

Stories That Know the Sea: Cultural Memory, Maritime Knowledge and Wellbeing in Kuala Selangor Folklore

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines two coastal folktales from Kuala Selangor as dynamic repositories of cultural memory, arguing that they function not merely as narrative heritage but as lived frameworks through which communities interpret risk, leadership and belonging. Drawing on cultural memory theory and Quality of Life (QoL) perspectives, the study positions these stories as narrative *lieux de mémoire* that anchor collective experience to specific maritime landscapes. Through close textual analysis, the paper demonstrates how sites such as bays and river settlements are imbued with layered meanings, transforming them into symbolic infrastructures that encode ecological awareness, social norms and political legitimacy. The findings show that these folktales transmit practical maritime knowledge through narrative form, shaping communal responses to danger, uncertainty and environmental change. At the same time, they construct models of leadership grounded in ethical responsibility, intercultural negotiation and relational authority rather than coercive power. The stories further contribute to place identity by attaching emotional significance to landscapes, fostering a sense of continuity, belonging and resilience among coastal communities. The paper also argues that folklore functions as a living cultural resource with contemporary relevance, particularly amid shifting environmental and social conditions. While acknowledging narrative silences and selective representations, the study highlights the role of storytelling in sustaining cultural continuity and supporting wellbeing. The study is primarily grounded in qualitative textual analysis; however, this limitation is acknowledged given the absence of ethnographic field validation with contemporary community stakeholders. In doing so, it contributes to broader discussions on intangible heritage as an active force in shaping community identity and adaptive capacity.

Keywords: cultural memory; Malaysian folklore; maritime knowledge; Quality of Life (QoL)

INTRODUCTION

When heritage comes up in Malaysian policy documents or public discourse, it usually arrives wearing stone and mortar. We think of forts, mosques, shophouses, museum buildings and archaeological remains. These are, of course, important. But they are also incomplete. For many communities, especially those shaped by water rather than land, the past is carried less in walls and more in words. It survives in stories told casually in kitchens, in fishing huts, on verandas facing rivers and tides. And these stories, quietly but persistently, shape how people make sense of risk, authority, belonging and change.

The central purpose of this paper is to explore how Malay coastal tales from Kuala Selangor function simultaneously as cultural memory, heritage resources and emotional anchors. In approaching this topic, the study draws on three research objectives. The first is to examine how the selected tales operate as narrative *lieux de mémoire*, borrowing from Pierre Nora's influential concept. These memory sites capture experiences of maritime danger, leadership norms and cross-cultural relationships. The second objective is to trace how storytelling contributes to place identity and cultural continuity, especially in communities shaped by centuries of waterborne mobility. Finally, the third objective considers how these narrative functions intersect with Quality of Life (QoL) research. There is an expanding body of work showing that heritage participation and storied landscapes influence

capability-building, belonging and resilience. By looking closely at these folktales, the research aims to show how intangible cultural heritage strengthens these QoL dimensions.

To build the conceptual foundation for this inquiry, the study leans on the works of Jan Assmann and Pierre Nora. Assmann's (2008) distinction between communicative memory and cultural memory sheds light on how stories shift from informal conversation into institutionalised heritage. Meanwhile, Nora's (1989) *lieux de mémoire* provides a vocabulary for interpreting narrative places like Teluk Penyamun or Jeram as symbolic anchors. Recent studies from Abdul Aziz et al. (2023) and Gallou (2022) tie these insights to wellbeing research by emphasising how people derive emotional stability from participating in cultural memory practices.

Folktales from Kuala Selangor make it particularly suitable for this kind of discussion. Bugis settlers, Orang Laut communities and Malay rulers all played roles in shaping the region's maritime identity. With this in mind, the folktales under study reveal intertwined themes of danger, diplomacy and leadership. They also encode ecological awareness, suggesting ways of living with unpredictable coastal environments. Interpreting these tales through contemporary heritage and QoL frameworks allows us to see how communities continue to draw meaning from the past to navigate ongoing change.

Within this framework, cultural memory functions as the mediating structure through which place-based narratives translate historical experience into present-day wellbeing outcomes. At the same time, resilience is understood as the adaptive capacity generated through this sustained relationship between memory, identity and environment.

