



## CHAPTER 4

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# Dual Triumphalist Heritage Narrative and the Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement

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### INTRODUCTION

Unlike other heritage movements in Malaysia, which are largely ethnic-based and culture obsessed (Cartier 1996; Worden 2001), the preservation movement of the Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement (SBLS thereafter), also widely referred to as the “Valley of Hope”,<sup>1</sup> is concerned with the conservation of a site that is associated with a socially stigmatised disease. Built at a jungle fringe in Selangor in 1930, SBLS was constructed as a place for the treatment, and forced isolation from wider society, of people suffering from leprosy. Although leprosy knows no racial boundaries as people of any background can be afflicted with the disease, nearly eighty per cent of the patients admitted to SBLS have been ethnic Chinese. Of the rest, about fifteen per cent were ethnic Malays with ethnic Indians making up five per cent. Former patients who were cured but left with differing degrees of disfigurement and disability are also residents of the SBLS today.<sup>2</sup> SBLS’s population reached its peak with 2400 people in 1958, but today their number is just slightly over one hundred (Joshua-Raghavar 1983; Wong and Phang 2006). The demographic structure of the settlement remains more or less the same as in the old days but this

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does not reflect the prevalence of leprosy because the disease is now curable, with newly detected cases being treated on an outpatient basis. However, the over representation of ethnic Chinese in the settlement consolidates the myth that leprosy is a “Chinese disease”.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, the SBLs movement is the first of its kind to show an interest in a place of historic significance that transcends ethnicity, representing a departure from mainstream heritage discourses in Malaysia.

What is so unique about the SBLs that it deserves heritage status? Who are those at the forefront of the movement to preserve SBLs as a heritage site? What purpose and whose interests do the calls for preservation serve? Different people would give different answers to this set of questions. It needs to be stated that this chapter is not interested to argue whether or not SBLs deserves the status of heritage, but rather to investigate how it has *become* a site for heritage-making and what it represents as a heritage site in the discourses of the conservation movement. Informed by the work of social constructionists, I take the view that heritage is not static but rather subject to a process of negotiation that is influenced by various historical factors and actors (Harvey 2001; Lowenthal 1997). Presentism—the adherence to present-day concepts, concerns, values and attitudes in interpreting past events—undoubtedly underpins SBLs’s heritage discourse. However, this chapter moves beyond merely proving the influence of presentism to also examine why presentism persists in the movement. As activists have argued, the SBLs heritage movement is important for future generations. I would further argue that how the movement conceptualises SBLs as a heritage site is equally significant. As importantly, heritage discourses simultaneously highlight and obscure different aspects of a site with complicated pasts (MacCannall 2011; Smith 2006; Walsh 1992). Reading or attributing qualities to a heritage site or obscuring certain aspects about it or its past can have epistemic implications as both can shape popular perception and the symbolic meanings of the site (Lowenthal 1997, 2015).

This chapter draws on newspaper articles, newsletters and book publications on the SBLs to put together a picture of its preservation movement. It is divided into three parts. The first part chronicles the genesis and evolution of the movement, the second deals with its shifting preservation discourses and the final section provides an evaluation of the impact of the movement from the perspective of a descendant of sufferers of the disease.

Before proceeding, I would like to bring two points to the readers’ attention. First, I am one of the members of the “Save Valley of Hope

Solidarity Group”. I share my peers’ desire for SBLS to be made a heritage site but with a slightly different vision, as will be elaborated later. Second, I wish to emphasise that the community concerned with the preservation of the SBLS is not a homogenous one. Differences exist not just between residents and non-residents but also within and between the groups in the movement. Every member influences and contributes to the movement in different ways. This chapter is a contemplation of the SBLS movement with the aim of opening up a discursive space that engages in depth and critically with a heritage that has a “dark” or ostracised past.

