

# DOCUMENTARY FILM RECORDING HISTORY AND CULTURAL MEMORY OF SALAYA.

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to learn, study and record the history, way of life and cultural memories in both personal and collective (Individual and Collective Cultural Memory) of villagers in Salaya Subdistrict by using documentary as a medium for recording and broadcasting historical and cultural narratives and stories for villagers in Salaya and the public to study and learn the wisdom and cultural knowledge of Salaya.

The research found that Salaya is a city with a long history and a rich cultural heritage, which is full of wisdom that the villagers continue to carry on and apply today. The culture and local wisdom of the Salaya people are covered in many areas such as canal life, canal poetry, stories and local stories, dialects, medicine, food, folk songs and religious traditions. And the documentary film is the effective way to turn the personal and collective history and memory into historical narrative that take them to a new level in which collective and individual memory can blend and give a more intense and reflexive form of historical experience and can combine the factual and the emotional, the individual and the collective, the messages and the ideologies of Salaya people with experienced and lived life.

**Keywords:** History and Cultural Memory, Individual and Collective Cultural Memory, Historical and Cultural Narratives

## INTRODUCTION

Suan Sunandha International School of Art (SISA) opened a learning center named "Learning Center of SISA" by starting with a group of people in Salaya to produce community products and develop the packaging for distribution to generate income for the community and make the elderly in the community to earn income and create mental value for the community.

From the study by talking with the community members found that the history of Salaya Subdistrict in Nakhon Pathom province is very interesting in history and culture and it is an area with a long history. But nowadays some knowledge is about to disappear or modified over time.

Therefore the researcher realizes the value and importance of Salaya's historical and cultural knowledge. This research aims to learn, study and record the history, way of life and cultural memories in both personal and collective (Individual and Collective Cultural Memory) of villagers in Salaya Subdistrict by using documentary as a medium for recording and broadcasting historical and cultural narratives / stories for villagers in Salaya and the public to study and learn the wisdom and cultural knowledge of Salaya.

## OBJECTIVE

1. To study the history of communities in Salaya.
2. To study the Individual and Collective Cultural Memory of people in Salaya.
3. To use the documentary as a medium for recording and broadcasting the history and cultural memories of Salaya.

## METHODOLOGY

To study community area, Village 1, Salaya, Nakhonpathom Province in details of the history of the area and shared memory through the telling of community residents by using documentary as media for recording and broadcasting for villagers in Salaya and the public to study and learn the wisdom and cultural knowledge of Salaya.

## CONCEPT THEORY AND RELATED RESEARCH

### *1. The relationship between history and memory*

Individual history and memory is the construction of one's life as an identity narrative with emotional, cognitive dimensions and with certain aspects of narrativity – diaries, pictures, personal movies, data published on social media, family stories, personal belongings etc.

Collective history and memory connected to what we learn about the world in school and through history books, construction of national history and beyond as a kind of official public knowledge

Mediated historical narrative is the way to take the personal and collective history and memory to a new level by developing highly complex fictional or non-fictional narratives recreating history in a more live form, in which collective and individual memory can blend and give a more intense and reflexive form of historical experience.

### *2. Individual and Collective Cultural Memory*

Memory is a cognitive, emotional dimension through which humans combine short term memory and long term memory, and generally memory works on several levels and is most strongly activated when 'data' from the past are condensed in narrative images and stories.

'Remembering is vital to our well-being, because without our autobiographical memories we would have no sense of past or future, and we would lack any sense of continuity. Our image of who we are (...) is never stable but it is subject to constant remodeling because our perceptions of who we are change along with our projections and desires of who we want to be (Van Dijk 2007 p. 3)

The personal memory is from early on shaped by a broader socio-cultural influence and thus has a clear collective dimension.

Collective narratives and stories on family level and broader influence us and mingle with personal dimensions

Mediated narratives and experiences from all types of media also intervene (books, cartoons, games, film, television).

"Personal cultural memory is the acts and products of remembering, in which individuals engage to make sense of their lives in relation to the lives of others and to their surroundings, situating themselves in time and place" (Van Dijk 2007 p. 6). "In a sociological sense, collective memory means that people must feel they were somehow part of a communal past, experiencing a connection between what happened in general and how they were involved as individuals. Adjusted to historiographical explanation, social memory

constitutes the interface between individual and collective ordering of the past.” (Van Dijk 2007 p. 10).