Folklore as Cultural Memory

Folklore often carries a quiet sense of authority that can be easy to overlook. Communities do not simply recall events for the sake of remembering. They retell stories because these narratives help hold together the fragments of shared experience. Ruth Finnegan's (2012) work demonstrated how oral traditions compress complex histories into symbolic forms that are easier to recall. In maritime settings, this function becomes critical. People rely on stories to explain sudden changes in weather, dangerous waters and the uncertainties of living so close to the sea. These stories are not instruction guides, but they carry practical knowledge in forms people remember.

Foundational studies by Finnegan and Andaya remain central to understanding oral tradition and maritime social organisation, particularly in relation to memory and authority. More recent scholarship extends these concerns by linking folklore and living heritage to Quality of Life (QoL). Gallou (2022) conceptualises heritage participation as a process that shapes emotional capability and agency, while Abdul Aziz et al. (2023) demonstrate that engagement with living heritage strengthens collective learning and cohesion. Together, these perspectives extend folklore beyond textual analysis into contemporary wellbeing discourse.

Recent interdisciplinary work has also framed memory as something encountered through landscape and repetition rather than preserved solely in narrative or archive. Wellen (2021) offers a useful parallel by treating coastal environments as affective spaces where rhythm and familiarity shape lived memory. Although not focused on folklore, such perspectives help explain how stories attached to bays and shorelines acquire emotional durability. Read alongside cultural memory theory, Malay coastal folktales emerge as lived frameworks that support orientation, continuity and wellbeing.

Pierre Nora and *Lieux de Mémoire*

Nora's (1989) concept of *lieux de mémoire* has been widely used to understand how communities anchor memory in both physical places and symbolic forms. Memory sites arise when lived experience begins to fade yet the need to remember persists. These sites include legends, rituals and recurring motifs, not only physical monuments that may help communities recover the essence of earlier experiences. Nora's concept, hence, offers a framework for understanding how narratives become symbolic anchors of identity.

In Southeast Asia, landscapes are often deeply intertwined with narrative meaning. Rivers act as thresholds between safety and danger. Mangroves appear as liminal spaces where spirits, traders and fugitives all find refuge.

Coastal headlands can signify authority or protection. In the Malay world, many of these ecological features have gained narrative significance, forming quiet memory sites that shape how people relate to the environment.

Nora's framework becomes even more compelling when placed alongside Gallou's (2022) argument that memory sites support wellbeing by encouraging emotional attachment to place. Graham and Howard (2008) similarly note that heritage places are shaped by the stories that circulate around them. In Malay coastal folklore, places like Jeram or Teluk Penyamun are more than locations. They become narrative containers that store emotions and values. Applying Nora's framework thus demonstrates how oral traditions serve simultaneously as heritage, memory and emotional infrastructure with direct implications for QoL.

Heritage and Place Identity

Heritage scholarship has been undergoing a notable shift. Instead of treating heritage as a fixed collection of artefacts, scholars like Smith (2006) argued that heritage is a cultural process. Communities interpret the past in ways that help them navigate the present. In addition, Graham and Howard (2008) emphasised the role of shared stories in constructing place identity, while Lowenthal (2015) described such landscapes as storied when natural features acquire narrative significance. These stories can become part of the emotional fabric of a place, shaping how people feel toward it.

Furthermore, Aldy et al. (2024) observed that ritual practices create emotional resonance, strengthening the bond between people and their environment. Abdul Aziz et al. (2023) found that heritage involvement nurtures cultural literacy and resilience. Gallou (2022) suggests that heritage practices develop capabilities that contribute to agency and wellbeing. In the case of Malaysian folktales, Malay coastal stories provide a vivid example of how narrative shapes place identity. These narrative associations deepen cultural attachment and shape how communities imagine themselves and may further contribute to identity formation and wellbeing by offering recognition and belonging.

Maritime Societies of the Malay World

Although classical Malay literature often appears heavily male-centred, folklore presents more varied images of gender. In many coastal communities, women maintained social and economic stability while men were away at sea. Andaya (2006) has highlighted how women exerted influence and decision-making power in these contexts. Their presence in folktales as protectors, advisors or moral anchors reflects this historical reality (Andaya, 2008).

