there is a lack of trust and understanding between majority and minority, the best intentions of each will be misinterpreted. It is not the sole responsibility of historians to avoid this, but theirs is an essential role.

Minority historians need to study what individuals and groups have done in the past, how they recognised forces which lead to oppression as they arose, how they responded in times of crisis, and how those who survived worked to rebuild their societies when it was over. Christians, like others, do not all agree with what should be done in times of crisis, and leadership may be confused or compromised.

Surprisingly in view of all this, it is possible for minorities to be complacent about the preservation of their faith, language, culture and history. Yet the ultimate aim of totalitarian groups is frequently to obliterate the memory of those they persecute and to rewrite history accordingly. Religious freedom is the most fundamental of all freedoms. To take away a person's "right to believe" is to deprive them of the most basic ingredient of personal human existence.

Failure in the collective memory of a minority group which has experienced oppression, whether serious or minor, carries great dangers. People, including religious people, are likely to be damaged in various ways including emotionally and spiritually. Not all are strengthened by the experience of being oppressed. Their judgement may be distorted even when their faith has grown. The minority historian must take seriously very human and understandable responses to these experiences, yet also by the information and perspective which they may be better placed to bring, help their people rise above these things.

The historian of the minority has thus the task not only of preserving and representing the story and the memory of his own community, but of also using a knowledge of the wider context to remind people that they may be wrong as well as wronged, and that they need to

be as careful of the freedoms of others as of the freedoms they seek for themselves. The historian has a concern for human rights which extends beyond concern for his or her own community and is the bearer of the not always welcome information that the persecuted can become persecutors.

The problems which arise for minority groups in extreme situations, may alert us to things which have to be born in mind in more ordinary times. Awareness of lessons from the experience of persecution may be a warning about the proper treatment of other minorities, even in eras marked by good will and good intentions.

Christianity as a worldwide Faith.

A notable feature of Christianity in the last two centuries is how it has crossed cultural boundaries and moved from being the religion of those associated with Europe, to being rooted in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and the Americas. One outcome of the new historiography of this development is not how much western missionaries had to do with it, but how little. The globalisation of Christianity coupled with a sense of the importance of the localisation of its history and theology raise questions of perspective, methods, sources and ownership which are important to address, particularly in minority situations.

Christianity is thus moving from a situation where the Western world and its philosophical traditions set the norms of content and expression for theology and the centre of gravity for Christian history, to one in which the variety of content, expression and history found in different countries and cultures must be taken with comparable seriousness and norms and continuities looked for out of multi-cultural comparison and involvement. The study of Christianity in the non-western world is therefore concerned with "South-South" interaction, not just "North-South." It cannot be a matter of the centre and the periphery changing places - though there may be some pressures in that direction - but of both becoming more diffuse.

This has importance for Malaysian Christian historiography. In studying the past it is necessary to learn from countries with comparable colonial experiences and religious history such as Africa, India and China. The European legacy is not to be disowned however it may be evaluated. It is necessary to write new history rooted in the life of those on the receiving end of colonialism and missions; even when the writing the history of the missions themselves remains a valid task.

One benefit of a less Euro-centred view, has been that forms of Christian expression which have not always been taken seriously within the old countries, but are prevalent in some of the new, have come to be accepted and better understood. New Religious Movements or "adjustment cults" provide an example of the integration of Christian and traditional beliefs in a way which has not been greatly observed in Southeast Asia.⁵ This is an essentially positive development and part of the nature of a universal faith even if it is not consistently encouraged, however much it may be intrinsic to a religion which believes in incarnation. While some feel insecure unless the boundaries of different belief systems are sharply drawn, others see contextualisation as a vital element in dis-association from cultural imperialism.

