

# A Long Journey of Historical Research and Scientific Publication

**Purnawan Basundoro**

Department of History, Faculty of Humanities,  
Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, East Java - Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: [pbasundoro@fib.unair.ac.id](mailto:pbasundoro@fib.unair.ac.id)

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## Abstract

This paper describes the steps of historical research as well as the possibility of publishing the results in international journals. Historical research is an attempt to reconstruct various events in the past in the form of stories that can be read again by the wider community. The main problem faced in writing historical articles is usually related to relevance. Relevance in historical writing means that historical narratives are written suggested to have links or affinity with contemporary conditions. If the historical narrative presented has no relevance to the present, it is considered to have low use value for the reader. Historical research starts from the process of finding sources or what is known as heuristics. Some historians consider written sources as the main sources, even though there are alternative sources that are no less important, namely oral sources that have the same value and use as written sources. Historians are also required to publish their research results in journals, especially in international journals. Publication is considered as a manifestation of the responsibility of researchers to the wider community. This paper was written using the literature study method. The sources of the literature are read, analyzed for their contents, and become a reference in writing this paper.

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## Introduction

Research or historical research is an attempt to dig into the past to be brought back to the present through a series of systematic steps. The final step of historical research is to present it to the public in the form of a written narrative that is widely published for the public to read. In general, the steps of historical research, which are commonly referred to as historical methods, are well understood by historians (Kuntowijoyo, 2005, p. 90). Although all historians have understood the steps of historical research, it does not mean that all processes are easy to do.

Often, historical researchers face two big dilemmas related to the data search process (heuristics), namely between limited data and abundant data. Limited data makes the writing process a dead end, while excess data causes the data selection process to take a long time. This shows that the research process to writing history is not an easy job, it requires careful preparation starting from determining the theme to initial assessment of the appropriate data.

## Method

This article was written using the literature study method, namely writing based on previously published written references (Zed, 2004). Some of the literature sources that are used as references include Taufik Abdullah's writings published in *The History Journal* Number 1 of 1990. These writings generally explain the relationship between historical narratives and contemporary relevance. *The History Journal* is a journal published by the Indonesian Historian Society (MSI) as a place to exchange ideas about history. Kuntowijoyo in his book *Introduction to History* provides an explanation of historical research methods, starting from the selection of themes, searching for sources, verification, interpretation, and writing. The book edited by Sarah Barber and Corinna M. Peniston-Bird entitled *History Beyond the Text and the book* written by Bambang Purwanto, *The Failure of Indonesian-centric Historiography*, are important references to explain alternative sources in historical research.

All library materials that have been collected are then read and used as references to support the main ideas initiated by the author. The final results of this paper have been widely discussed in a seminar forum held by the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Diponegoro. The discussion process has provided significant input in improving this paper.

## Relevance: Foundations of Historical Research

Why is the past being scraped, researched, and reintroduced in the present if it has no use? Only the past that has relevance to the present deserves to be researched and presented again in the form of a written narrative. Relevance in historical writing means that there is a link or affinity with contemporary conditions. According to Taufik Abdullah, relevance has become a concept about a historian's awareness of actuality. The history that historians want to study should be something that can later become knowledge that has value for human life today (Abdullah, 1990).

Awareness of relevance arises when a historical researcher asks questions related to issues that are the key to the research to be carried out. Furthermore, Taufik Abdullah stated that in essence the question posed as a research problem refers to the "origin of something" and about the "historical journey chain of that thing" which is asked with reference to current conditions. Identification of why something should be researched or investigated, of course, must start from an awareness of relevance. These questions are asked because all of them relate to the concerns felt by historians. Of course, this is a subjectivity that is very dependent on the daily experience of the historian (Abdullah, 1990, p. 54). A historian whose daily experience is very rich; perhaps because of meeting many people and getting various information, by reading various references, or by seeing a lot of events around them; it will be easier to find research themes and easier to ask questions that will be answered through historical research.

The daily experience of a historian is very important and very decisive for formulating various research questions. This means that awareness of relevance does not just come, but through a process of contact with the "outside world" as well as with

the various sciences he has learned. Historical descriptions that are incomplete and have the potential for further research can also be an inspiration for further research. The contact of a historian with various theories, concepts, and other knowledge obtained from the social sciences can also help historians to connect the past with the present. In simpler language, Kuntowijoyo stated that the historical research themes were chosen based on emotional closeness and intellectual closeness, which indicated the relevance as described earlier (Kuntowijoyo, 2005, p. 91).

Relevance is very important so that historical research has a use value for the wider community, not just antiquariat. This happens because historical research that has high relevance of course contains novelty of knowledge because the current conditions of the people who are the source of the relevance continue to experience renewal along with changes in time that occur simultaneously and without end. This is in line with Postan's thought, that historical facts are nothing more than *relevance* (Postan, 1971, p. 51). Relevance can avoid information that tends to be antiquarian, namely standard knowledge about the excess that has been accepted, regardless of the main problem that is of concern. Antiquarians are similar to antiques on display in silent, cold museums, which may not have any context to the present. Antiquarism is history regardless of its social context, like a book that has been used and has no use value anymore. Thus, a good historical narrative is one that remains part of the current social dynamics of society.