These gendered representations shape emotional connections to landscapes. Female figures who guide or protect their communities help frame the environment as a relational space. Such portrayals can enhance empathy, belonging and cultural understanding across generations. Chou's (2003) work suggests that gendered stories contribute to cohesion, while Andaya and Andaya (2017) show how women held meaningful autonomy in early societies. These stories, therefore, shape wellbeing by reinforcing shared values and emotional security.

METHODOLOGY

Interpreting the two folktales required a qualitative approach centred on close reading, thematic analysis and cultural contextualisation. The selected texts, *Legenda Pekan Lama Kuala Selangor dan Teluk Penyamun* and *Legenda Jeram dan Penabalan Paduka Seri Cina*, come from *Penglipur Lara: Cerita Rakyat Asia Tenggara* (Aziz, Abdillah and Omar, 2025). They were chosen primarily because they originate from historically significant coastal zones and contain themes that correspond with broader regional histories. Other tales were considered, but these two offered the clearest overlap between maritime identity, leadership values and, multicultural diplomacy.

A limitation worth acknowledging is that the study focuses solely on textual sources. While this allows for a concentrated analysis of narrative structure and meaning, it does not include ethnographic insights from local storytellers or community members. Such perspectives could enrich the interpretation. Another limitation is the small number of tales. A broader selection might reveal additional patterns or contrasts. Despite these boundaries, the textual analysis offers a structured way to explore how these stories function as cultural memory frameworks.

This limitation is further compounded by the absence of ethnographic engagement such as interviews or participant observation with local storytellers, which would have provided insight into how these narratives are currently understood, transmitted, and reinterpreted within lived community contexts.

The following diagram illustrates how heritage practices feed into memory, how memory attaches itself to place, and how these layered processes contribute to community wellbeing, thus further ensuring coherence with the study’s objectives and providing a structured foundation for the findings.