The documentation of New Religious Movements world-wide has been considerable, yet the difficulties of trying to catch in words and on paper what is often by its very nature dynamic, spontaneous and non-literary mean much is missed. What has been said about African Independent Churches - the non-Western churches for whom documentation is probably strongest - applies also to Asia and Malaysia. Perhaps because it is often a different class of society involved, Christian -

rather than 'secular' writers seem slow to examine what these sorts of things mean.⁶

The membership is often recruited from the marginalized, the voiceless, the poor, the non-literate. They nevertheless have a very lively faith and a strong sense of mission. Their [his]story is often told in the form of a story, mostly unwritten. But it is often the story of manifestations of the power of God in healing, exorcism and glossolalia, precisely gifts which Christ bequeathed to His church, but which somehow is put in abeyance by established Christianity. It may not be erudite ... but it is the history of a church living in time and space, living the biblical faith and addressing the hopes and fears of people ... a history not written up but still history, Christian oral tradition.⁷

As far as Malaysia is concerned, apart from an article by Michael Northcott,⁸ the most comprehensive treatment of Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement has been provided by Susan Ackerman and Raymond Lee⁹ whose concerns are sociological. Although reflection on the conversion of middle-class Singaporeans may contain clues to dynamics at work in Malaysia, these theories need to be explored in the Malaysian context.¹⁰ Whether popular spirituality is what it ought to be is one thing, that it is a genuine dimension of religious faith in a particular context has to be taken seriously. Minority history must deal with its own minorities as well.

Ideology and methodology

There is danger allowing ideological frameworks to fill gaps in information. Impatience to prove a general thesis results in selective choice of evidence, distorts understanding and delays the gathering of resources and finding aids which might make the testing of theories possible.

Religious history suffers from this in a number of ways. It is a natural tendency for those not religious to seek to demonstrate religion is either irrelevant or dangerous. It is in the interests of those who share faith to show how it has proved itself relevant and beneficial or at worst inconsequential. It is not wrong to test such judgements, but the temptation to make the evidence fit the theory, rather than the other way around, is strong.

These considerations apply also when there is no malice, nor any attempt to misrepresent anybody or anything. They apply to the interpretation of past documents which require us to ask who they were written for and why, and more recent writing and our own must be subject to the same scrutiny. It is important the methodology of history operates in a situation where theories and evidence may be checked, and where attention is given to minimising basic errors in the first place.

It is part of such methodology to survey what is already known and what is understood to be the situation in a particular context. It may be necessary to prepare material which is first of all not so much in itself a writing of history but the provision of tools to enable that task to be undertaken. There are questions to be identified. There is the existing process to be examined. How is historiography taught? What values are learnt? What experiences are provided to develop basic skills? Are primary documents part of class-room experience? Are there discussions of what is involved in determining periodisation? How does one deal with sensitivities of race, patronage, conflict and

corruption? How does one decide which issues are worthy of critical enquiry? How ecumenical and how confessional is all this? What attention is given to local history and theology? To political and cultural contexts? How is the particularity of the local related to regional and global experiences? How much is this a task of the many and how much is it that of the expert? Do students record how Christianity came to their village or their family? Are they given experience doing oral history? Are records preserved which enable the production of biographical details of leadership and laity? Do publications encourage writing which allows for documentation of the life of the church now? Are there archives? Are people encouraged to tell their own story and record the stories of others?

Progress in the study of Christianity in a minority situation, or anywhere else, depends on examination of primary sources, and on allowing those sources to determine the questions which it is possible to answer including questions the researcher may never have thought of. The collection, classification and dissemination of these sources must therefore be of major concern. If we lose our way to the archives it is possible to prove anything and to disprove very little.

Speaking generally sources may be written or oral; they may be primary, secondary, formal, informal, in church hands or in the hands of others. In the Western world the sources are likely to be largely within the country itself; they are likely to be in the language of the country; it is possible they will be geographically accessible, and may, depending on the period, be well preserved with efficient finding aids. Elsewhere, depending on the nature and extent of colonialism and political stability, they are likely to be in a range of languages and found in different parts of the globe. These languages may no longer be widely spoken within the country and it may be difficult for one person to be competent in the languages concerned.