### **Alternative History Sources**

The essence of historical research activities is to trace historical sources that are needed according to the theme and purpose of the research. Most historians make written documents the main goal in tracing historical sources. Why written documents are used as the main reference in writing history, it is of course not merely following the advice of the modern German historian, Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) who believes in written documents to compose history, but also because written documents are historical traces that are easiest for historians to find and interpret. Beginning historians are usually very happy to find written documents, and if analytical skills and imagination are limited then without the hassle of quoting the information contained in the documents directly, as well as imitating the technique of a tailor, which is to join materials one by one until they become a piece. full writing (Padmo, 2000).

Written sources can be traced in various places, ranging from archive depots, government offices, personal documents, libraries, and others. Written documents also have various forms, ranging from archives, statistical data, magazines, newspapers, sales records, diaries, and so on. In essence, if a historian is observant and creative, written sources can actually be obtained easily. The ease of access offered by the historical data digitization platform also further expands the possibilities of data discovery. With easy access to written sources, this should trigger historians to look for new "challenges" by turning to alternative sources, especially oral sources.

In general, what is meant by oral history is the transfer of memory (memory) into

sound through the process of interviewing and recording by other people/historians. The sound is then used as material to reconstruct the past (historiography). Oral history is categorized as an alternative source because so far historians tend to avoid it for certain reasons (Purwanto, 2006, p. 70). Some historians assume that the function of oral history is complementary to written historical sources. According to the author, this statement is inaccurate, because both written and oral sources have a strategic function in the preparation of historical writings.

The oral history method underwent a remarkable development when Allan Nevins of Columbia University began working with this method in 1948 to reconstruct the past of white men in the United States. The use of oral history methods has shifted the historical orientation of historians in the United States and Europe. Political history and the problems of the elite began to be replaced by social history and the problems of the common people which often left no trace of written sources. Historical studies began to be oriented towards writing history from below. The oral history method has made it possible for the history of minors that are not revealed in written historical sources to be written based on their testimonies revealed through the interview method.

According to Bambang Purwanto, deconstructive awareness has made most social and humanities scientists base their thoughts on the grand design of narrativism and relativism as the focus of their studies. In that context, oral history has a more strategic role to be used as a historical source. If there is an argument that oral sources have a greater bias, proponents of oral history also argue that written documents also contain the same thing, namely bias and distortion (*Ibid*, p. 71). One of the distortions in written sources is because these sources do not necessarily record all the data needed by historians, while oral sources are actually much more numerous and broader as much and as broad as can be extracted from the informants. Furthermore, Bambang Purwanto suggests that interviews conducted by a historian are able to document certain aspects of historical experience that tend to be lost from written sources (Purwanto, 2006).

Alternative sources are numerous, as outlined in a book edited by Sarah Barber and Corina H. Peniston-Bird entitled *History Beyond the Text: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*. Referring to the title, this book wants to emphasize that historical sources are not only about written texts. At the beginning of the book, it is explained that in fact there are many non-textual objects which some people also consider as text, so that we often hear the phrase "reading films, reading photos, reading music," and others which indicate that in fact many things are unwritten is analogous to texts that can be read. Thus, these objects from the past can be "read" as historical sources (Barber and Peniston-Bird, 2009, p.1). The book clearly explains ten alternative sources that can be used as historical sources, including: fine arts, cartoons, photography, film and television, music, oral history, internet, landscapes, architecture, and cultural materials. In the third chapter discussing cartoons as historical sources by Frank Palmeri, it is explained that cartoons which are social criticisms can explain the psychological situation at the time the cartoons were made.

## Historical Publications

Publication is broadcasting research results to the wider community which is generally done in writing. Research, writing, and publication in the academic world is known as *The Holy Trinity* or the three holy things. Writing activity is the last activity in the historical research process known as historiography. Writing is the last activity and is the most difficult because it includes the choice of words that will be used to communicate research findings. The success of a historian is very dependent on the results of the writing because that is what will be judged by the community regarding the truth that is written, the facts presented, the style of language used, and the flexibility in telling. A history scholar will not be called a historian if he has not succeeded in presenting the results of his research in written form.

Skills in writing historical narratives are not easy because they must rely on historical data, in contrast to writing literary works which rely more on the writer's free imagination (Kuntowijoyo, 1987, p. 128). However, a historian still needs imagination, because without imagination it is impossible for a historical narrative to be structured properly. Historical narratives have twin tasks, first, history intends to tell things that actually happened in the past, so that what is presented is what actually happened. Second, historical narratives must follow certain strict procedures, namely they must be orderly in the placement of space and time, consistent with other elements such as topography and chronology, and most importantly must be based on evidence (Collingwood, 1959, p. 81).

Beginning historians usually find it difficult to articulate historical sources into easy-to-read narratives. Writing is the result of continuous practice, not just an exercise to express historical facts well, but more than that is an effort to communicate what we want to convey to the public (Lohanda, 2011, p. 192). This concerns the next step, namely publication. Historical research reports will be of high use value if they are widely published to the public. Publication of research results is a form of accountability of an academic to the wider community. In addition, publications are important as a way to communicate new findings due to new research activities.