Heritage-Memory-Place-QoL Framework

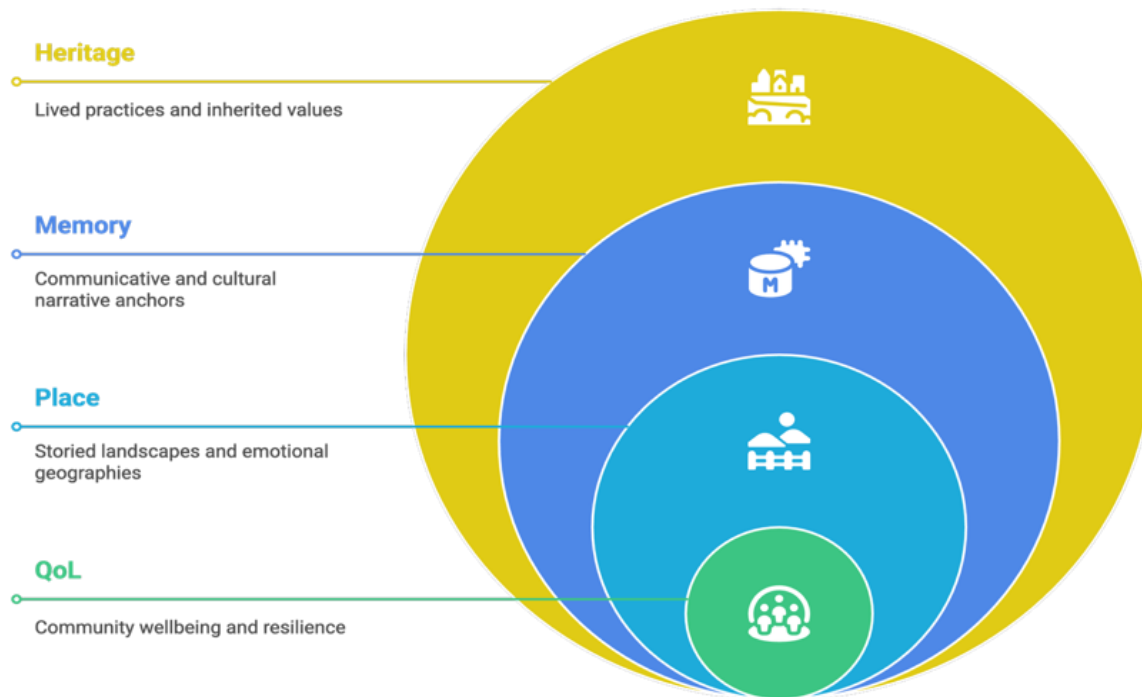


Figure 1 A Conceptual Diagram of Heritage–Memory–Place–QoL Framework

While the selection of two folktales enables focused interpretive depth, it necessarily constrains comparative breadth. A wider corpus could have allowed for stronger identification of recurring regional patterns across coastal narrative traditions.

RESULTS

Maritime Societies of the Malay World

In *Legenda Pekan Lama Kuala Selangor dan Teluk Penyamun*, maritime knowledge is woven directly into narrative texture. The story does not pause to explain tides or currents in abstract terms. Instead, these elements emerge through plot and atmosphere. Early in the tale, Teluk Penyamun is described as a place “sheltered by its natural geography, making it an ideal refuge for raiders seeking to ambush passing trading vessels and fishing boats” (Abdillah, 2025, p. 266). The phrasing is understated rather than dramatic, yet effective. Danger does not arrive as spectacle but as geography. A calm-looking inlet becomes lethal precisely because it conceals threat. This description does more than set the scene. It encodes a lesson about maritime risk. Safe-looking waters may harbour ambush, disruption and loss. Such warnings resonate in coastal communities where visual cues often mislead. The story thus functions as a mnemonic device, turning place into a repository of practical and emotional knowledge.

Later, when fear begins to circulate among the Bugis community, the narrative explains that “over time, Teluk Penyamun came to be known as a dangerous place, and many began to avoid it, despite its proximity to major trade routes” (Abdillah, 2025, p. 267). The language is simple and descriptive, but the implication is strong.

Collective behaviour shifts, navigation becomes cautious and risk is managed socially rather than individually. Here, heritage operates not as static inheritance but as enacted knowledge. The story does not tell readers to remember Teluk Penyamun because it is historically important. It teaches them to remember it because forgetting has consequences. This aligns with Smith's (2006) conceptualisation of heritage as something people do rather than something they possess. Knowledge survives through performance, repetition and avoidance as much as through celebration.

In *Legenda Jeram dan Penabalan Paduka Seri Cina*, maritime knowledge appears in a different register. Rather than focusing on danger and survival, the story emphasises ritual, ceremony and political legitimacy anchored to place. Jeram is described as a place "situated not far from the mouth of the Selangor River... with waterways readily navigable by ships and boats" (Abdillah, 2025, p. 268). Here, water is not a threat but a conduit. Accessibility becomes authority.

The installation of Paduka Seri Cina unfolds through ritual action tied to this landscape. The story recounts that "the installation ceremony was attended by court officials, warriors, and coastal communities... and included prayers and pledges of loyalty from the people" (Abdillah, 2025, p. 269). The ritual transforms Jeram into memory centre where political authority, intercultural negotiation and communal recognition converge.

Lowenthal (2015) argues that traditions gain meaning through repeated performance. This tale exemplifies that principle. Authority is not naturalised through lineage alone. It is enacted through ceremony, witnessed by the community and anchored to a place. Jeram becomes not just a river site but a symbolic infrastructure for political memory.

At the same time, both tales reveal narrative silences. Authority is rarely questioned. Leaders are depicted as morally upright, wise, and legitimate, or even as outsiders or newcomers. Ordinary people appear largely as supportive collectives rather than dissenting voices. Women's leadership, while present in the first tale, is framed as exceptional rather than typical. These silences matter. They remind us that cultural memory is selective. Folklore preserves values as much as it omits alternative perspectives.

This selectivity does not negate the stories' significance. But it complicates it. Heritage here is not simply shared wisdom. It is also a site of negotiation over whose experiences count and whose authority is naturalised. Recognising this tension allows for more critical engagement with folklore as living heritage.