Archives may be in the hands of governments, mission societies and churches which may or may not have an on-going relationship with the country and its churches. The records of one ethnic group may be under the control of another ethnic group. Archives may be held by agencies with limited sympathy. Lacking their own resources, churches, particularly if they are a minority faith, may have a painful choice between preservation and accessibility, and may open themselves to their archives being used against them. Security may remain a problem. There may also be difficulty with financial resources. Fortunately not too many of these concerns apply to Malaysia.

There is in general a willingness on the part of Western depositories to make their holdings available in microform if not in original. There is no short cut across barriers of language, and the value of studying in another place is still recognised even if the wider availability of material in microform makes it less essential. Travel does have added value where it provides for comparative study within a multi-cultural community of scholars whose trust makes mutual critical engagement possible. It is important such study be further facilitated within Malaysia and in this the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society has an ongoing role.

Reflections from Malaysian experience.

In 1984 the Malaysian Church History Study Group was set up¹¹ to be as broadly based as possible. Early projects were the production of *A short introduction to Malaysian Church History*,¹² the beginnings of a comprehensive bibliography of material in English¹³ and organising a symposium to provide an occasion for the writing of papers outlining denominational histories.¹⁴

In 1985 and again in 1987 Asian regional meetings of the

Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) Working Commission on Church History took place in Bombay and Manila. These meetings had relevance to what was being attempted in Malaysia. Along with a similar group in Africa and others in Latin America, the concern was to encourage the writing of post-colonial church history. Although the methodological problems involved were underestimated, the EATWOT enterprise was formative and some of its concerns came to be reflected in the work of the Malaysian Church History Study Group. From this a number of principles came clear.

1. Whom we were writing for.

The call to write not just on behalf of the receiving end, but on behalf of the poor and oppressed was a real challenge, but one which had methodological problems which were considerable. In a multi-cultural situation with a complex colonial history and minority Christianity the issue of who is oppressed and who is oppressor, who is poor etc., is not straightforward and changes with time. In Malaysia the poor are not generally Christian, and at times both Christian and non-Christian perceive the other as the oppressor - the one politically and the other economically.

Often missionary writing of earlier generations was written for a public in the sending country or for locally resident expatriates. What was written for local Christians was not infrequently translations of Western material. The inadequacy of this is now obvious, but its value should not be denied either. It helped ensure parts of Malaysia's cultural and religious heritage was documented and put Malaysian Christians in touch with a wider world. It is now better recognised that what is needed is not just material which answers the questions of churches overseas about what was going on in countries to which missionaries had been sent, but that which seeks to provide a sense of identity for a local church concerned with questions like "Who are we?" "Where have we come from?" "Where are we going?"

Writing for a local constituency means national concerns have priority and one of those concerns is how expressions of Christianity can be true both to its universal nature and its local cultural context. Christians would regard both as God-given. A national audience means there must be more detailed reference to local places, personalities and events and there is less need to impose a critical framework designed to prove something about generalised theories of religion and its environment. There is need for biography, narrative and chronicle; at the same time there should be interpretation and an identification of recurring issues. The area to be studied can be smaller, and comparative studies within the country are possible. Justice should be done to the periphery as well as the centre, to those on the fringes of official Christianity as well as those who represent groups of churches and church-related organisations.

Distortions due to the interests of audience also apply to writing for local consumption and Western guilt is no more a basis for sound judgement than nationalism, romanticism or defensiveness. Questions of contextualisation cannot be answered without a critical knowledge of the historical experience of the church in each culture. There is a danger that where hard information is not available, the assumptions of ideology (of whatever stripe) will fill the gaps.

2. Writing should as far as possible be a team effort.

There has been more success encouraging and assisting those already interested and committed than commissioning those representative of every group. More than desirable it was necessary to resort to using expatriates to write up a number of situations it was hoped could have

been completed by others. As in other areas, the writing of Christian history in Malaysia is a Malaysian responsibility where others may be privileged to assist, but no more than that. There has been a team effort, papers have been shared, comments exchanged and improvements made, and what has been done will stimulate others to action.