### GENESIS AND EVOLUTION OF THE SBLS HERITAGE MOVEMENT

The history of the leprosarium in Malaysia extends further than that of the SBLS, in both a temporal and geographical sense. Pulau Serimbun in Melaka, Pulau Jerejak in Penang and the Setapak Camp in Selangor are among the sites for the segregation of leprosy patients built much earlier than the SBLS. Thus, the SBLS became a starting point for the leprosy heritage movement in Malaysia by contingency. The cessation of their operations is one of the main reasons that the older leprosariums have fallen out of popular attention. SBLS, too, faded out of public memory for several decades, as leprosy was no longer seen as a public health threat after effective treatment was discovered in the early 1980s. It was not until 2006 that SBLS came under the media limelight, with the publication of a book by Joyce Wong Chau Yin and Phang Siew Sia titled *Valley of Hope: Sungai Buloh National Leprosy Control Center*. The settlement again drew public attention later that year, when parts of the cemetery for its deceased residents were badly damaged by commercial horticultural activities in the settlement. Responding to the call by Tang Ah Chye, who was then Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall (KLSCAH) and a cemetery preservationist, a group of volunteers, myself included, went forward to the SBLS to map and document the seven-decade-old cemetery.<sup>4</sup> The cemetery itself constitutes an important archive of the history of leprosy and of the SBLS. In the meantime, residents had been informed that the land on the East Section had been acquired by Universiti Teknologi Mara for the construction of a medical school. Over fifty elderly residents, who were also former leprosy patients, through the Sungai Buloh Settlement Council (previously known as the

Patients' Council), openly petitioned against the land acquisition and urged the authorities to protect their welfare and their livelihood as operators of plant nurseries in the SBLS.<sup>5</sup> The settlement, once a colony of compulsory quarantine, was now a living space that was home to many former leprosy patients. Despite the opposition put up by the residents, a bulldozer was sent by the developer; it reduced the old prison to rubble in early September 2007.

Over the span of a year, rapid changes in the SBLS, in addition to the demolition of the prison, included the fencing up of the East Section and the erection of "no trespass" signs near the purported construction site. This eventually caught the attention of non-residents who were concerned with the fate that had befallen what they considered to be a site that marked a significant phase in Malaysian history. Responding to the demolition of the prison in the settlement, Lim Yong Long, a researcher specialising in the architectural history of leprosariums, penned an article for *Malaysiakini* (7 September 2007) on the reasons for preserving the SBLS. Unlike the residents' petition, which had focused on the former patients' right to a livelihood in the settlement, Lim's statement drew attention to six "significant values" for which SBLS should be considered a heritage site, all of which, he argued, were in line with the criteria set by ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) and the 2005 National Heritage Act.<sup>6</sup> The six heritage values he invoked touched on several broad areas, including architectural aesthetics, the achievements made by the drug trials, the humane design and the multiethnic environment of the SBLS. Both the residents and Lim shared the view of the importance of preserving the site but for different reasons.

Equally dismayed and angered by the demolition activities was a group of urban-based architects, academics and activists, among whom were volunteers who had participated in the mapping of the SBLS cemetery a year earlier. They came together to form the "Save Valley of Hope Solidarity Group" (SVHSG thereafter) later that year, marking the beginning of a non-resident community-led heritage preservation movement. Up to this point, SVHSG as a non-resident community was in the process of understanding the disease and picking up historical fragments of the SBLS from any available source, while working with the residents on the settlement's preservation. Given the paucity of historical research on the SBLS, the late resident Anthony Joshua-Raghavar's book, *Leprosy in Malaysia: Past, Present and Future* (1983), documented important glimpses into the past; Wong and Phang's 2006 book offered clues about daily life in the

settlement; and Lim's architectural expertise proposed a direction for the preservation movement. With the involvement of non-resident preservationists, the movement began to incorporate aspects on architectural aesthetics and the medical significance of the settlement, with the architectural experts and activists framing their heritage discourse on SBLs in terms of its status as a self-supporting "Garden City".<sup>7</sup>

As the heritage movement gained momentum, several internal conversations began to take place among SVHSG members. Should the movement engage the wider public or should it take the form of lobbying and negotiating with the authorities through formal channels hidden from public attention? Should the protest be confrontational, similar to the movement to preserve the Losheng Sanatorium in Taipei County,<sup>8</sup> or should it be a peaceful negotiation? While many of them admired the strength and scale of the confrontational resistance shown in the Losheng case, SBLs residents also expressed their concern that they risked jeopardising their welfare if the resistance were to turn antagonistic. Their anxieties were not entirely baseless, given the authoritarian nature of Malaysia's ruling regime. Taking the residents' concerns into account, SVHSG opted for a non-confrontational approach to educate the public about the historical and heritage value of the SBLs without giving up lobbying through formal channels. Regular community activities were held to engage both residents and non-residents and to attract media coverage. In addition to organising festivals like community activities, members of the SVHSG began to work on documentaries and collect oral histories.