### **3. Dimensions of Documentary – Historical and Cultural Narratives**

Film is an important and strong medium for visualizing the past and for getting historical memory and historical themes on the individual and public, collective agenda.

It can recreate the 'look' of the past, make the past come alive placing ways of living, a sense of how it was

personification and dramatization of events, conflicts and historical knowledge that is otherwise perhaps too distant and abstract for a contemporary person to understand.

Unlike academic or journalistic history representation the film representation can combine the factual and the emotional, the individual and the collective, the messages and the ideologies with experienced and lived life.

The fictional distance and freedom in historical films allow the director to take up even very controversial matters and events, events that would otherwise be difficult to deal with in factual discourses. The fictional, historical film has the potential of recreating history as live experience where both large scale history and small scale history, the economic, the social and the cultural can be combined.

#### ***Basic documentary modes:***

Documentary mode is a conceptual scheme developed by American documentary theorist Bill Nichols that seeks to distinguish particular traits and conventions of various documentary film styles. Nichols identifies six different documentary 'modes' in his schema: *poetic, expository, observational, participatory, reflexive, and performative*. (Nichols, 2001)

*Poetic Documentaries* : They focus on experiences, images and showing the audience the world through a different set of eyes. Abstract and loose with narrative, the poetic sub-genre can be very unconventional and experimental in form and content. The ultimate goal is to create a feeling rather than a truth.

*Expository Documentaries* : A sharp contrast to poetic, expository documentaries aim to inform and/or persuade — often through omnipresent “Voice of God” narration over footage devoid of ambiguous or poetic rhetoric.

*Observational Documentaries* : They aim to simply observe the world around them. The style attempts to give voice to all sides of an issue by giving audiences first hand access to some of the subject's most important moments.

*Participatory Documentaries* : They include the filmmaker within the narrative. This could be as minor as the filmmaker's voice being heard behind the camera, prodding subjects with questions or cues — all the way to the filmmaker directly influencing the major actions of the narrative.

*Reflexive Documentaries* : They often include the filmmaker within the film — however, unlike Participatory, they make no attempts to explore an outside subject. Rather, they focus solely on themselves and the act of them making the film.

*Performative Documentaries* : They emphasize truth as relative, favoring a personal take over the objective lens. They often connect personal accounts or experience juxtaposed with larger political or historical issues. This has sometimes been called the “Michael Moore” style, as he often uses his own personal stories as a way to construct social truths.

#### ***The elements of Historical Documentay films***

Narrative and aesthetic forms of historical documentary:

Voice over narration and information – on screen/off screen: mixture of factual presentation and symbolic, metaphoric use of language

Expert testimonies and Experience testimonies – interviews  
Historical film footage  
On site visual presentation of historical spaces, landmarks, buildings etc.  
Use of dramatized reconstruction of historical events or persons, including types of program based on re-enactment with audiences  
Dramatizing still images of actual historical places, persons and events through visual effects (zooming, panning, montage)  
Drawing parallels between present times and historical event through montage and visual cues or through narrator – reflexive history  
Use of poetic, narrative, dramatized and emotional aesthetics to position the audience in relation to the past:  
Marks of authenticity and factuality  
Marks of heritage, the sublime, the grand, the tragic, the spectacular  
Music and sound with direct emotional and memory effects

### ***Related research***

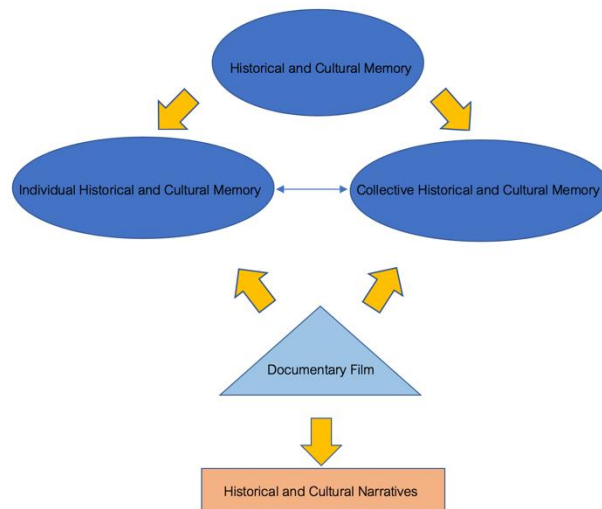
In **Angkoon Hongkananukraw** 's “**Meaning of Space, Condition of Memory : Relation Between Memory and Meaning of Space at Baan Huai Kop**” , the results indicated that the relationship between memorial and historical data of Baan Huai Kop are supported and testified each other about the occurrence of the past, especially, on immigration related to governmental agencies such as EGAT (Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand). For the meaning of “Baan Huai Kop” of people who were affected by the construction of CDR Vajiralongkorn Dam, economic difficulty and the limitation on resource access cause them to reminisce livelihoods in former village, by comparing with present lives at Baan Huai Kop. In contrary for displaced people who came from neighboring countries and haven't yet gotten Thai citizen rights, Baan Huai Kop is place of opportunity and better lives comparing to their lives in the past. Their memories are related to what they are facing in present time.