3. The need for the preservation of records and making them available is very clear.

The climate of Malaysia is not archives friendly, but the biggest enemy of the records of the past is man. Important minutes of meetings with church and government leaders have been lost and were it not for archives in London would still be lost. In a post colonial era churches are anxious to know their identity but the process of achieving this requires greater commitment to matters of documentation, collection and preservation. The history of the ecumenical movement, of social involvement, of engagement with other faiths, are all dimensions where past records need to be located and digested so that a coherent narrative can be provided to give some indication of what has and has not proved possible in the past.

4. The commitment to writing history is still mixed.

Individuals have got projects done which without the encouragement of the group and the availability of the resources brought together would not have been possible. The example of the universities must not go unacknowledged. The role of seminaries in facilitating the writing of the story of Christianity in Malaysia is notable, but sometimes in the churches making history seems more important than writing it. For an individual that may be a matter of preference and calling; for churches, and for the nation, it is a failing.

The Future

Much of history writing is a commitment to industry. Hard work is required and from that there is no escape. From within and without the Christian community there need to be those committed to the serious study of the role of Christianity in the past and the present. The standards which should be aspired to have been set. One does not have to apologise for wanting to write about Malaysian Christians more than about missionaries, to try and uncover the stories of lay-people, not just leaders and institutions, to see truth testified in failure as well as success, to be concerned with the real world which includes ambiguity and uncertainty as well as faith and conviction.

There are still archives to be located in Malaysia and overseas.¹⁵ Resources exist for writing the history of Christianity in places like Taiping, Melaka, and Teluk Intan which need to be exploited. The task of oral history is urgent. Anniversaries of events need to be taken up as opportunities for research. Training needs to be given. Bibliographies and other finding aids need to be updated. A thematic rather than denominational account of Christianity in West Malaysia is needed and the rich story of East Malaysia awaits being told.

Appeals to seek understanding more than indulge in indignation may still be required. It is necessary to remind amateur historians that their work and resources are essential. Every generation has to commit themselves to objectivity - to the labour of going to the archives and not to the ideology of the moment in their quest for truth and relevance. It is necessary we submit our work to one another, those sympathetic and those less so, and that as a community of historians we fulfill the task of our calling to do justice both to the majority, and to the minorities of which we are part.

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Footnotes

¹ Dato' Dr Khoo Kay Kim, "The significance of history in the preservation of heritage," Raja Fuziah bte Raja Tun Uda, *Heritage. The changing world: Our heritage and our future. A series of talks held at the National Archives, Kuala Lumpur*, Pan-Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association, Malaysia and Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 1990, p.14.

² G R Elton, *Times Literary Supplement*, 23 July 1976, p.912.

³ The following statement has been use by the Study Group.
"material accepted for publication is expected to be marked by objectivity of approach, sensitivity to different views that may be held on different subjects, and a sympathetic rather than a partisan approach to issues. We seek to promote writing and research that is of good quality and that is fair to the range of opinions that one would naturally expect to find in any historical project. A balanced approach will seek to concentrate on issues rather than personalities, be understanding of people's

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- ideals and intentions, and judicious in its analysis. The tone as well as the content is very important. Indignation and condemnation, for example, are inappropriate to the sort of work we are trying to promote.
- 4 "Sentimentality and cynicism are ... two sides of the same coin: the one is blind to the evil in the world, the other to the good." E Robinson, *The language of mystery*, SCM.
- 5 Turner, H W. "'And brought forth fruit an hundredfold': sharing Western documentation resources with the Third World by microfiche," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 9(3) July 1985, 110-114. See also Walls, A F and Wilbert R Shenk, eds., *Exploring New Religious Movements, Essays in honour of Harold W Turner*, Mission Focus, 1990.
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