I worked with two TV producers, Joshua Wong and Tan Ean Nee, and contributed as a coordinator of a documentary titled "The Everlasting Valley of Hope" in 2008. Despite the resistance put up by the SVHSG, the East Section of the SBLs was completely demolished in 2008, and its residents relocated to other parts of the settlement. Undeterred by this, a few members continued with their preservation efforts, this time employing oral history for "community building" (Chou and Loh 2012; Chou and Ho 2013), while others used the same approach to document the emotional world of the sufferers and that of their children who were forced to separate from them (Tan and Wong 2012).

Fears of a demolition of a grander scale lingered with rumours surfacing in 2016 that a second demolition was on its way for the construction of a federal infectious disease control centre. The SVHSG initiated an online petition to seek public support against the demolition, reassert the significance of the SBLs as a heritage site by highlighting it as "the second

largest leprosarium in the world”, and to pressure the authorities to preserve the place.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, Tan Ean Nee, a former NTV7 Mandarin newsreader and a long-time volunteer at the SBLs, joined the Sungai Buloh Settlement Council as a non-resident member and formed a new group called “Care & Share Circle” (CSC thereafter).

The CSC under Tan’s leadership has so far produced at least three DVDs and two books<sup>10</sup> in multiple languages, mainly stories about the reunion between sent-away children and their parents, and it has also conducted guided tours of the site. Under CSC’s intensive efforts at crowd-funding and mobilisation, the preservation movement culminated in the launch in February 2018 of an on-site initiative, the “Valley of Hope Story Gallery”. The theme for both the fundraising campaign and the launching ceremony was “You Are the Hero”. The idea was to view as heroic not only the leprosy patients, and their extreme pain and suffering, but also all those who sponsored the gallery and had contributed to the campaign. The gallery highlighted the contributions made by leprosy sufferers who had participated in the medical trials. It also emphasised the positive aspects of the colonial legacy and called attention to the natural, Arcadian beauty of the site. A day after the launch, the SBLs management, for the first time, openly agreed to work with the activists and to jointly call for the leprosy sanatorium to be deemed a national as well as a UNESCO world heritage site. How committed they are to this goal remains to be seen. In the meantime, the management was also repurposing several blocks of old buildings into on-site history galleries, with a focus on showcasing medical and clinical artefacts and framing the development of the treatment of leprosy in terms of a triumphalist account of medical modernity. Not wanting to appear to the public as being indifferent to the cause of heritage preservation, yet also not wanting to oppose the Ministry of Health’s decision to demolish SBLs for the construction of a federal infectious disease control centre, the management wanted to convey the impression that “we too care about the heritage of SBLs” through the setting up of these official galleries. Ironically, despite enjoying institutional support, the official galleries are hardly ever open to the public and not as popular as their community-operated counterpart.

I will now turn to examine the evolution of the SBLs heritage preservation discourse.

## SHIFTING SBLs HERITAGE DISCOURSES AND UN-DECOLONISED SUBALTERN HISTORY

In the residents' very first petition against the acquisition of their land for redevelopment in 2006, the SBLs was presented as a living commune, a home for aged residents who had spent decades of their lives in the settlement. In a deferential tone, the petition expressed the residents' simple wish to be allowed a livelihood and spend the rest of their old age in the settlement. The SBLs was not viewed as a heritage site then. On 22 October 2007, the SBS Council issued a second statement, following the demolition of the prison. This time, the SBS Council began to consider the value of the place beyond the mere protection of the residents' livelihood, urging the authorities to also appreciate and value the site's architectural significance. Fusing two different discourses, on the SBLs as home and the SBLs as heritage, was of strategic importance. A sole emphasis on home and livelihood could be met with relocation to a new shelter or with financial compensation. However, relocation would be a displacement too drastic and inconvenient for many of the community's elderly and disabled residents. Appropriating the discourse of the site's architectural significance, which although it was external to them and their personal interests, made it more likely for the residents to keep both their livelihood and the buildings they called home. Without this local context and interests, the SBLs discourse of architectural and aesthetic value would have reinforced what Laurajane Smith (2006, 11) has identified as "international authorized heritage discourse" (IAHD), which refers to officially recognised and expert-defined concepts of heritage that privilege monumentality, grand-scale artefacts and sites of great historical value. In his analysis of the international heritage discourse employed by the activists, social historian Loh Kah Seng (2011) observes that most of the residents were largely passive in preserving the place as a heritage site due to their sense of impending mortality (237). Nonetheless, he notes that Lee Chor Seng, who was the most vocal of the residents and the then Chairman of the SBS Council, and who had been very vocal in defending his community, had consciously merged two different discourses, the international heritage discourse and the desire for keeping SBLs as home (Loh 2011, 238). Though rare among the residents, Lee's voice does represent the agency of his community.