Landscapes as Anchors of Communal Identity

Both tales portray landscapes not merely as settings but as active agents shaping narrative meaning. Teluk Penyamun, for instance, is framed less through metaphor than through reputation and consequence. The narrative explains that it became known as dangerous because it "had become a place frequently used by pirate groups from outside the area to carry out raids" (Abdillah, 2025, p. 266). Rather than a poetic description, we get social memory. The bay is not threatening because it looks dangerous, but because people know what happens there. This framing turns Teluk Penyamun into more than a geographical feature. It becomes a moral landscape. Entering it without caution signals not just physical recklessness but social disregard. Fear and resilience coexist here, shaping communal identity around alertness, mutual responsibility and collective survival.

Jeram, by contrast, is framed as a place of legitimacy and unity. The story emphasises its suitability for royal ritual because its people are described as "known for their friendliness and loyalty to leadership, making the place suitable for ceremonial occasions such as the installation of a royal prince" (Abdillah, 2025, p. 268). The river landscape becomes not a hiding place but a stage. Unlike the secrecy of Teluk Penyamun, Jeram is public, ceremonial and witnessed. The space is not dangerous but dignified. Political futures are enacted here before communal eyes.

This contrast between hidden and open spaces mirrors broader social distinctions between danger and legitimacy, secrecy and ceremony, survival and governance. It also illustrates Assmann's (2008) distinction between communicative and cultural memory. Teluk Penyamun functions more as a communicative memory, rooted in everyday experience, fear and oral transmission. Jeram functions more as a cultural memory, institutionalised through ritual, ceremony and political authority.

In both cases, landscapes anchor memory by absorbing emotional significance. People do not merely remember what happened in these places. They remember how those places felt. Teluk Penyamun feels tense, deceptive and threatening, while Jeram feels solemn, public and legitimising. These emotional textures shape how communities imagine their environments and their relationships to them.

Such narrative anchoring has implications for place identity. Rather than viewing identity as an abstract attachment to territory, these tales suggest identity emerges from lived engagement with storied spaces. People belong not simply to Kuala Selangor as a geographic region but to specific bays, rivers and sites charged with narrative meaning. Place becomes relational rather than territorial.

These interpretations are grounded in textual representation and therefore reflect narrative constructions of place rather than empirically verified community perceptions. As such, they indicate cultural logics embedded in folklore rather than direct accounts of present-day lived experience.

Memory, Maritime Risk and Resilience

Maritime risk shapes the emotional tone of *Legenda Teluk Penyamun* in quiet but persistent ways. The story repeatedly emphasises vulnerability, not as individual weakness but as shared condition. The narrative explains that pirate activity “created fear among the residents, especially when it began to disrupt daily fishing routines and small-scale trade” (Abdillah, 2025, p. 267). The danger here is not abstract. It interferes with livelihood, routine and social stability. Risk becomes economic, emotional and collective. The response, accordingly, is communal rather than heroic. No warrior defeats the pirates. Instead, people avoid the area, alter routes, adjust habits and remain alert. Survival depends not on force but on awareness and coordination.

This aligns with Warren’s (2008) observations about maritime societies, where survival often depends less on brute force than on collective intelligence, negotiation and adaptability. Pirates, traders, fishers and coastal communities alike navigate environments where conditions shift rapidly. In such contexts, rigid strategies fail but flexible and relational strategies succeed.

In *Legenda Jeram dan Penabalan Paduka Seri Cina*, resilience appears in a different register. Rather than physical survival, the story focuses on political stability and intercultural cooperation. The installation of Paduka Seri Cina is framed as a solution to uncertainty, particularly in the context of regional diplomacy and succession. The text explains that his appointment “reflected the wisdom of the Melaka Sultanate in celebrating cultural diversity and building diplomatic relations with regional powers” (Abdillah, 2025, p. 268).

The ritual at Jeram transforms uncertainty into structure. Political risk becomes ceremonial order. Intercultural tension becomes an alliance. The story suggests stability arises not from exclusion but from negotiated inclusion. This framing resonates with Reid’s (2000) account of early Southeast Asian polities as fluid, networked and adaptable rather than rigidly territorial.