Academic historians who live on campus usually write history for two purposes, namely academic interests in the form of raw research reports such as theses, theses, dissertations, and research reports in general, and writing for publication purposes to be published in journals, newspapers, or books. The two writing models are usually different, especially in the use of language. Writing for academic purposes usually uses rigid language because it refers to the standard rules of "good and right" language and uses a strictly defined writing structure. The target audience is also usually limited to the academic community on campus. Meanwhile, writing for the sake of publication aims to make the works of historians can be read by the wider community. Therefore, a communicative language is needed so that it can attract people's interest to read it (Tuchman, 1982, p. 46).

How can we write well, deliciously, and interestingly so that our writing is liked by readers? In addition to constantly practicing, of course, the main capital is reading

a lot of references. Reading activities, in addition to expanding various information, also enrich our vocabulary which is the main capital in the writing process. Without reading a lot, the vocabulary will be limited so that our imagination is also limited. According to Mona Lohanda, analytic logic must be reflected in the logic of sentences that are coherent and successive. That is, no matter how rich a historian is in historical data found in the research process, if he is not able to write it down sequentially, successively, in a communicative language, he will fail to communicate his findings (Lohanda, 2011, p. 193).

As a side note, if we read the works of historians we will see that each historian has a different writing style. There are historians' writings that are very easy to read because the language used flows like a river without rocks, but there are also historians who have a writing style that is difficult to understand. Kuntowijoyo is the type of historian who has a good writing style, with short sentences that are very easy to understand, and flow freely. The reader is stunned by the sentence he wrote so that he is motivated to read his writing to the end. This may be influenced by his habit of writing literary works that are very imaginative and free, so that Kuntowijoyo has an inexhaustible store of words and sentences when writing history. On the other hand, historians Sartono Kartodirdjo and Taufik Abdullah have a writing style that is sometimes difficult to digest, convoluted, and not easy to extract. My guess is that both of them are heavily influenced by historical philosophical readings which are difficult for laymen to understand. How about us? I suggest writing in a language that is easily understood by all levels of society because the more people who like our writing, the more people will be enlightened by our new findings. There is no point in us writing if it is not read by the wider community.

### ***Scientific Publications in Journals***

Scientific journals are a very effective medium for disseminating the research findings of academics. Writing in a journal usually has a higher level of difficulty than writing a book, because the writing will usually go through a long review process until the writing is declared worthy. The higher the level of the journal, the longer the process that needs to be passed until it is declared accepted and published. Journals are grouped into several categories, including national journals (not accredited), accredited national journals, and international journals. International journals are also grouped into several categories, namely international journals (regular) and reputable international journals. Reputable international journals are also grouped into several categories marked with the symbol Q (*quartile*), so there are Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4 journals. The smaller the number, the higher the ranking.

Journal ranking usually refers to citations (quotations) of the journal in question, which are called *Impact Factor* (IF) and *SCImago Journal Ranking* (SJR) made by two different institutions. IF is a measure that reflects the annual average number of citations to the most recent articles published in the journal in question. It is often used as a proxy for the relative importance of journals in their field. Journals with a higher IF are considered more important than journals with a lower IF. IF was designed by

Eugene Garfield, founder of the *Institute for Scientific Information*. IF is calculated annually starting from 1975 for reviews of journals listed in Thomson Reuters' *Journal Citation Reports*. The SJR is calculated using the Scopus database (Elsevier) by taking into account several things.

If the journal to be addressed is not recorded for its IF or SJR, it means that the journal should be questioned for its internationality. To research SJR, you can access the <https://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php> page. Through this time, the author can search and check reputable international journals indexed by Scopus. Which international journal should we submit to? This of course really depends on the scope and quality of the writing. On the page belonging to Scimagojr, you can browse thematic journals. Each journal usually has different writing techniques (covering style), writers need to adjust the technicalities as determined by the journal in question. International journals generally have an online system for submitting manuscripts, not via e-mail. Journals that still apply for sending manuscripts by e-mail are usually considered less reputable.

## Conclusion

Historical research aims to reveal events that have occurred in the past and bring them back to the present. Efforts to present the past is certainly not an easy thing because it really depends on the sources found and their relevance to the present. Historians' dependence on written sources often limits historical narratives and explanations. Historians need to broaden their research horizons by utilizing abundant alternative sources, both in the form of oral histories, as well as small sources that have not been paid attention to, such as photographs, paintings, household objects, and others. Online access also provides abundant historical resources that make it easier for historians to access them. Information technology assistance has made the work of historians easier.

The success of historians is also influenced by the publications carried out post-research. Research results will get a high use value when published and read by the wider community. The success of scientific publications depends on several things, including the language used. The use of good, coherent, and comfortable language will certainly make it easier for people to understand the results of the research. The use of difficult and convoluted language makes people lazy to access the results of historians' research. Currently access to international journals is made easier by online media. Historians can easily choose online journals that match the theme of the research that has been done. International journals will help connect a historian with the wider outside world.

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