Leading up to the setting up of the community-run, on-site Story Gallery ten years later, the preservation discourse shifted again, with the

heritage narrative taking on a physical and material form when the gallery was finally launched in 2018. Perhaps, it is easier to promote a site associated with positive stories than one with a stigmatised and dark past. “[The] story gallery will revolve around the inmates’ stories and the positive values of the cultural heritage, which is intangible, because what truly moves people are the meaningful and touching stories”, said the founder Tan Ean Nee during the fundraising campaign.<sup>11</sup> This time the notion of “positive values” takes centre stage. It was hoped that, by sanitising a place of pain and shame into a place of positivity, the preservation movement would move closer to its primary goal to destigmatise the disease.

The gallery’s preservation discourse of tangible heritage, which references the settlement’s physical architecture, is fused with the intangible stories of the heroism of leprosy sufferers and that also of the doctors who treated them. Not only are the buildings endowed with aesthetic values, the medical treatment of the patients is also painted with a celebratory brush. This new heritage narrative interprets the official colonial narrative in relation to the SBLS as an “enlightened policy”, hailing its medical doctors as heroes, and differentiates it from the pre-SBLS, “uncivilised” treatment of leprosy in the Setapak Camp. It is silent on the negative aspects of colonialism, such as the unequal power relations, police brutality, racialisation, paternalism and criminalisation that characterised this period of SBLS history.<sup>12</sup> The activists also repeatedly highlight SBLS as “the second largest leprosarium in the world”, resurrecting the tagline used by the colonial authorities themselves to advertise and glorify their achievements in public health. The historical context where medical scientists in different parts of the colonial empire viewed the leprosariums they were building in increasing numbers as a theatre for the performance and experimentation of their methods is completely erased.<sup>13</sup> Also missing from this “positive narrative” is the significant fact that compulsory segregation was a greatly contested idea and practice up to the early 1930s, when a few colonial administrators and medical doctors pushed it through despite leprosy already being proven to be only a mildly contagious disease (Joshua-Raghavar 1983, 64; Loh 2009; Por 2018).<sup>14</sup>

The on-site Story Gallery also accords a central place to visual culture, which was a prime aspect of the “great colonial medicine” trope. Photographs of different genres feature prominently in the gallery, but are re-framed in terms of a positive narrative to make an “intangible” culture visible. The very photos that were used by colonial medical authorities to construct the pathogenic body of the racial Other are now used to illustrate

colonial benevolence and display the dramatic effects of colonial medicine on the diseased body (Burke 2001; Hattori 2011; Imada 2017; Por 2018; Stepen 2001). These photos vindicate both the medical and heritage significance of the SBLS (Fig. 4.1). As the SBLS is represented as an enlightened and benevolent colonial legacy, the implications are that it is the duty of present-day Malaysians to inherit and then bequeath such a legacy as a “national heritage” to future generations. As succinctly argued by Watson and Waterton, heritage-making is “a process of selection and display, and the ascription of meaning to the objects concerned” (2010, 89).

On the other hand, the rich oral history accounts of the leprosarium’s residents, which once might have served to document the emotional trauma of forced segregation, are now presented as testimonies of victory over bodily suffering and of human resilience. Former leprosy patients have rightly been recognised by the preservationists for their sacrifice and contributions to the medical trials. Without their participation in the trials,



**Fig. 4.1** A propagandistic photo of the drug trial, framed in terms of a “before-after treatment” trope, taken in the 1930s

there would be no effective drugs for the disease today. Indeed, they endured hardship and survived intense discrimination. But drawing attention to the heroism and resilience of the patients is not tantamount to effacing the discrimination and injustices they experienced as pathogenic subjects living under compulsory quarantine and separation from their family and society. This is to ignore or, worse, mitigate the repressive nature of the colonial regime.