In **Pison Suwanpakdee** 's “**The potential of ready-made and found object on individual and collective memory in a case study works of Joseph Beuys and Marina Abramovic**” , this article examines the works and concepts of two artists, Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) and Marina Abramovic (1946-present), under the theory of individual memory and collective memory between the usage of ready-made and found objects materials, with the structure semiotics analysis in Joseph Beuys's work, How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare (Wie man dem toten Hasen die Bilder erklärt, 1965) and Marina Abramovic's work, Balkan Baroque (1997). According to the studies, it has been found that both pieces of works, reflected individual and collective memories with different aspect. Joseph Beuys's work represented more personal memory than Abramovic's work in Balkan Baroque (1997), which indicates more of social criticism. However, the use of Abramovic's found object has capability to capture individual memory by showing images of recollection and artistic ideas more specifically than the ready-made material characteristics of Beuys's work. Therefore, the found object material has better potential in presenting memory than ready-made material which shows inferior in memory capacity and less ability to express emotion when compared with the found object material.

In **Pison Suwanpakdee**'s “**The Visualization of Photography Learning through Cinematic Methods**” , the research was found that students were interested in studying photography through documentary films and not only the student can apply concepts from the cinematic methods in documentary films to create their own photography concepts for the community but they can transfer their concepts to community projects and presented in conferences and publication in the academic proceeding also.

## RESULTS

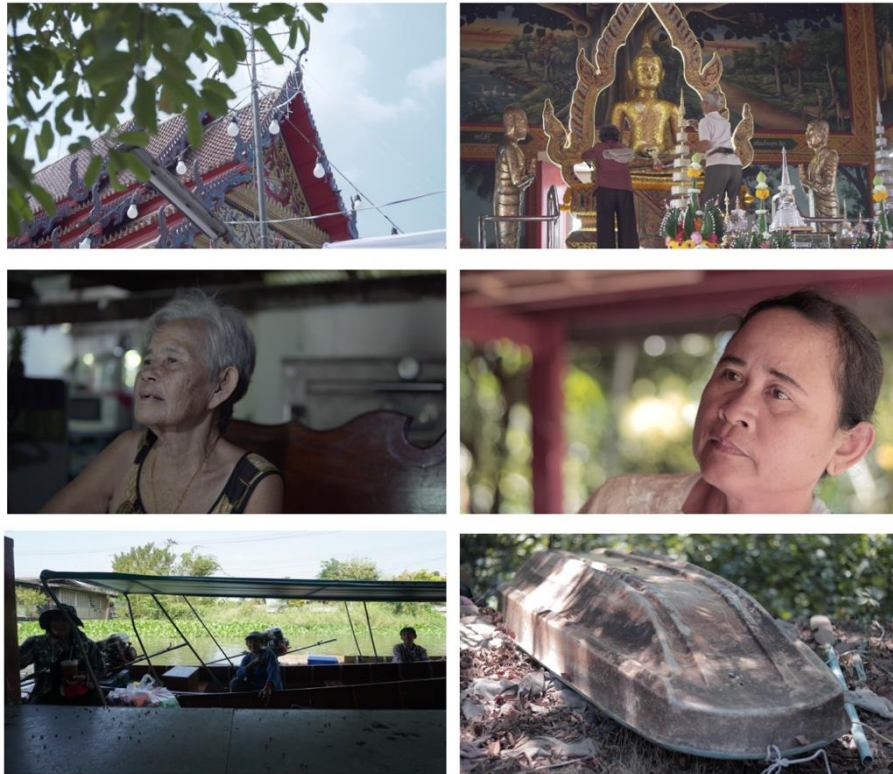
The research found that documentary film is the effective way to turn the personal and collective history and memory into historical narrative that take them to a new level by developing highly complex fictional or non-fictional narratives recreating history in a more live form, in which collective and individual memory can blend and give a more intense and reflexive form of historical experience. It can recreate the 'look' of the past, make the past come alive placing ways of living, a sense of how it was personification and dramatization of events, conflicts and historical knowledge that is otherwise perhaps too distant and abstract for a contemporary person to understand.