Both tales convert uncertainty into a narrative structure. Danger becomes a lesson, difference becomes an alliance and vulnerability becomes a resilience. Rather than denying risk, the stories teach people how to live with it. They do not promise safety but they promise orientation.

This narrative orientation has implications for wellbeing. Rather than fostering false security, the stories cultivate alertness, humility and collective responsibility. They model emotional responses to uncertainty emphasising preparedness over panic, cooperation over isolation and adaptability over rigidity. In doing so, they offer psychological resources for navigating volatile environments.

Leadership, Agency and Intercultural Diplomacy

The Bugis woman leader in *Legenda Pekan Lama Kuala Selangor dan Teluk Penyamun* stands out as one of the most striking figures in the narrative. The story introduces her as a leader who “not only led her community wisely but was also known for her compassion toward the people and the land they inhabited” (Abdillah, 2025, p. 266).

Her authority is not martial or hereditary but ethical and relational. She governs through care rather than command. The narrative describes how, under her leadership, the community lived “in harmony, helping one another manage marine resources and live daily life with values of unity” (Abdillah, 2025, p. 266).

There is no moment of dramatic confrontation or battlefield heroism. Leadership here is quiet, sustained and practical. It lies in coordination, attentiveness and communal responsibility. This portrayal complicates assumptions about gender roles in early Malay societies. As Andaya (1981) documented, women often exercised authority during men’s maritime absences, managing households, trade and social life. This story echoes that historical pattern. The leader’s authority is not symbolic. It is operational. She keeps her community intact.

At the same time, her leadership is framed as exceptional rather than normative. The narrative does not suggest women commonly held such roles. Instead, it highlights her uniqueness, reinforcing the sense that female authority remains unusual. This tension matters. In this manner, it reveals how folklore can challenge and reinforce gender norms simultaneously.

In *Legenda Jeram dan Penabalan Paduka Seri Cina*, leadership appears in a different form. Paduka Seri Cina’s authority derives not from local lineage but from ritual recognition and intercultural legitimacy. The text explains that he “was believed to have mixed Malay and Chinese ancestry” (Abdillah, 2025, p. 268) and that his appointment symbolised “unity and prosperity championed by Sultan Mansur Syah” (Abdillah, 2025, p. 269).

The installation ceremony under Sultan Mansur Syah formalises this hybridity into political authority. The ritual transforms difference into legitimacy. It signals leadership can emerge from negotiation rather than inheritance, from alliance rather than exclusion. Andaya and Andaya (2017) note that such multicultural alliances played significant roles in regional political history, particularly in port polities dependent on trade and diplomacy.

These narratives emphasise relational authority rather than coercive power. Leaders succeed not by dominating others but by navigating complexity, building trust and negotiating differences. Authority becomes something performed and recognised rather than imposed and enforced.

This has implications for contemporary discussions of governance, inclusion, and wellbeing. The stories offer alternative leadership models grounded in care, negotiation and moral responsibility rather than hierarchy alone. While not free from elite bias, they nonetheless complicate simplistic narratives of power.

Place Attachment and Community Wellbeing (QoL Relevance)

The folktales contribute to place attachment by transforming landscapes into emotional geographies. Teluk Penyamun and Jeram are not merely physical locations. They are sites of fear, hope, legitimacy and belonging. These emotional associations shape how people relate to environments, and by extension, how they experience wellbeing.

In *Legenda Pekan Lama Kuala Selangor dan Teluk Penyamun*, the bay becomes emotionally charged because it is repeatedly associated with disruption and danger. The narrative explains that pirate activity “disrupted fishing routines and small-scale trade” (Abdillah, 2025, p. 267) and fear circulated whenever boats returned late or unfamiliar vessels appeared. The cove becomes something to avoid, remember and warn others about. Emotional meaning becomes attached not through poetic metaphor but through lived consequence. Place becomes something felt before it is named.

In *Legenda Jeram dan Penabalan Paduka Seri Cina*, the river’s rapids become the backdrop for political symbolism. The ceremonial installation of Paduka Seri Cina anchors authority to place, turning Jeram into a site of legitimacy and unity. The story notes that Jeram later became known not merely as a fishing or farming village but as “royal land, the resting place of Melaka’s heritage of greatness” (Abdillah, 2025, p. 269). The landscape becomes a moral and political reference point. It is no longer just water and land but it has become a memory infrastructure.