This is not to say that representing the disease in positive terms is not a laudable move. On the contrary, reinterpreting the residents' social ostracism is instrumental in destigmatising the disease and returning justice and dignity to people afflicted by it. However, this can be done without romanticising colonial rule, which had played a key role in reinforcing fear of the disease by imposing compulsory segregation with the help of the police force and by ignoring humane calls for voluntary segregation. But as correctly observed by Loh (2011, 2018), the SBLs activists utilised oral histories for the express purpose of heritage preservation. Their agenda in reinterpreting these stories positively was not to counter official and colonial narratives.

Interrogating the "heroic" narrative of subaltern colonial subjects is to bring out the epistemic implications of the preservation movement's dual triumphalist narrative, which tells us not only about the past, albeit selectively, but also about the dangers of a depoliticised discourse of the SBLs as a heritage site. A depoliticised account of SBLs not only creates the false impression that colonialism was benevolent and benign but also the notion that compulsory isolation was necessary and inevitable. Indeed, there is no lack of stories about patients who had exercised their agency against their harsh regime of quarantine. For example, there are accounts of patients who made their own rice wine and of others who furtively left the settlement to get a glimpse of the outside world, activities which were banned by the settlement's administrators (Loh 2009; Wong and Phang 2006). In the early 1970s, a few radicalised residents even organised a demonstration to protest against the discharging of recovered patients for fear of the discrimination they would face in the world beyond the gates of the SBLs. The demonstration was deemed disrespectful of the authorities; a pictorial history book published by CSC labelled the demonstration's organisers as "ringleaders" (Care & Share Circle 2015, 247–248). While a decontextualised account of the past elides the hierarchy and power relations that operated in the settlement, reading along the grain robs the patients of their agency and reduces them to passive objects of governmentality. As

pointed out by Loh (2011, 237), the activists “negated the active role of the residents in unmaking and remaking the leprosarium from initially a prison into a genuine community”.

Viewing heritage as a process, rather than as a fixed, ready-made narrative, reveals the preservation movement’s selective appropriations of the past. Nonetheless, the pasts of SBLS are saturated with complexities and contradictions, which defy harmonisation and sanitisation for any singular narrative or purpose.

As one enters the Valley of Hope Story Gallery, one is immediately greeted with dissonant messages. On the right hand side of the entrance, a section that chronicles the contribution of medical and health officers, the narrative starts by describing Dr E.A.O. Travers as the progenitor of an “enlightened policy”, whose proposal of “a leprosarium without barbed wires or high walls, and more like a home away from home” resulted in the establishment of the leprosarium in Sungai Buloh in 1930. On the left hand side is a different section that documents the everyday lives of patients in the settlement; the section’s short introduction announces that “the policy of forced segregation brought a group of leprosy patients to the edge of despair” (Fig. 4.2). There is a missing link between these two contradictory messages. The inclusion into the heritage narrative of the workings of colonial ideology, such as the legitimisation of the highly contested practice of segregation, would likely have introduced cognitive dissonance into that narrative. Understandably, the well-meaning activists were constructing a positive past for the SBLS to market a place with a dark history to the wider public. As Loh (2011, 237) puts it, the activities to gloss over the negative aspects of colonial rule “reveal the underlying tensions between history and heritage”. In contrast to the debates on colonialism in Singapore, where colonial rule is painted as a positive and benevolent force in dominant or state narratives (Huang 2018), a similar view of colonialism is propagated in Malaysia but from bottom-up perspectives in the SBLS. The move by SBLS activists to draw attention to the gains introduced by the colonial administration could also serve as an indirect critique of the present-day regime for its lack of interest to preserve the place. In the eyes of a section of the SBLS activists, the destruction of SBLS is a symbol of the dissolution of British medical modernity and philanthropy by the excesses of the present-day, authoritarian, Malay-dominant regime.