**Figure 1 :** The Relationship between Documentary Film and Historical and Cultural Memory

**Table 1**  
**Documentary Film Techniques for Recording History and Cultural Memory of Salaya**

Techniques	Purposes
Voice over narration and information – on screen/off screen	Telling the story simultaneously with the image that connected with the story.
Dramatizing still images of actual historical places, persons and events through visual effects (zooming, panning, montage)	Connecting with the voice of interviewee that telling the story of Salaya.
Interviewing the Salaya people	Recording the individual and collective historical and cultural memory of Salaya people.
Historical film footage	Using Historical film footage from film archive for representing event and activities in the past.
Re-enactment	Dramatizing and reconstructing the historical events or persons' story.
Editing techniques	Drawing parallels between present times and historical event through montage and visual cues or through narrator – reflexive history
Music	Representing the Emotion of Salaya people.



**Figure 2 :** The pictures from The Documentary of Salaya

From the study, it is found that most villagers who live in Village 1, Salaya Subdistrict, have always lived in this area since being born. The oldest person who was interviewed is 80 years old. The villagers lived along the canal and made a living in agriculture. In the past, most of the travels were mainly by boat, but later, when the roads were made, they switched to cars or motorcycles instead.

Since the main occupation is agriculture, so the big problem that the villagers faced is "Flood ing" which had a severe impact on the crops grown which the villagers could not permanently solve the problem, they could only try to prevent and accept the condition that occurs. In addition, another problem is leasing land for farming because this land is not owned by the villagers but belongs to the temple or the capitalist that is leased therefore causing the villagers to have expenses in this area on a regular basis, causing some groups of villagers to choose to stop farming and find other occupations.

But nowadays, due to the development of public utilities and roads, as well as the growth of tourism, the occupation of Salaya villagers is varied, ranging from independent careers such as bakers selling or opening Homestay for tourists to stay including hire a boat to take a trip, etc. The villagers do not have to experience the same problems as before because they can choose or change careers to suit their current aptitude and situation.

Despite the changes, however, the people in Salaya district still maintain the local identity whether it is crops such as lotus or rice paddies that are applied as a variety of products for tourists or to sell local food that has been developed and passed down from one another to another, way of life in the community that is bound to the temple. In this area, Wat Suwannaram, that has been the center of the minds of the villagers from the past to the present. There is also an interesting thing that recording the story of the community from the past to the present. The researcher found that the villagers of Salaya Sub-district are using "Poem" in recording the community's story about who's doing what occupation , who is

related to anybody in the community, giving an insight into the family history, including the identity of the community from the "Poem" that people in the old days have written and passed on through, as part of Oral History.

Salaya is a city with a long history and a rich cultural heritage, which is full of wisdom that the villagers continue to carry on and apply today. The culture and local wisdom of the Salaya people are covered in many areas such as canal life, canal poetry, stories and local stories, dialects, medicine, food, folk songs and religious traditions. And the film can combine the factual and the emotional, the individual and the collective, the messages and the ideologies of Salaya people with experienced and lived life.

## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

Salaya is an area in Phutthamonthon District , Nakhon Pathom Province which has an interesting aspect of study, both in history, culture and literature, which this research helps to understand the "wisdom" and "way of thinking" of the people in that area which will lead to sustainable development of the quality of life of local people .It can also be a model for other communities to study and apply.

Film is a powerful medium of communication because it can record the story in at the moment and also able to create and present stories that occurred in the past by converting the stories into images that are supplemented by cinematic art, both audio and visual, creating lucidly both images and emotions. It is also very useful for understanding and impressing the audience very well.

This research helps to making people in the area both long-lived and new-arrivals including people in other areas to "understand" and feel "proud" together with the story of the people in Salaya through the study of historical narratives, memories, and cultures both at the individual and collective levels.

We can extend this research by applying the knowledge of story recording through documentary films to other areas or delve into specific stories such as Documentary film on folk songs, the agricultural way , or the recipe of medicine etc.

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