These narrative transformations support the idea that wellbeing can stem from cultural continuity and relational security rather than material prosperity alone. People feel anchored not simply because they own property or

possess resources, but because they recognise themselves in stories attached to environments. They know where they are, not just geographically but symbolically.

Gallou (2022) argues that heritage practices support wellbeing by shaping capabilities such as belonging, agency and emotional resilience. These folktales illustrate that process in action. By offering interpretive frameworks for understanding danger, authority and differences, the stories equip communities with cognitive and emotional tools for navigating uncertainty. They do not eliminate risk but they render it intelligible.

At the same time, not all community members experience these narratives equally. Younger generations may feel less connected. Migrants or newcomers may not recognise themselves in these stories. Some may resist them as outdated. Place attachment is not automatic. It is cultivated, negotiated, and sometimes contested.

Nevertheless, the persistence of these stories suggests continuing resonance, at least in some contexts. Their emotional durability points to their capacity to support wellbeing, particularly in environments characterised by volatility, mobility and change.

DISCUSSION

The relationship between cultural memory, Quality of Life (QoL) and community resilience in this study can be understood as a layered continuum. Cultural memory provides the narrative infrastructure through which collective experience is encoded; Quality of Life (QoL) represents the experiential outcomes shaped by these narratives in terms of belonging, capability and emotional stability; and resilience emerges as the adaptive capacity produced when communities draw upon these storied frameworks to interpret and respond to environmental and social uncertainty.

It is suggested that heritage, memory, place and wellbeing form an integrated system rather than discrete domains. The folktales preserve maritime heritage by encoding environmental knowledge, leadership ethics and social norms. They transform memory into narrative form, anchoring it to landscapes. These storied places shape emotional attachment, identity and belonging. In turn, these attachments support resilience, cohesion and wellbeing.

Relp's (1976) work on place and placelessness emphasised how identity erodes when environments lose meaning. These folktales suggest an opposite dynamic. Meaning persists even when physical environments change because stories adapt, circulate and reattach memory to new contexts. When coastlines shift, stories move, and when settlements relocate, narratives migrate. Heritage becomes portable.

Kamarudin and Denison (2022) similarly argue that oral history and memory-making in Malaysia function less as archival preservation and more as relational practice. Memory survives not in static repositories but in interaction, performance and dialogue. These folktales exemplify that process. They do not simply record the past. They rehearse ways of living.

At the same time, the narratives reveal tensions. They privilege elite figures. They normalise hierarchical authority. They frame gendered agency as exceptional. They foreground certain voices while silencing others. Recognising these limits does not weaken the argument for folklore's relevance. It strengthens it. Heritage that cannot be questioned cannot evolve and stories that cannot be critiqued cannot adapt.

In this sense, these folktales function not as closed moral systems but as open interpretive frameworks. They invite reflection, negotiation and reinterpretation. Their value lies not in prescribing fixed answers but in offering shared language for thinking through uncertainty, difference and belonging.

The reliance on a limited number of folktales means that the analytical claims are illustrative rather than exhaustive. Expanding the dataset to include additional coastal narratives from Kuala Selangor and neighbouring maritime regions would enhance the comparative validity of the findings and allow for stronger generalisation of observed thematic patterns.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that Kuala Selangor folktales function as narrative *lieux de mémoire* shaping place identity, leadership ideals and communal resilience. By integrating cultural memory and Quality of Life (QoL) perspectives, the analysis highlights folklore as a living resource that supports belonging, orientation and social continuity rather than as a closed archive of the past. The research remains limited by its small corpus and textual focus. Future research could incorporate ethnographic perspectives or comparative coastal studies to deepen understanding of how these narratives circulate within contemporary communities. For educators and heritage practitioners, engagement with folktales should balance preservation with critical reflection, recognising both their cultural value and their narrative silences. Such an approach strengthens cultural sustainability while remaining attentive to inclusivity and change.

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