**Fig. 4.2** Contradictory messages at the entrance of the Valley of Hope Story Gallery. Left: An introduction to a section which documents the residents’ everyday lives in the SBLs. Right: An introduction to the origins of the SBLs

### REMAKING SBLs AND DESTIGMATISATION

Heritage is a powerful medium of representation that selects, frames and sacralises its chosen subjects and objects (Walsh 1992; Watson and Waterton 2010). If leprosy was once under the colonial medical gaze, it has now come under the gaze of heritage preservationists and tourists. Heritage is a particularly effective platform to engage the wider public to relearn their past. Preserving the SBLs as a heritage site with the objective of destigmatising leprosy is an especially laudable move. Despite the problems inherent in a presentist interpretation of the past, the preservation movement has reshaped not only public perception of the disease but also the self-perception of the sufferers themselves. Joyce Wong, the co-author of *Valley of Hope: The Sungai Buloh National Leprosy Control Center* and a descendant of sufferers who grew up in SBLs, acknowledged in an interview the contributions made by the preservation movement:

People from outside are so much more passionate than the residents in preserving the place. Not that preserving the buildings is not good, but it is more important to de-stigmatise the disease. We have to ask: What is the preservation for? How is it going to benefit the residents? You can see that the residents are not really active in the preservation, they just play along so long as it does not cause any troubles. What they care most is the safety and peacefulness of the place, and that their welfare is well taken care of. But this preservation movement does spark something among the residents, for example my own parents, they never thought this place deserves preserving until the outsiders came to care so much about it and see the values of preserving it.

The movement and the publicity it gets give a lot of exposure for the residents who used to remain anonymous. They were not comfortable being seen in public due to their unpleasant experience when leprosy was still highly stigmatised. But the genuine concern and interest shown by the people who came in to get to know them have given them their sense of self-worth. I'll say it, give them back the dignity they deserve.

Many descendants of ex-leprosy sufferers are [however] not passionate about preserving the place. Because many of them were sent away for adoption and never grew up in the place like I did, hence [they are] not sentimental about the place. Some still feel uncomfortable about coming out to the public to defend the place, because they [have] never got rid of the phobia they have internalised.<sup>15</sup>

Before the SBLS was opened to the public, there were three security gates that residents had to pass through to leave the commune. The security restrictions also hampered outsiders from entering the settlement. Surrounded by hills and forests, the SBLS has always been a place of scenic beauty. The removal of the gates in the late 1970s exposed the place to outsiders, and many may now enter freely to experience its beauty. Some SBLS activists argue that heritage, unlike history, allows people to experience and appreciate a place. But experiencing a place is not equivalent to educating and enlightening themselves about its pasts. The display of the residents' stories in the gallery might even feed the illusion that just reading these accounts is enough to know about the settlement's past. Furthermore, the phobia experienced and internalised by some descendants, as mentioned by Wong, is another indication that heritage per se is insufficient to rid the disease of its social stigma.

Nonetheless, the SBLS as a heritage site can serve as an on-site facilitator or a catalyst that invites people to explore and engage more deeply and critically with the past. As argued by Dean MacCannall (2011, 178), “every effective memorial depends on narration both on- and offsite”.

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Existing critical heritage studies scholarship tends to assume the top-down influence of heritage discourse, but the case of the SBLS indicates otherwise. Years after the movement began, the official website of the Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture now has an entry on the SBLS, albeit with a focus on its architecture, indicating the power of a community-led heritage movement in shaping how society and the state could think about place.<sup>16</sup> At the time of writing this chapter, SBLS is on UNESCO’s tentative list as a potential nominee for UNESCO’s World Heritage site listing. As David Harvey (2001, 327) puts it, heritagemaking is “an instrument of cultural power”. Yet, the movement’s selective remembering of the past has epistemic implications. By highlighting the positive pasts of SBLS and obscuring its dark aspects, the movement creates a false impression that colonialism was benign and good, and that compulsory segregation was inevitable. Seeing SBLS in a positive lens may do no harm to the residents and the place, but nevertheless constitutes a form of epistemic injustice. As a place of complicated pasts and contradictions, the SBLS as a heritage site can be made more meaningful by scholars and activists engaging in conversations about the production of knowledge, identity, power and authority. This can be done by taking a more conscious and conscientious attempt to understand and represent the settlement’s history, instead of adopting or ensuring official interpretations which whitewash the site with a positive and paternalistic brush. Acknowledging the dark past of SBLS will do no harm to its status as a heritage site. Instead, it will enrich our understanding of the nation’s history, of human society and of the colonial state’s mechanisms of power and control.

I have demonstrated how the SBLS movement evolved over the years and how its preservation discourse shifted. Despite its present-centred reading of the past, the movement has effected an important shift in public perceptions of the disease and the settlement. The movement is also the first of its kind to depart from mainstream, ethnocentric heritage discourses

in Malaysia. As heritage, the SBLS can be a facilitator for a deeper exploration of the nation's difficult and entangled pasts.

## NOTES

1. The term “Valley of Hope” was coined by a 1955 documentary produced by the Malayan Film Unit about the SBLS. It was also the title of the documentary.
2. “Patients” and “residents” will be used interchangeably throughout this chapter.
3. For detailed accounts of how Europeans used leprosy to pathologise the colonial “racial Other” they encountered in the colonies from the nineteenth century, see Leung, A. K. 2009. *Leprosy in China: A History*. New York: Columbia University Press; and Mawani, R. 2003. ‘The Island of the Unclean’: Race, Colonialism and ‘Chinese Leprosy’ in British Columbia, 1891–1924. *Law, Social Justice and Global Development Journal (LGD)* 1: 1–21.
4. The report of the mapping can be found in the Dewan Perhimpunan Cina Kuala Lumpur dan Selangor (February 2007). A Field Report on the Cemetery in Sungai Buloh’s National Leprosy Control Center. *Berita DPCKLS*, February 2007, pp. 136–156.
5. “Residents of the East Section of Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement Petition Against Land Acquisition”, *China Press*, 1 September 2006, pp. C2; “Valley of Hope Seeks Preservation”, *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 3 September 2006, pp. G10.
6. Lim Yong Long’s statement is available at <https://www.malaysiakini.com/rentakini/72118> [accessed: 2 February 2019].
7. The “Garden City” is a method of urban planning, characterised by self-supporting communities surrounded by greenbelts, containing proportionate areas of residences, industry and agriculture. The method was promoted by British elites in England during the late nineteenth century. The design for SBLS was clearly influenced by the notion of the English Garden City, even though there is no archival record to suggest that SBLS set up by the colonial government in the early twentieth century was based on the idea of the Garden City.
8. The Losheng Sanatorium was built in Xinzhuang District in 1929 during the Japanese Occupation. In 2002, Taipei Mass Rapid Transit demolished seventy per cent of the sanatorium to make way for the construction of Xinzhuang MRT Depot. The demolition sparked a strong wave of confrontational resistance and a preservation movement throughout the 2000s and had inspired SBLS activists.

9. “Save Valley of Hope Solidarity Group Protests Against Demolition of SBLS”, *Kwong Wah Yit Poh*, 28 May 2016; “Preserving Leprosy Settlement History”, *The Star*, 4 October 2016.
10. The book titles are: Mohamed, N., and E. N. Tan. 2015. *Reunion at the Graveyard: A True Story of a Lady Who Was Determined to Search for the Truth of Her Origins*. Subang Jaya: Care & Share Circle; Care & Share Circle. 2015. *Valley of Hope: Pictorial History Book*. Subang Jaya: Care & Share Circle.
11. The fundraising campaign is available at: <https://www.valleyofhope.my/the-sungai-buloh-settlement-council/> [accessed: 2 February 2019].
12. The vision of SBLS as a heritage as advanced by CSC is available at <https://www.mystartr.com/projects/valleyofhopestorymuseum> [accessed: 2 February 2019].
13. For more detailed accounts of inter-empire competition in the field of public health and medical science, read Planta, M. M. 2016. Hansen’s Disease and International Public Health in the Philippines. In *Hidden Lives, Concealed Narratives: A History of Leprosy in the Philippines*, ed. M. S. Diokno, 193–221. Manila: National Historical Commission of the Philippines; Bashford, A. 2004. *Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
14. See the correspondence between Frank Oldrieve, secretary of the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association and several medical officers in the Straits Settlement and Federated Malay States in 1924, as recorded in Arkib Negara’s file, accession no.: 1957/0233954.
15. Interviewed by the author on 5 March 2019.
16. The entry on the SBLS in the official website of the Heritage Department of Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture. Accessed 2 March 2019. <http://www.heritage.gov.my/index.php/ms/konservasi/konservasi-tapak-warisan/pusat-kawalan-kusta-negara>

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